

Notre Dame Appoints Abortion Advocate Director of Liu Institute

Announcement comes four years after Jenkins publicly rejected her views

LUCY SPENCE
Editor-in-Chief

The Keough School of Global Affairs announced its recent appointment of abortion activist Susan Ostermann as the incoming director of its Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, beginning July 1. Ostermann, an associate professor of global affairs and political science, has written multiple national opinion articles advocating for increased abortion access, arguing that “[a]bortion saves women’s lives.”

Hired by Notre Dame in 2017 as one of the first professors for the new Keough School, Ostermann studies state capacity, coercion, and law, with a focus on South Asia. She teaches courses for both undergraduate and Law School students, according to course records available to students.

Keough Dean Mary Gallagher described Ostermann as an “outstanding choice” for the Liu Institute, saying, “Susan is an exceptional scholar and a deeply engaged teacher whose work reflects the Keough School’s commitment to rigorous, interdisciplinary research with real-world impact.”



Image by Irish Rover

Ostermann gained the attention of the Notre Dame community in 2022, when then-president Fr. John Jenkins, C.S.C. wrote a rejection of Ostermann’s pro-abortion work in the Chicago Tribune. Ostermann’s article, titled “Lies about abortion have dictated our health policy,” was co-authored with former Notre Dame professor Tamara Kay,

who left the university after unsuccessfully suing the *Irish Rover* for defamation after the student newspaper covered her offers of illegal abortion access to students.

In their article, Ostermann and Kay wrote, “Almost 90% of abortions occur during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy when there are no babies or fetuses. There are

only blastocysts or embryos so tiny they are too small to be seen on an abdominal ultrasound.”

According to a 2021 peer-reviewed article published in *Issues in Law & Medicine*, 96 percent of biologists from academic institutions agree that a human life begins at the moment of conception.

In response to Ostermann’s

article, Fr. Jenkins wrote that the “essay does not reflect the views and values of the University of Notre Dame in its tone, arguments or assertions.”

Ostermann has previously called forced pregnancy and childbirth instances of “violence against women,” “sexual abuse,” and “trauma.” She has linked bans on abortion to white supremacy, writing, “Abortion criminalization and gun rights in the U.S. have their roots in white supremacy and racism.”

Ostermann has also frequently condemned the “propaganda” of crisis pregnancy centers, saying they are “anti-abortion rights propaganda sites, to operate and provide false information to women who are lured to them believing they will receive legitimate medical care.” In another Chicago Tribune article, she wrote, “[T]he manner in which the information is delivered [at crisis pregnancy centers] is specifically designed to deceive pregnant people.”

Notre Dame’s official position on abortion can be found on the Office of the President’s website.

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Students Return to National March For Life

Right to Life sends 400 students to Washington, D.C.

KOLBE BARTA
Staff Writer

More than 400 Notre Dame students registered for the National March for Life in Washington, D.C. on Friday, January 23. Before the students left, University President Father Robert Dowd, C.S.C. blessed the students and their pilgrimage.

This year’s March was unique for Notre Dame’s Right to Life Club due to university-wide budget cuts. Right to Life President Anna Kelley explained to the *Rover*, “We had a lot of conversations with financial advisors. We didn’t know where we were getting funding from, but we knew we were going to make it happen.”

Through sponsorship from the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, the Notre Dame Alumni

Association, Notre Dame Knights of Columbus Council #1477, and other generous benefactors, students joined tens of thousands of fellow demonstrators, marching peacefully from the National Mall to the Supreme Court building on an unusually mild winter afternoon.

The March for Life—the largest annual human rights demonstration in the world, according to its website—has continued even after the *Dobbs v. Jackson* Supreme Court decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. Although the battles over abortion legislation now occur at the state level, the March for Life, a pro-life, non-profit organization, carries on the large-scale demonstration “until a culture of life is restored in the United States of America.”

Notre Dame has a long history with the March for Life. For over fifty years, Notre Dame students have marched to defend pre-born children, with many students attending more than once. Additionally, the president of the March for Life organization—Jennie Bradley Lichter ‘04—is a Notre Dame alumna and former resident of Lyons Hall.

Lichter opened the pre-march Rally for Life with brief remarks and a prayer led by bishops of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Traditions. Vice President J. D. Vance began the keynote speeches with an address to the marchers, followed by a video message from President Donald Trump. “[The battle for life] is one that must be fought, must be won, not only in

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Notre Dame Invites Buttigieg for Fireside Chat

Former mayor discusses Trump, economy

SAM MARCHAND
Staff Writer

Pete Buttigieg, former Mayor of South Bend and Secretary of Transportation under the Biden administration, sat down for a fireside chat with Keough School of Global Affairs Dean Mary Gallagher on January 23. Gallagher and Buttigieg addressed South Bend’s “Leadership, Innovation, and the Next Generation.”

Buttigieg, a Democrat, is an outspoken supporter of gay marriage, gay adoption, abortion, and in-vitro fertilization. During a 2024 appearance on the “White Dudes for Harris” podcast, Buttigieg stated, “Men are more free in a country where we have a president who stands up for access to abortion.”

Notre Dame President Father Robert Dowd, C.S.C. introduced Buttigieg. While the Catholic Church categorically denies the validity of homosexual marriages, Fr. Dowd stated, “Buttigieg lives in northern Michigan with his husband Chasten.” The politician was awarded the LGBT Service Award in 2019 by the Gay and Lesbian Alumni of Notre Dame and St. Mary’s. Though the association was never affiliated with the university, it was disbanded by its members when the university officially created the Alumni Rainbow Community of Notre Dame.

Starting the conversation, Gallagher asked Buttigieg for his perspective on artificial intelligence (AI). “I don’t think we

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Founded in 2003, the *Irish Rover* is an independent, Catholic newspaper published fortnightly by students of the University of Notre Dame du Lac, and, as such, it receives no funding or official recognition from the University. Indeed, the ideas presented herein are not necessarily those of the University, although they probably should be.

The *Rover* was established by Notre Dame students who desired a strong and organized conservative voice on campus with the primary purpose of keeping the University true to its founding mission as a Roman Catholic institution. The *Rover* seeks to facilitate part of what the University's mission statement desires in its community: "a forum where through free inquiry and open discussion the various lines of Catholic thought may intersect with all the forms of knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity." To provide this forum, the *Rover* offers a distinctive kind of coverage that includes campus news, religion, politics, culture, history, and humor.

Out of civility, the *Rover* will not critically mention names of students, professors, or administrators, unless the person is either a well-known member of the community, or he or she has openly sought publicity. Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the *Rover's* Editorial Board, while content in individual columns represents the views of each respective author and should not be construed as representing the views of the entire staff. All comments and questions regarding the *Rover's* policies and editorial content, as well as Letters to the Editor, may be directed to the Editor-in-Chief, Lucy Spence, at NDIrishRover@gmail.com or PO Box 46 Notre Dame IN 46556. These letters may be printed anonymously, upon request. Also, please visit our website www.irishrover.net, where you can peruse archives and subscribe to the paper.

**"It will be one of the most powerful means for good in this country."
 – Fr. Edward Sorin**



Image by University of Notre Dame Law School

Notre Dame: An American University

LUCY SPENCE
 Editor-in-Chief



Recent descriptions of Notre Dame's mission frequently include a phrase that rings hollow. The words "Notre Dame is a Catholic, global research university" are found on the university's website and within every admissions pamphlet and administrative speech.

But Notre Dame is not firstly a global university. She is an *American* university, and she has an authentically American purpose that has largely been forgotten.

As we begin to celebrate 250 years of the Founding Fathers' great American project, Notre Dame would do well to engage seriously with this American history and purpose—something which lay close to the heart of her own founder, Fr. Edward Sorin.

Irish immigrants faced waves of anti-Catholic prejudice in the decades leading up to Notre Dame's founding in 1842. Nativist fears, driven largely by Protestants who were alarmed by the number of Irish immigrants entering the country, painted Catholics as a group whose beliefs were antithetical to the culture of the United States. The Know-Nothing Party attempted to rid public offices of Catholics. Signs saying "No Irish Need Apply"

frequented shop windows in Northeastern cities beginning in the 1860s, and Irish Catholics were caricatured as a drunken, poor, and dissolute people.

Fr. Sorin's vision for Notre Dame was in many ways a reaction to the anti-Catholic sentiment that was rampant when he arrived in New York in 1841. The university he established—an American one *and* a Catholic one—challenged the Nativist prejudice that a Catholic's allegiance to Rome would in some way impede his loyalty as a citizen of the state. Instead, Fr. Sorin gifted the country with an educational institution that, through its Catholic instruction, would produce more virtuous citizens.

Signs of Fr. Sorin's efforts are evident here on campus. The now-covered Columbus Murals, commissioned by Fr. Sorin after a 1879 fire in the Main Building, were a physical reminder to every visitor that it was because of a Catholic figure—albeit a deeply flawed Catholic figure—that each American could consider himself as such.

"I think above all," Notre Dame historian and professor Felipe Fernandez-Armesto explained to the *Rover* in an earlier column this year, "Columbus appealed to [Fr. Sorin] because [his] vision for Notre Dame ... was going to show the world that Notre Dame could be part of the creation of a newer, purer kind of Catholicism than immigrants had left behind in the Old World."

"It will be one of the most powerful means for good in this country," Fr. Sorin wrote of his university in a letter to Blessed Basil Moreau in 1842. The native Frenchman understood the enormous evangelical task that stood before the Catholic Church in the shape of America. His

Catholic project was accordingly a distinctly American one as well.

Why has Notre Dame shifted its focus in recent years, then, to a "global" identity and a "global" calling to be a "force for good"? Should we be a university that creates citizens of the world?

In some ways, yes. Our Catholic identity is inherently a universal one, and the truths of our faith are ones that really do transcend borders, languages, and cultures. But Notre Dame's implementation of this global purpose is selective: We are a global Catholic university, but we will not defend the universal truth that "male and female He created them." We are a global Catholic university, but we cannot include the interests of unborn children in our unceasing quest for global inclusion, diversity, and equity.

If Notre Dame is a global Catholic university, it bears this identity in a much more *real* sense than the one it currently promotes. A focus on the solubility of borders becomes nothing but a mockery of the institution's duty to that which is indeed universal—a truth centered on the person of Jesus Christ and sheltered under the watchful care of his Holy Church—if that focus is accompanied by blatant disregard for certain teachings of that truth.

Our country's need for citizens who can articulate and live out Christian morals is great. Notre Dame's obligation as an American university is to the future citizens of this republic—citizens whom she is actively shaping. The university's misplaced priorities between her duties to God, her country, and the world are misleading her students. We are taught first to be citizens of the world, and afterwards to be Americans.

"So what?" you might ask.

"What's wrong with prioritizing our global duty?" To answer this question, we can return to Fr. Sorin. It was *because* of Notre Dame's Catholic identity that Fr. Sorin saw the importance of cultivating a sense of civic responsibility in his students. Responsible citizenship and ordered patriotism are both virtues, and the French priest believed that Notre Dame was fulfilling part of her educational duty by forming virtuous Americans. To look beyond the scope of American mores, one must first live out those mores through virtuous citizenship.

The Church is clear about the importance of its role in shaping the moral norms of a society. Which of these norms is Notre Dame inculcating in her students? And how is the Notre Dame education benefiting the country?

Notre Dame's current global pursuits have led her to forget her American identity, or at least to cease celebrating it. Little has been done by the university to commemorate the past 250 years, which witnessed the founding and rise of an extraordinary Christian nation. Notre Dame's part in that story, particularly in the story of American Catholics, is something her students should be learning in these next months. Let Notre Dame *really* live up to her mantra: God, Country, Notre Dame.

Lucy Spence is a junior from McLean, Virginia majoring in piano performance and the Program of Liberal Studies, with a minor in philosophy. Reach her at lspace@nd.edu.



Fr. Dowd Announces 2026-27 Forum Theme

What does it mean to live a good life?

GABE HOCKSTRA

Staff Writer

“What Does It Mean to Live a Good Life?” University President Father Robert Dowd, C.S.C. announced this classic question as the theme for the 2026-27 Notre Dame Forum in an email to students and faculty on Thursday, January 15.

Established in 2005, the Notre Dame Forum “invites campus-wide dialogue about issues of importance to the University, the nation, and the larger world.” Events for this year’s theme, “Cultivating Hope,” have included public discussions on the power of hope in leadership, bridging divides through compassion, and the joy of service.

Fr. Dowd chose this year’s theme in light of the 2025 Jubilee Year, which Pope Francis themed “Pilgrims of Hope.” The forum website also points to the theme’s resonance with the Congregation of Holy Cross’ motto, *Ave Crux, Spes Unica*: “Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope.”

Notably, this year’s forum hosted controversial Cardinal Robert McElroy, who has faced national criticism for his progressive stances on LGBTQ issues. Card. McElroy joined Fr. Dowd on October 17 for a conversation titled, “Healing Our National



Image by Notre Dame News

Dialogue and Political Life.” The forum has also featured former President Obama’s Joint Chief of Staff, Ret. General Martin Dempsey, among others.

In an interview with the *Rover*, Professor of Political Science Daniel Philpott commended Fr. Dowd’s announcement and emphasized Notre Dame’s unique answer to the question of what it means to live a good life, saying, “Most other universities teach that life is to be spent eternally asking this question and that each person’s answer is equally

important. Here at Notre Dame, though, it is the answer, not the question, that is eternal. The good life is found in friendship with God.”

He added, “The forum can engage in conversation with brothers and sisters of a different faith and no faith. ... Still, if the forum is to be a Notre Dame one, we will want to share our answer with others. We have a duty to do that.”

Father Gregory Haake, C.S.C., who serves as the superior of the priests and brothers of Holy Cross

at Notre Dame, described the personal value of engaging with next year’s forum theme amidst the challenges of today’s world. He told the *Rover*, “At a time when the culture (or the algorithm) is sending you a thousand messages every day about what it means to live the good life, one [of] the best ways to resist is by defining that for yourself according to the principles of our Catholic faith.”

Fr. Haake continued, “If you have a concrete idea of what constitutes the good life, both in general and in your particular case

and according to your particular vocation, then your engagement with the question on the day-to-day will be much less fraught.”

Regarding next year’s theme, junior Jack Keller told the *Rover*, “I think that’s a great question we should be asking, especially as young adults going into many facets of life.” Keller said he hopes the forum will address the communal aspect of the good life—specifically, “What does it mean to live a good life in relation to one another, with our neighbors?”

In his announcement email, Fr. Dowd wrote that he looks forward to the dialogue that will occur within and across various disciplines at Notre Dame through the 2026-27 forum. He also encouraged students to recommit to respectful attentiveness as well as constructive and robust engagement: “In so doing, we will become the seekers of truth, sustainers of hope, and builders of bridges we hope to be.”

Gabe Hockstra is a freshman from Aldie, VA studying economics. He can be reached at ghockstr@nd.edu.

March for Life *continued from front*

the corridors of power, but above all in the hearts and souls of the people,” said President Trump via video from the Oval Office.

Vance’s speech began with a personal defense of life from his background as father of a growing family. The vice president and his wife, Usha, recently announced the pregnancy of their fourth child. “In my remarks last year, I told you all that one of the things I wanted most in the United States was more families and more babies,” said Vance. “So, let the record show you have a vice president who practices what he preaches.”

Vance then pivoted to discuss the second Trump administration’s pro-life policy victories. Chief among them was an expansion of the Mexico City Policy, which prohibits U.S. taxpayer funding of international abortion efforts; the rollback of Biden-era policies funding abortions for government employees; “Trump Accounts” for every baby born during this presidential term; the beginning of fraud investigations into loans for Planned Parenthood-affiliated organizations that were awarded and forgiven by the Biden administration; and banning the use of fetal tissue in federally-funded research.

Vance emphasized, “The March for Life is not just about a political issue. As important as all this



Image by Christian Bustillo

politics stuff is, it is about whether we will remain a civilization under God or whether we ultimately return to the paganism of the past.”

Not all pro-lifers were thrilled with the appearance of Trump and Vance at the movement’s signature event. Many have criticized the administration for not adhering to core principles of the pro-life movement, citing both politicians’ support for access to the abortion pill mifepristone and Trump’s offer of the Hyde Amendment—a

longstanding statute that prevents federal taxpayer dollars from funding abortions—as a bargaining chip to forestall another government shutdown.

Many marchers also decried the administration’s apparent lack of progress on abortion policy, with one demonstrator shouting protests over Vance’s speech. Vance acknowledged the “elephant in the room,” as he called it, but responded by pointing to Trump’s track record and asking for patience. “I’d ask you to look at

where the fight for life stood just one decade ago, and now look where it stands today,” said the vice president. “We have made tremendous strides over the last year, and we’re going to continue to make strides over the next three years to come.”

Despite the ongoing political power plays, the March went smoothly and Notre Dame students were thrilled to participate. After driving through Thursday night in eight buses, students began the day of the March with a Holy Hour and Mass before heading to the National Mall. From there, Notre Dame students marched as a group toward the Supreme Court, often breaking out into renditions of the Alma Mater and chants of “Go Irish, save babies!”

The trip concluded on Saturday morning with a Notre Dame community Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, in partnership with the Notre Dame Club of Washington, D.C. As Notre Dame students traveled back to campus, they reflected fondly on their pilgrimage. “I loved the March and was inspired to see so many people advocating for life,” freshman Luke Fisher told the *Rover*.

Freshman Lydia Tomko remarked, “It was a hopeful and sincere joy, rather than anger or hatred, that filled the streets of D.C. That joy is the most striking thing about the March:

it’s not merely a political or personal conflict for which the marchers advocate, but rather the conviction that life, the most basic right, is good and beautiful.” She added, “To participate alongside other Notre Dame students was a true gift!”

Reynaldo Guillén, this year’s March Director for Right to Life, concluded the trip with a message to the marchers: “For over 50 years, Notre Dame students, faculty, and staff have traveled to our nation’s capital to march for life. ... My hope is that 50 years from now, our fellow alumni will be marching in a world that not only recognizes abortion as an injustice, but truly sees and celebrates the God-given beauty inherent in every human person. Until that day, we march on.”

Kolbe Barta is a freshman in Duncan Hall studying political science and constitutional studies. He can be found dropping sizzling hot takes to cause chaos, playing his guitar, or lecturing on the evils of smartphones while scrolling away on his own. If you are also bad at guitar and a hypocrite, please reach out to him at kbarta3@nd.edu.



Liu Director *continued from front*

In its “Institutional Statement Supporting the Choice for Life,” the university writes that it “recognizes and upholds the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.”

Despite the obvious incongruity between Ostermann’s views and the university’s on a grave matter of Catholic Social Teaching, no mention of Ostermann’s numerous pro-abortion writings was recognized by the university in the announcement of her appointment.

Michael Hockx, who serves as the current director of the Liu Institute, described his replacement as an “inspiring leader” in the news release.

In response to the *Rover’s*

request for a comment on the matter, the university gave the following statement:

“Professor Susan Ostermann is a highly regarded political scientist and legal scholar whose insightful research on regulatory compliance — from forestry conservation in India and Nepal to NSF-funded disaster mitigation in the U.S. territories — demonstrates the rigorous, interdisciplinary expertise required to lead the Liu Institute. A deeply committed educator who has led study abroad programs in Mumbai, she is well prepared to expand the Institute’s global partnerships and create impactful research opportunities that advance our dedication to serving as the preeminent global Catholic research institution. Those who serve in leadership positions at Notre Dame do so

with the clear understanding that their decision-making as leaders must be guided by and consistent with the University’s Catholic mission. Notre Dame’s commitment to upholding the inherent dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life at every stage is unwavering.”

When asked to comment, Ostermann declined and directed the *Rover* to the university’s office of communications.

Notre Dame has a history of inviting and supporting figures who are public proponents of abortion and the abortion industry, beginning in 2009 when they awarded former President Obama an honorary doctor of laws degree. Although the decision caused enormous controversy and received criticism from over 80 American bishops,

the university never rescinded the award, allowing the staunch supporter of abortion rights to speak at commencement.

More recently, in a 2023 post-*Dobbs* lecture series titled, “Reproductive Justice: Scholarship for Solidarity and Social Change,” the university invited abortion activist Ash Williams to speak on a panel about “Trans Care + Abortion Care,” which was sponsored in part by the Gender Studies Program. Williams was described on the event’s page as a “Black trans abortion doula, public intellectual, and abolitionist community organizer.”

The Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies hosted Cambridge professor Clair Wills as part of its Fall 2024 speaker series. Wills has authored

several pro-abortion articles, including one book review titled, “Quickening, or How to Plot an Abortion.”

The Liu Institute is one of 17 university institutes listed on the Provost’s website. The Dean of the Keough School of Global Affairs, Mary Gallagher, was responsible for Ostermann’s appointment, according to information provided by current Liu Director Michael Hockx.

Lucy Spence is a junior from McLean, Virginia majoring in piano performance and the Program of Liberal Studies, with a minor in philosophy. She can be reached at lspace@nd.edu.



It behooves a watchdog to bark. Good, *Rover*.

Opera ND Presents Bernstein’s *Candide* *Students and cast celebrate latest comic production*

VICENT PEREZ

Staff Writer

As Notre Dame found itself in the coldest of all possible South Bends, Opera Notre Dame invited theatergoers to question what else is wrong in the world with its production of Leonard Bernstein’s *Candide* at the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center (DPAC) on December 5 and 7.

The performance follows the group’s staging of Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* in February of 2025. Director and conductor Dr. Dror Baitel told the *Rover*, “This is the first time Notre Dame Opera presented a full scale production with an orchestra since Covid.”

First performed in 1956, *Candide* is a comic operetta, providing a contrast to Purcell’s 17th-century Baroque tragedy. The score was composed by Leonard Bernstein, widely known for the iconic musical *West Side Story*. Like much of Bernstein’s work, *Candide* shows a wide variety of musical influences, including the classical operatic tradition, medieval chant, and Latin dances.

The show is an adaptation of the 1759 novella by Voltaire, which satirizes Gottfried Leibniz’s philosophy. Leibniz held that we live in the “best of all possible

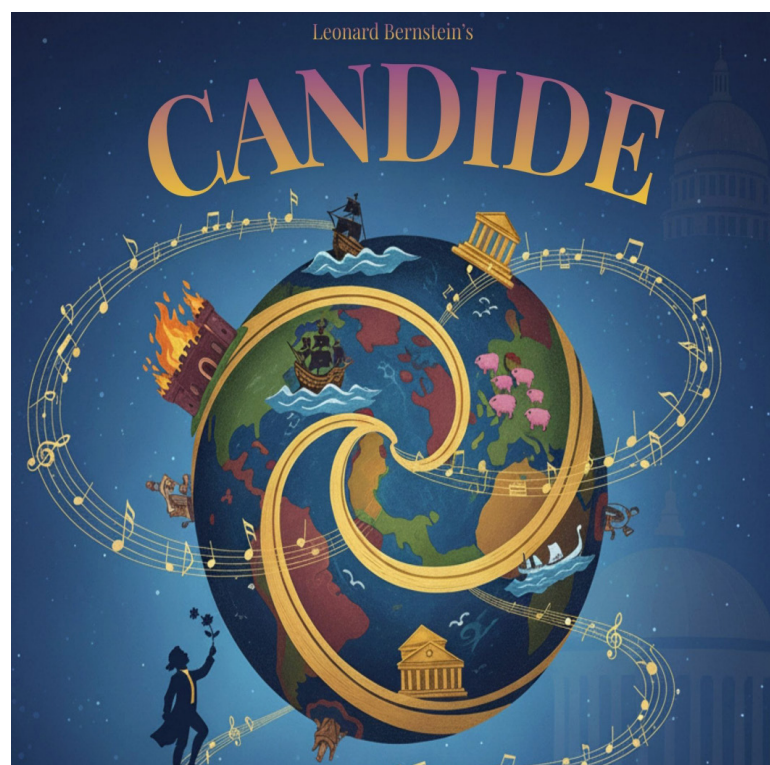


Image by Notre Dame Department of Music

worlds,” since evil only serves to bring about an even greater good.

For Voltaire, this philosophy was unsatisfactory. In the novella as well as in Bernstein’s operetta, the protagonist Candide and his companions encounter immense suffering, including war, rape, shipwreck, an earthquake, and near execution. All the while, Candide’s mentor Dr. Pangloss serves as a mouthpiece for

Leibniz’s ideas, driving Candide to despair. Ultimately, Candide settles on a farm and concludes that the best response to evil is to cultivate good.

In her notes in the show’s program, Rev. John A. Brien Professor of Philosophy Barbara Gail Montero wrote, “Life, Voltaire believed, was rife with random catastrophes and unconscionable cruelty. Music,

however, tends to bring out the best in humanity. And Bernstein’s luscious score to *Candide* is a perfect example of this.”

Montero continued, “We invite you to ponder whether we, like Candide, can still, despite murder and mayhem, adversity and avarice, find a way to make our garden grow.”

Many of the cast were members of Notre Dame’s Sacred Music Program, which offers degrees and classes in organ, voice, and choral conducting, among other subjects.

The cast also represents a variety of backgrounds and experience levels. Freshman cast member Madeline Anderson spoke to the *Rover* about being in the show: “I had a wonderful time working on *Candide*. ... Working with so many incredible people, like our director and the graduate students, really filled me with joy and passion for opera as an art form.” Anderson called her first operetta at Notre Dame “a very collaborative and supportive environment, especially for beginners to opera like myself.”

“I think people think opera is a dying genre,” Anderson continued, “but being in a production with so many young, talented, and passionate artists

really shows that opera is alive. I hope everyone who saw *Candide* saw how much fun we had putting it on and enjoyed an art form they hadn’t watched before!”

For many students, watching the operetta was a new and positive experience. Freshman Robert Myler told the *Rover*, “[*Candide*] was really morbid but had a comic overtone, which made it hilarious.” As for Voltaire’s less-than-subtle satire of the Church, Myler did not think it detracted from the show: “Honestly, that was one of my favorite parts. ... I know it doesn’t paint the Church in the best way, but it was still funny.”

Dr. Baitel expressed his hope for the future of Opera Notre Dame, saying, “[W]e look forward to return to DeBartolo in future seasons with more exciting programming.”

Vicent Perez is a freshman studying architecture with a minor in music. He thinks Voltaire would be more of an optimist if he had the stuffed pita from Garbanzo. He can be reached at vperezra@nd.edu.



Fr. Gregory Pine on Conversation and God's Plan

dCEC hosts popular theologian

JEREMY SIEGL
Staff Writer

Rev. Gregory Pine, O.P., a popular Dominican theologian, recently visited campus for two events centered on his forthcoming book, *Training the Tongue and Growing Beyond Sins of Speech*. The de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture (dCEC) welcomed Fr. Pine for a public book talk and conversation, followed by a day of recollection for the dCEC's Sorin Fellows.

The public event, entitled "Training the Tongue: How to Avoid the Sins of Speech," left standing room only in Andrews Auditorium in Geddes Hall. This conversation on the purpose of speech was between Fr. Pine and Dr. Angela Knobel, a professor of philosophy at the University of Dallas and the dCEC's current Myser Visiting Fellow.

During the discussion, Fr. Pine explained that he did not write his book to scold readers into avoiding wrongdoing, but rather "to show how to use speech well." Describing speech as something meant to build relationships and foster communion, he emphasized that conversation

should be "a genuine sharing of life" between individuals.

Knobel raised the concern that modern technology can discourage authentic conversation, even when people are more "connected" than ever. Fr. Pine responded by emphasizing that the goal of conversation is not efficiency or entertainment, but rather "meeting each other in our depths."

The following day, the dCEC hosted an on-campus day of recollection for its Sorin Fellows, which included two talks and Q&A sessions with Fr. Pine, conversations with Professor of Theology Rev. Matthew Hovde, C.S.C. and graduate student Rev. Brendan Baran, O.P., and Mass in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

The theme of the day of recollection was a question many carry quietly: Can you "mess up" God's plan for your life? Fr. Pine encouraged participants to approach this fear with both honesty and trust, emphasizing that God's providence is not fragile or easily "ruined" by human weakness. "God is not scandalized by your imperfections," Pine said. "He knows what he was doing when he made you."

Throughout the day, Fr. Pine



Image by Catholic Information Center

stressed that Christian life is not lived in an imagined future where everything is finally in order. He remarked that "your real life is not elsewhere ... it is here and now." He encouraged students to resist both despair and perfectionism, reminding them that God works through ordinary circumstances and even through failure.

Dr. Jennifer Newsome Martin, Director of the dCEC, explained in an email to the Rover that the events were planned as part of the Center's mission of promoting formation for its community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

"Our Sorin Fellows program

is designed to support holistic, integral student formation in the Catholic tradition," she said. Martin noted that this includes "focused attention, not only on intellectual development, virtuous friendships, professional training, and vocational mentoring, but also—given Catholicism's universal call to holiness—upon the interior, spiritual lives of the students under our care."

Martin explained that the dCEC has long been interested in hosting a day of recollection for the Sorin Fellows, and that "since Fr. Gregory is a known quantity through his work at the Thomistic Institute and various podcasts alongside his fellow Dominicans (not to mention that he is intellectually serious, deeply funny, and manifestly approachable!), we knew he would have broad appeal not only to our Sorin Fellows, but also to the broader campus and local community." She also added that graduate Sorin Fellow Fr. Henry Stephan, O.P. helped facilitate the introduction.

The reception of both events was overwhelmingly positive. Freshman Sorin Fellow Christian Weber told the Rover that Fr. Pine "has this uncanny ability to

voice our inner thoughts in a way that's both deeply relatable and spiritually formative."

Sophomore Sorin Fellow Ella Ortiz echoed Weber's praise, writing to the Rover that the day of recollection was "a wonderful opportunity to contemplate my role in God's divine plan, entrusting my life and my semester to Him."

Across both events, Fr. Pine's message remained consistent: The Christian life, whether expressed in the way people speak or the way they imagine their future, is inherently oriented toward communion. For attendees, his two-day visit offered the practical challenge of cultivating "verbal virtue" and a deep reassurance that God's plans are not derailed by human imperfection but patiently carried forward through His grace.

Jeremy Siegl is a freshman from Southern California studying history and constitutional studies. He's currently complaining about winter weather to anyone who will listen to him. You can reach him at jsiegl@nd.edu.

Local Musicians Promote Gregorian Chant, Renaissance Polyphony

St. Hildegard Project seeks to renew liturgical music landscape

MADLINE PAGE
Staff Writer

Within the suburbs of South Bend is an assemblage of musicians with a sacred mission. The St. Hildegard Project, a non-profit choral organization, aims to cultivate the Roman Catholic sacred music tradition through liturgical ministry, performances, and outreach.

Jerome Cole, the founder and executive director of the St. Hildegard Project, told the Rover that the ensemble seeks "to share the rich treasury of the Church's sacred music through teaching and performance." Cole, who also serves as the music director of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Mishawaka, founded the project in 2022.

Initially a small choir of half a dozen voices, the project has expanded since its inception to include sixteen singers. A wide range of people from the South Bend community, including Notre Dame faculty and staff, are involved in the project.

In addition to their daily endeavors directing music for local parishes, completing graduate coursework, attending Moreau Seminary, parenting, and teaching at Notre Dame, Holy Cross, and other local schools, the ensemble members provide music for numerous Catholic

liturgies and perform three concerts annually. They host workshops around the diocese and have also been invited to share their music at the de Nicola Center Fall Conference for the past several years.

Daniel Tucker, who serves as the choir's artistic director and the director of liturgical music at the Cathedral of St. Matthew, wrote to the Rover that the St. Hildegard Project is centered around prayer, not performance.

"Most importantly, I think [the project is] to provide music for the sacred liturgy," he explained. "The liturgy—Mass, Vespers, et cetera—is our music's 'natural habitat,' and we much prefer singing for liturgy to singing at a concert, as fun as the concerts can be."

Tucker continued, "We serve the community by passing on to the rest of the faithful the Church's treasury of sacred music (principally Gregorian chant, and also Renaissance polyphony) which the Second Vatican Council said is the Church's greatest artistic treasure, and something that needs to be diligently preserved and fostered."

In accord with this mission, the St. Hildegard Project recently recorded and released an album of Gregorian chants for weddings and funerals, titled *In Te Speravi* ("In You Have I Trusted"). Cole



Image by hildegardproject.org

said that Gregorian chant, a tradition of sacred music that consists of unaccompanied, monophonic Latin song, is "the foundation of [the] group's repertoire."

For Madeline Thompson, a Notre Dame alumna and soprano in the St. Hildegard Project ensemble, the choir offers a unique opportunity for blending prayer with professional musicianship.

"It [is] overwhelmingly evident to me that this is the best choir I have ever sung with," she told the Rover. "I [am] incredibly humbled to be a part of such beautiful music making, all for the glory of God."

As the name suggests, the St. Hildegard Project fosters a particular devotion to St. Hildegard of Bingen and her compositions. Hailing from medieval Germany, St. Hildegard was a Benedictine abbess well known for her deep spirituality,

as well as her vast knowledge of theology, botany, medicine, and music. A prolific composer, St. Hildegard's chants are the earliest known Gregorian compositions that can be traced back to a single composer.

"Although our mission is to perform and teach all of the rich treasury of Catholic sacred music, we have indeed honored our patron, St. Hildegard, the last couple years by chanting vespers and performing several of [her] pieces on her feast day at a beautiful local church, St. Monica's [in] Mishawaka," Cole told the Rover.

Nonetheless, the St. Hildegard Project also maintains a broader focus. "More important for us than devotion to a particular saint is devotion to Our Lord in His Church and to rendering right worship to Him in accord with the Catholic liturgical and artistic tradition," Tucker said.

Through the music of St.

Hildegard and other composers, the St. Hildegard Project seeks to increase awareness of and participation in the rich Catholic tradition of sacred music.

"The Catholic Church possesses a rich patrimony of sacred music that is at risk of being lost if it is not actively promoted and, more importantly, performed," Thompson told the Rover. "This music exists to glorify God and sanctify souls. It is the responsibility of the faithful to preserve and pass down the tradition of sacred music to each generation, so that others may continue to benefit from both performing it and receiving it as a gift."

More information on the St. Hildegard Project, including concerts, liturgical events, and recordings, can be found on their website.

Madeline Page is a sophomore studying biology. She enjoys listening to Gregorian chant whilst completing her scholarly endeavors; the beauty and intensity of the music help her to pretend that she is conquering dramatic feats of great importance, rather than simply memorizing vertebrate phylogeny. Playlist recommendations can be sent to mpag4@nd.edu.



Pope Leo's Invitation to Greater Love

Notre Dame responds to Dilexi Te

LUKE FISHER
Staff Writer

Pope Leo XIV recently released the first major writing of his pontificate, an apostolic exhortation titled *Dilexi Te* ("I have loved you"). Focusing on the themes of love for the poor and service to neighbor, Pope Leo's words were written as an invitation to all Christians today.

"The main key theme [of *Dilexi Te*] is that God is a God of love, and every human being is created in the image and likeness of God," John Staud, Director of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education, told the *Rover*. "It's an exhortation to all of us to do a better job of addressing some of the structural inequalities of the world."

The exhortation is the most recent papal writing within Catholic Social Teaching, a movement of teachings concentrated on building a holier and more just society. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, the Church's Social Teaching "provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action" (CCC 2423).

Dr. John C. Cavadini, Director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life and Professor of Theology, noted the pope's emphasis on the "specifically theological character" of the

Church's relationship to the poor. In an email to the *Rover*, he explained, "The major [idea] is that care for the poor and love of the poor is intrinsic to Christian identity and to the mission of the Church, not an optional 'add-on.'"

Cavadini continued, quoting the exhortation, "'For Christians, the poor are not a sociological category but the very flesh of Christ who became poor for us.' We do not fully comprehend or encounter Christ if we reject or neglect the poor."

Gabriel Wollak, a first-year architecture student, told the *Rover* that he was drawn to the pope's emphasis on service to others: "[The exhortation focuses] on how we can actually live the Gospel out, and actually take this love—this heart that beats for us, that is the Lord's—and put that love into action. It is through service, particularly to the poor, to the marginalized, to those who are not treated fairly, as Pope Leo included."

The exhortation is "in some ways not [Pope Leo's] first major writing; it is [rather] the completion of a project Pope Francis began," explained Cavadini. "The late Pope Francis began work on *Dilexi Te* after writing what would be his final encyclical, *Dilexit Nos* ('He loved us'), which focused



Image by Tasnimnews.com

on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, encouraging a devotion that has been experiencing a resurgence among American Catholics and in the wider Church.

The two writings are inherently connected to each other. Focusing on the relationship between service and devotion to the Sacred Heart, *Dilexi Te* explains that "in this call to recognize [Jesus] in the poor and suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate."

"I think primarily the way to implement *Dilexi Te* is to ... prioritize Mass, where we actually get to take on Jesus' heart and see it and contemplate it," said Wollak. "It's the strongest factor in fostering an environment of

service to the poor."

Staud remarked that Pope Leo's exhortation is a message for Catholics to "figure out, 'What am I called to do with my life, and how am I called to extend myself for us, for others?' It all boils down to, 'Did I see Christ? Did I see God in everyone I encountered?'"

"Although it involves addressing social structures that perpetuate poverty, Christian service to the poor cannot be reduced to a political program," Cavadini cautioned.

He continued, "There is an intrinsic personal dimension of accompaniment, outreach, and love which no political structure can provide, and therefore almsgiving, our personal action on behalf of the poor, can never

be obsolete."

Furthermore, Cavadini added that "Leo advises almsgiving, direct personal caring for anyone whose poverty of any kind makes them invisible to us or inconvenient. God's compassion is toward the poverty and weakness of all humanity. We can encounter this poverty and weakness in the materially poor, but also in the lonely, the sidelined, [and] those whose personal habits make them difficult to love."

"There's so many different ways that we can serve the poor, even in the midst of our lives at Notre Dame," Wollak voiced. "The important part is having that time for silence and taking on the Lord's heart, and then being aware and just looking for ways to serve those poor."

Luke Fisher is a freshman from Detroit living in Siegfried Hall. He is majoring in theology and also struggling his way through the Program of Liberal Studies. If he's not snacking on almonds or wishing for more snow, you can usually find him doing the chapel crawl around campus. To join in (or chat), reach out at lfisher8@nd.edu

Aquinas on Law and Justice

Notre Dame professor reflects on Aquinas' legacy

MATTHEW MROSLA
Staff Writer

In anticipation of St. Thomas Aquinas' feast day on January 28, the *Rover* sat down with Jean Porter, Professor Emeritus of Theology, to discuss Aquinas' philosophy of natural law and justice.

Porter emphasized the importance of reading Aquinas in his historical, scholastic context. She told the *Rover*, "The best way to approach Aquinas is not to start with his theory but to start with what he's working with. Aquinas is working within the context of a lot of people who are all trying to bring about some degree of harmony, some degree of intelligibility to traditions that they have from Scripture, classical sources, and patristic sources."

Porter's encounter with Aquinas began incidentally when she found him widely cited while pursuing her Ph.D. in Religious Studies at Yale. She began reading Aquinas directly, comparing his texts to how they were often portrayed. She recalled her thought process: "At a certain point, I said, 'Why am I reading all these other people when I could actually be reading Aquinas?'" Since then, Porter has published numerous works on Aquinas' theology of ethics.



Image by Wikipedia

Reflecting on the concepts that influenced Aquinas, Porter commented, "Gratian, who is the so-called father of canon law, starts his work [saying that] natural law is that which we find in the law of the Gospel, which is to do to others what you would have others do unto you. So there's a precept. Aquinas goes in the direction that [natural law]

isn't this precept. It's the principle behind it, which is reason."

Porter explained that, for Aquinas, natural law is not arbitrary but in fact can be identified with reason, saying, "[Aquinas] says the first principle of natural law is that good is to be sought and done and evil is to be avoided. This is also the first principle of virtue ... and

the first principle of practical reasoning. That's not the whole of the natural law, but that's the key to understanding and integrating the different ways of thinking about the natural law."

Along with explaining Thomistic principles like natural law, Porter also illustrated how Aquinas' thought has practical relevance. "Justice for [Aquinas] is the cardinal virtue, which brings into order and provides a normative standard for our relations to both neighbors and to God," she explained.

According to Porter, Aquinas' thought also provides a standard for what we owe each other. Porter said, "Aquinas accepts Justinian's basic definition of justice as a constant and perpetual will rendering to each that which is his right. What does it mean to do justice in relations between individuals? Well, it means to preserve an equality of exchange."

Porter clarified what this "equality of exchange" means, saying, "In some cases, this is easy to understand. Aristotle's basic understanding is that you go to the merchant and buy something. You agree on a price, and you make an exchange. Not so easy to understand is if I steal something from you. Our relation has become unequal. I've been able to force my will on you

without your consent."

Porter elaborated on the Thomistic idea of atonement after wrongdoing, saying, "In order for this relationship to be restored and for justice to be done, I have to, first of all, make restitution. Secondly, there has to be some way in which we equalize our status. Maybe that's through punishment. Maybe that's through some kind of act of contrition."

As debates over law and justice continue to shape life today, Porter's reading of Aquinas suggests that his relevance has not faded. By grounding justice in reason, Aquinas offers a framework that, according to Porter, remains capable of clarifying what we owe one another today.

Matthew Mroska is a sophomore studying philosophy, theology, and the Program of Liberal Studies. If you can prove that we aren't living in a simulation, he would be very happy to be cured of his current bout of technosolipsism. Help him find out just how deep the rabbit hole goes at mmroska@nd.edu.



Buttigieg Visit *continued from front*

have to be pessimistic,” Buttigieg said, “AI won’t necessarily make us dumber, but it might, and it seems to be on its way to doing so in the same way that the advent of social media has made us less social.”

South Bend’s economy was a major topic of conversation. Buttigieg complimented his successor’s improvements of South Bend’s economy. “I’m thrilled by what I see when I come back,” Buttigieg said. “I’m really proud of the city, really proud of what my successor has done.” Buttigieg was succeeded by current South Bend Mayor James Mueller, a fellow Democrat.

Switching to the topic of academic freedom, Buttigieg argued that universities are “under attack.” He cautioned that when funding becomes contingent on



Image by WSBT 22

“conform[ity] to the political preferences of the person in charge of the government,” universities are unable to fulfill their missions.

Buttigieg previously endorsed Biden-Harris policies that imposed restrictions on universities. In 2024, the Biden administration issued a new rule that explicitly expanded Title IX protections to include LGBTQ students, prohibiting discrimination based on gender

identity and sexual orientation at federally funded schools and colleges. The rule was struck down the following year by a federal judge and is not currently in effect.

Buttigieg praised Republican members of the Indiana State Assembly who voted against a Trump-backed redistricting plan, telling Gallagher, “[They] showed a lot more solidarity than law firms and many American universities have.”

“What every firm, every university, and every politician has discovered if they try to play the game of this administration in order to survive is that sooner or later it will come back and demand more until ultimately you wind up getting eaten anyway. So stand up,” he concluded.

The Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Studies hired Buttigieg in 2020 to teach and conduct research culminating in a book on trust in political institutions. This decision drew criticism from Catholic media.

Finance major Liam Carey questioned the event’s focus on the Trump administration, telling the *Rover*, “I feel like much of his failed time as secretary and running for president was left out of the conversation.”

Freshman Caden Peltier agreed, saying, “He should have focused more on his own policy, it’s more than just spending all his time

saying “Trump is bad.”

Keough Hall resident Nick DeNatale also critiqued the focus of the talk, telling the *Rover*, “It should have included at least some debate as to the actual impact he made as Secretary of Transportation. Lots of lofty promises about EV chargers and high speed rail that never happened.”

Sam Marchand is a junior studying political science and finance from Beaumont, Texas. He squanders much of his spare time by reading the Current Events section of Wikipedia preparing arguments for ND Speech & Debate, of which he serves as head yapper. Contact him at smarcha3@nd.edu.

Trump Administration Pressures Powell *Fed chair faces DOJ investigation, calls to lower interest rates*

LUKE WOODYARD AND
ANDREW BLAKE
Politics Editors

The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) President Jerome Powell has come under pressure from President Trump for the Fed’s refusal to lower interest rates, despite the president’s demands. The Fed was subpoenaed to present in front of a grand jury by the Department of Justice (DOJ) on January 9. The DOJ investigation, which was approved by Judge Jeanine Pirro in November, will determine whether or not Powell is guilty of misleading Congress during his testimony regarding ongoing renovations of the Federal Reserve headquarters.

The Fed is responsible for maintaining steady economic growth through monetary policy. In part, this policy consists of setting interest rates, which impact consumer spending capacity. At lower interest rates, it becomes cheaper to borrow money, thereby increasing spending and output. The Fed is meant to carry out this mandate objectively in order to best serve American interests.

Trump has criticized raising interest rates for hindering economic growth. In a speech given to members of the Detroit Economic Club on January 13, Trump remarked, “In the old days, when you had good numbers, interest rates would go down . . . [and] the market would go through the roof.” Trump compared this to current fiscal policy, saying, “Today, if you announce great numbers, they raise interest rates to try and kill it.”

Powell, whom Trump appointed as chair of the Fed during his first term, has resisted Trump’s calls to lower rates. In a statement released on January 11, Powell stated his commitment to this position, saying, “In every case, I have carried out my duties



Image by Flickr

without political fear or favor, focused solely on our mandate of price stability and maximum employment.”

“Public service sometimes requires standing firm in the face of threats. I will continue to do the job the Senate confirmed me to do, with integrity and a commitment to serving the American people,” he concluded.

The statement was prompted by a newly opened DOJ investigation into Powell, marking the first time the DOJ has investigated the chairman of the Fed. According to Powell, the Federal Reserve was served grand jury subpoenas regarding his congressional testimony on the renovation of Fed buildings in June. These renovations are currently 700 million dollars over budget. The investigation seeks to determine if Powell’s testimony regarding the renovations was intentionally misleading. President Trump has denied knowledge of this investigation.

One sophomore economics major shared his thoughts on the investigation anonymously with

the *Rover*. While recognizing the importance of investigating potential fraud, he was suspicious of the investigation’s motives, saying, “Given the disagreements Powell and Trump have had in the past, I do think there are probably political motivations for the investigation, and I also don’t like that the president could be doing this out of an ego-filled quarrel.”

He continued, “The Fed’s dual mandate is very clear and helps keep the economy on track. Trump disagrees with the way Powell is handling this duty, but his term is nearly over. This investigation seems ridiculous.”

Powell addressed the DOJ investigation in his January statement, saying, “I have deep respect for the rule of law and for accountability in our democracy. No one—certainly not the chair of the Federal Reserve—is above the law. But this unprecedented action should be seen in the broader context of the administration’s threats and ongoing pressure.”

Jason Reed, Professor of

Economics, agreed with Powell that the investigation is trivial, telling the *Rover*, “The Federal Reserve is mandated by Congress to create long term maximum employment and stable prices. Those mandates may be orthogonal to a President’s fiscal policies and priorities, but that doesn’t mean the Federal Reserve should yield to them.”

Reed also acknowledged the reasoning behind Trump’s push for lower rates. “It is true that when fiscal and monetary policy work in tandem, the economic effects can be more pronounced, but the Fed should always strive to maintain its stated mandate, even in the face of fiscal and political pressure,” he explained.

Nolan Fletes, senior economics major and co-president of Notre Dame’s Federal and Fiscal Challenge team, added nuance to the dichotomy of Trump and Powell, citing the long term implications of the Fed’s policies. Fletes explained to the *Rover*, “Independence of monetary policy is powerful because it’s a different perspective than what we

see in a democracy. A democracy, especially the one we have now, is very short-sighted . . . and so having a different perspective that is looking towards the long term is important.”

However, Fletes recognized that a central bank with an independent mandate is not required, pointing to the United Kingdom as an example of an alternative banking system: “I think one reason why America is more attractive for capital is because of our independent monetary authority, but that independence also has drawbacks and is less capable of acting in times of crisis or change.”

Powell’s term as Fed chair is set to end in May. Trump has begun interviewing candidates for the position including Christopher Waller, Kevin Warsh, Kevin Hassett, and Rick Rieder, the chief investment officer at BlackRock.

Professor Reed called Rick Rieder an “outsider” candidate, citing his experience at BlackRock: “[Rieder] shares views similar to Trump’s, who would like to see lower rates closer to 3 percent rather than the current effective federal funds rate of 3.65 percent.”

Fletes also commented on Rieder, saying, “If Trump opts to elect someone like Rick Reider as the next Fed chair, I’d be excited to see his policies and vision for monetary responsibility, but until then Powell has the reins.”

Luke Woodyard and **Andrew Blake** are newly appointed politics editors. They hope there are no DOJ investigations in their futures. Email lwoodyar@nd.edu or ablake5@nd.edu with any potential evidence.



Fishy Waters: Experts Eye Chinese Maritime Violations

Military aggression accompanies destructive overfishing

KEVIN ANDREWS

Staff Writer

The fishing industry has long been an integral source of economic gain for many coastal nations. China has recently imposed its force on global markets through violations of water domain and overfishing in international waters, thereby depleting natural resources and creating economic strain for other countries. These actions occur amid China's growing aggression toward South Asian nations such as Taiwan.

Chinese fishing boats have been spotted overfishing in Latin American and West African waters. They will deliberately turn off tracking systems so as to enter other countries' domains and trespass into their waters. Destructive fishing practices damage marine life and the ocean floor, causing those waters to become uninhabitable. These practices can weaken or collapse certain seafood industries.

China's lack of concern for natural resources is not a novel phenomenon. Over the last two decades, it has been depleting fish



Image by Wikipedia

stocks in its own oceans and near other countries' territorial waters.

China's overfishing is not only an environmental issue, but a security issue as well. As Professor of Political Science Victoria Hui explained to the *Rover*, "The issue is not merely fishing, but the systematic denial of other states' lawful use of their exclusive economic zones through China's claim over nearly all waters within the nine-dash line."

China has also taken more aggressive action in South Asia. According to Hui, "This has included direct interference with Vietnam's offshore energy activities, including the cutting

of survey cables, and obstruction of oil and gas exploration infrastructure.

Beyond maritime pressure, China has also constructed numerous upstream dams—many major Southeast Asian rivers originate on the Tibetan plateau—thereby constraining water and resource access for downstream countries."

Hui suggests the activity is a violation of lawful water territory, pointing to recent fishing boats' activity as a gradual strangulation of Taiwan's economy. This pressure on Taiwan specifically could further tensions in the region, according to Hui, and be debilitating for countries that rely

on the industry.

Foreign policy experts have warned that China's control over these civilian vessels could escalate tensions between China and Taiwan. The *New York Times* estimated that China "could mobilize tens of thousands of civilian ships, including fishing boats, to clog sea lanes and complicate military and supply operations of its opponents."

China has also continued its military aggression toward Taiwan. On December 29 and 30, China conducted a military exercise titled "Justice Mission 2025." This was the second naval exercise carried out near Taiwan in 2025. The exercise included the practice of aerial and naval blockades. According to Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, Taiwan remains committed to keeping peace in the region. In late December, President Trump, though he was not informed by China of the military exercise, pointed to a strong and stable relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping. He did not express concern about potential attacks on Taiwan.

An undergraduate fellow in

the Notre Dame International Security Center was more concerned by the exercises than President Trump, telling the *Rover*, "This looks like another effort by China to build real operational capability by simulating activities that would occur in the opening stages of a Taiwan invasion."

"They are normalizing these actions in the same way they normalized violations of Taiwan's air defense identification zone and territorial sea in the past few years. Given the dual-use nature of China's civilian fishing fleet, it shouldn't be surprising that they are practicing mobilizations at this scale, although it should still be pretty concerning," he concluded.

Kevin Andrews is a junior in Keough Hall, majoring in political science and economics. He can be reached at kandrew6@nd.edu.

Crabgrass Catholicism: How the Suburb Reshaped the Church

Fr. Stephen Koeth on the problem of community and catechesis

ARTUR KRUTUL

Staff Writer

Green lawns, fenced yards, and a comfortable commute—suburban life is now a staple of modern American culture. But behind its mundane appearance lies a complex and quite recent history that has dramatically reshaped American Catholicism.

In his debut book, *Crabgrass Catholicism: How Suburbanization Transformed Faith and Politics in Postwar America*, Rev. Stephen M. Koeth, C.S.C. delves into the shift from a communal practice of the faith in the city to the private, family-oriented Catholicism of the suburb. Fr. Koeth is both a Notre Dame alumnus and an associate professor of urban, religious, and political history at the university.

What follows is adapted from an interview with the *Irish Rover* on *Crabgrass Catholicism*.

Fr. Koeth, himself a native of Staten Island, chose to center his research on New York City. He explained that in response to the suburban boom of the 40s and 50s, the Vatican established the first fully suburban parish in the nation as the Diocese of Rockville Center on Long Island.

"Catholics across the country noticed this and took note and said, let's pay attention to the Diocese of Rockville Center, because this is proof that the Vatican sees the suburbs as the future of the Church in the United

States. We can watch what's going on there, and we can learn how to transplant the church into the suburbs outside of Chicago and outside of Detroit and outside of St. Louis and outside of Boston," he continued.

Fr. Koeth described New York City and specifically the Diocese of Rockville Center as a "case study" that is "emblematic" of how postwar suburbanization reshaped Catholic faith, parish life, and political engagement across the United States after World War II.

During the interview, Fr. Koeth noted that many of the shifts that Americans ascribed to the Second Vatican Council "were already underway even prior to the council, and that the council really is ratifying or approving changes that were already coming up from the grassroots, not from the bishops and from theologians and documents from the Vatican on down, but from the bottom up."

For example, the rapid development of suburban communities challenged parish communities to adapt. Fr. Koeth explained, "[Imagine] last year, [the] land was all potato farms; now, all of a sudden, you've got 2000 families, and you establish a brand new parish."

He continued, "Well, that priest is probably by himself... [with] 2000 families. They're going to have to have the laity be involved in recruiting people to join the parish, and do the funding

drive to build the building, and probably do some work to find a temporary place for Mass to be said."

Education was likewise affected: "There are no nuns in the school because there's no school yet. So who's teaching the kids catechism? The parents are going to have to do that."

Fr. Koeth continued, "All of a sudden, the laity, because of suburbanization, is doing a lot more in leadership and authority in the Church than they had done before, and that's before Vatican II says the Church is the people of God and the laity have a mission, a role in the mission of the Church."

More than just an "area outside the city," suburbs also brought a new, more private mentality to Catholic practice.

Fr. Koeth explained, "[In] the Old Irish neighborhood, the old Italian neighborhood, the old Polish neighborhood, you participated in Mass because you were Catholic, and because you were Polish, and because you lived in the neighborhood, and because your parents did it, and because your grandparents did it, and they lived nearby. The webs of connection were tight and universal."

"In the suburbs," Fr. Koeth continued, "the practice of the faith is less a product of one's place in an interconnected community, [an] ethnic community. Now your practice of the faith is a personal choice, and you make

that personal choice amidst a variety of personal choices. Should I be a Mets fan or a Yankees fan? You know, should I drive a Chevrolet or a Ford? It's consumer culture. I'm the arbiter, and I pick and choose what will compose my identity."

As a result, parishes, while no longer divided on ethnic lines, became divided on the same socioeconomic, racial, and ideological lines as the suburbs themselves.

By the later half of the 20th century, an individualistic mindset had crept into the moral life of American Catholics as well. Fr. Koeth gave the example of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed Church teaching on the immorality of contraception. He explained that at the time, "[the laity] continue to practice artificial means of contraception, and, as I argue here, that signals that the credibility and authority of the hierarchy was being called into question. Lay people are basically making their own choices. They're saying 'the bishops might say this is immoral, but we're still going to do it.'"

He continued, "In a way, that would not quite have been true prior to *Humanae Vitae* and prior to the Second Vatican Council. You have Catholics who feel very comfortable calling themselves Catholics and participating in the life of the Church, and yet they don't follow the Church's teaching on contraception."

Fr. Koeth concluded on a hopeful note, "The path forward rests on young people today. A lot has been spoken of in the last couple of months about how Gen Z may be coming back to religion. OCIA programs are booming."

In particular, Fr. Koeth hopes that by leaning into community and catechesis—both of which were deeply impacted by suburbanization—the Church can "provide what [young people] are looking for—provide that community [and] answer the big questions of life."

He concluded, "The two problems are community and catechesis. The two solutions are community and catechesis."

Crabgrass Catholicism is available for purchase from the University of Chicago Press. Fr. Koeth's article *Crabgrass Catholicism: Suburbanization and the Plight of Black Catholics* can be found online in the *Church Life Journal*.

Artur Krutul is a sophomore in Stanford Hall studying neuroscience and behavior. After a recent PCL surgery, Artur has graduated to (Cart)ur, zooming about campus in his all-terrain vehicle. When he is not stuck in some snow, he can be found getting up to no good in his quad. Reach him at akrutul@nd.edu.



Basilica Converted to Mosque

Renovation motivated by university's "Catholic mission"

CALEB VAUGHAN
Campus Editor

The university announced recently that the Basilica of the Sacred Heart would be renamed "Our Lady's Arch-Mosque of the United States" and renovated accordingly. In an email to the student body, the Office of the President emphasized the importance of accepting all cultures and being a welcoming place to every student. The email read, "Motivated by our Catholic mission, the University of Notre Dame is committed to building bridges between all faith communities and ensuring access for all students to worship according to their liturgical customs."

This is not the first time a prominent Catholic church has been converted to Islam. See, for example, the *Hagia Sophia* in Constantinople or the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Notre Dame, feeling for a long time left out of this trend, has finally decided to join the movement.

The movement to convert the Basilica was led by a group of students and faculty called



Image by Courtesy of Grok

"Catholics for Islam." The group, whose name some opposing voices call "oxymoronic," has been operating on campus for only six months and was recently promoted to an official club. The *Rover* sat down for an interview with Maria Mohamed, leader of "Catholics for Islam."

Mohamed told the *Rover*, "I found out recently that you can justify anything if you say it's motivated by a Catholic mission. ... The term is so broad it can literally mean anything." She continued, "I was especially inspired by 'Catholics for Choice.' If 'Catholic social teaching' can

be used to promote abortion, then converting infidels under a Catholic banner should be no problem." She went on, "Once we figured out our angle, it was smooth sailing."

When asked about the difficulty of beginning a new official club, Mohamed told the *Rover*, "SAO made the process extremely easy! We felt very supported the whole time."

Professor of Islamic studies and Christian tradition, George Mohammad, told the *Rover* in an email, "It is in the spirit of ecclesiastical ecumenism and in honor of Jesus' cultural roots as a Middle Eastern man that we undertook this change." Mohammad went on to say, "Allah and the Prophet Mohamed, peace be upon him, look up kindly at this new mosque."

One priest, Fr. Peter Mahomed, said in a recent sermon at the Basilica Mosque, "Jesus calls us to repentance, and repentance means changing the direction of your life and where you are looking for happiness. That happiness comes from inclusion." He added that, since the best way to spread the Gospel is by including others, we

must include Muslims in the life of faith here on campus.

The mosque grounds will be officially consecrated by a local Imam, also named Mohamed, in February. Although Catholic leaders of the university requested to be present at the ceremony, they were not permitted. When asked whether this went contrary to the mosque's spirit of inclusion, Fr. Mohamed told the *Rover*, "It's fine when they do it."

Demolition of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart is expected to begin next week and renovations will continue through the 2027-28 academic year. The university hopes for construction to be completed in time for Ramadan in 2029.

Caleb "Mahommed" Vaughan is a junior studying chemical engineering. To join the Catholics for Islam club, email him at cvaugha2@nd.edu.

ND Wins National Championship

But in a much more real sense

JAMES WHITAKER
Humor Editor

Midnight on January 20th, Notre Dame's campus was amok with celebration and good cheer, midnight tailgating and making merry. Glee rowdiness was off the charts: Notre Dame had won another National Championship. By the transitive property.

Notre Dame kids know two things for sure, thanks to their required training in philosophy and theology. First, they know that objective, universal, abstract truths are far more real and important than literal, historical happenings. Second, they know that God's own mother is patroness of their football team, and "never was it known that anyone who fled to her protection, implored her help, or sought her intercession, was left unaided." Sure, Mendoza and Cignetti have a physical trophy—but the Notre Dame men have the metaphysical trophy: in the eyes of God and His mother, we won.

"But you weren't even ranked high enough for the playoffs," you whine pathetically. Yes, we were. Notre Dame ranked ahead of Miami for the weeks leading up to the final rankings, and

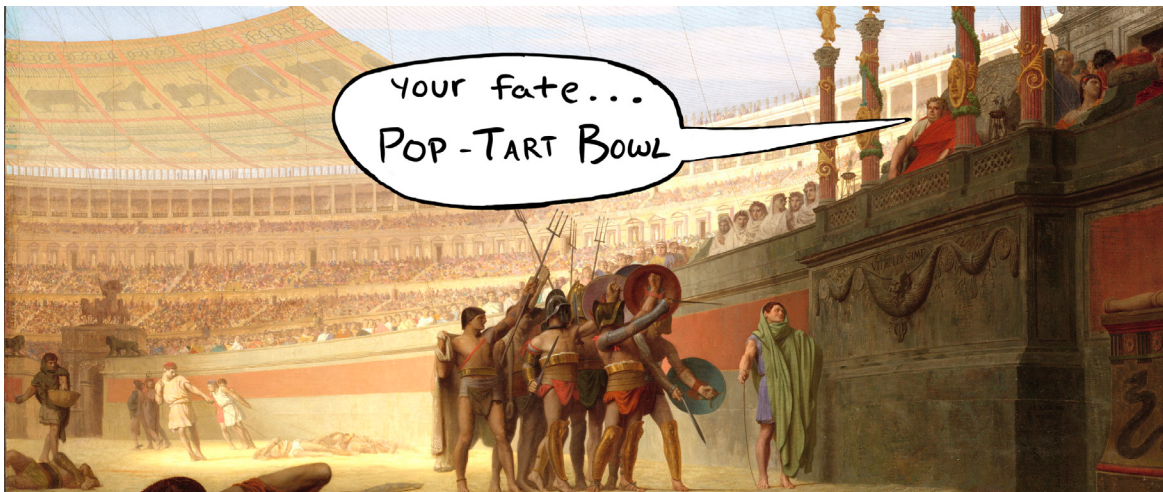


Image by Wikimedia Commons, edited

our resumé was better in Week 13 and Week 14. We didn't play in Week 15, which means Jeremiah Love was only stronger and healthier than before. And as Indiana showed against Alabama, a bye week doesn't have to change a thing.

"Why didn't the committee pick you, then?" you sneer vilely. When have Christians ever avoided persecution? Does the world love Catholics? When have the Irish ever caught a break? Who did the committee pick instead but the goons of deep Florida, the historically criminal-fraught college football team from the state which churns out "Florida Man Committed Heinous New Crime" headlines every hour? Is this not the way of the world, to

reject the Catholics and prefer the criminals? Is this not man's bitter fallenness, to crucify Christ while freeing Barabbas?

So, were it not for man's distorted will and rampant concupiscence, the committee might have seen the truth, willed the good, and properly ranked Notre Dame higher. And why should we now accept the way of the world, when we know the true, the good? Don't even get me started on Alabama. Negative three rushing yards. Roll Tide? Roll my butt.

"Okay, so even if you were gypped, how can you say that you would have won?" you bleat vacantly. We've got the goods: ten consecutive wins, once our freshman quarterback

got warmed up (while Mendoza wasn't warmed up until his junior year); huge margins of victory and an offense averaging 42 points per game; our two losses were by three and one points—to other ranked teams in the CFP—but back before we hit our stride in October and became a powerhouse capable of winning either rematch.

"But you lost to Miami! How could you know you're better than Miami or IU?" you bellyache condescendingly. Notre Dame lost to Miami by three points in Week 1 in Miami's home stadium. On a neutral field in January, with our freshman quarterback on his 13th game instead of his first, Notre Dame wins that rematch 99 times out

of 100. Add to that the Irish secondary, with cornerbacks Leonard Moore and Christian Gray, statistically one of the best in the country. We had more interceptions than any other team in the playoffs, and with even fewer games in our season to do so. In a playoff field featuring Indiana's or Miami's passing offenses, Notre Dame had the kryptonite to stop them more than any team in the bracket.

In conclusion, ergo, etc., etc.: Notre Dame won the National Championship. Thank you for your attention.

James Whitaker is a graduate student with the theology department. He's extra torn up because the experts tell him that if his alma mater UVA had beaten Duke, then ND would have definitely had a spot in the playoffs. He cannot be consoled; don't even try reaching him at jwhitak5@nd.edu.

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Bradley J. Birzer is Russell Amos Kirk Chair in American Studies and Professor of History, Hillsdale College. After receiving his B.A. at the University of Notre Dame in 1990, he earned his Ph.D. at Indiana University. Birzer is author of several books including his award-winning *Russell Kirk: American Conservative*; *American Cicero: The Life of Charles Carroll*; and *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth*. He's also the author of the forthcoming *The Declaration of Independence: 1776 and All That* as well as *Tolkien and the Inklings: Men of the West*. Birzer and his wife, Dedra (also a Ph.D.) have seven kids, one dog, and five cats. When a student at ND, he lived in Zahm Hall.

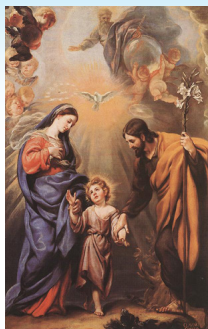


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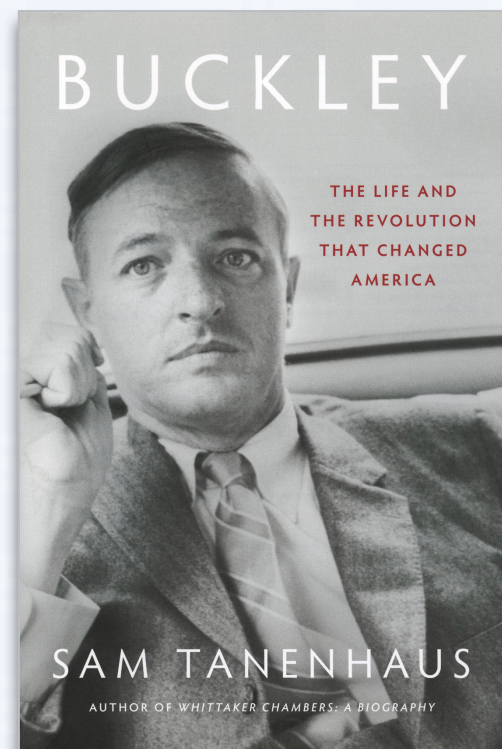
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