The Right to Right

The Wrong

By EFRAN MENNY

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At the age of seven, I experienced one of the most heart-breaking episodes of my life: experiencing separation from my mother due to her incarceration. One particular day in first grade left an indelible impression on me. I sat alone on the playground bench. The day was illuminated with bright rays, and the joyful laughter of my peers echoed across the lot, yet there I sat in a despondent state of grief. I watched my classmates move in an invisible, black-and-white manner. A voice like sweet honey broke through my preschool callousness.

“Efran, what’s the matter?”

Finally, someone recognized my hurt.

“My momma is in jail and I miss her,” I managed to utter while choking on my words. With no hesitation I started to cry, and she embraced me with the warmth of a hug that erased my hurt.

Looking back twenty-five years later, I can say that was an influential moment. No, that wasn’t my origin story on being against the prison industry. On the contrary, I have intellectually wrestled and teetered on this topic. However, when I reflect on the nature of prisons or prison-related entities and the catastrophic harm inflicted on Black families, I sympathize with the countless Black children who are forced to make sense of this terrible dynamic.

If we can effectively dismantle the racist and exploitative prison industry and create truly just and liberating systems, we might begin to truly heal, account-ability and recovery, we will be targeting the root causes of criminal behavior.

First, it’s imperative that we challenge the knee-jerk reactions to “Let’s abolish prison.” Upon hearing it, the idea sounds outlandish. For so many who benefit from unbalanced distribution of power, to attack the criminal justice system is to attack the fabric of the country’s ideals of justice, fairness and impartiality. Sadly, when we critically examine these three aspects and rate the prison system and similar institutions—courts, police, etc.—the record doesn’t add up.

For starters, Pew Research polling showed that nearly all Black respondents and even a majority of white participants think Black people get less favorable treatment than whites in the US criminal justice system. To have nearly the entirety of a historically neglected ethnic/racial group report their encounters with white supremacy is one thing, even that the majority with the most power affirms something is objectively wrong with the current system.

Moreover, to counter the popular narrative of the ideals, we have to recognize the level of conditioning we receive from early childhood concerning the complex industry of the courts. The same argument for eliminating prisons is this: incarcerating people causes a ripple effect of damage. Whether it be detention centers for immigrant children or debtors’ prisons, the levels of trauma being experienced are significant.

What I’ve been trying to show is that parental incarceration in childhood creates considerable mental and physical health challenges, such as poor access to healthcare, risky health behaviors, and exposure to adverse traumatic events. In families, incarceration alters dynamics dramatically, causing economic hardships. Data from a national study reveals that women with an incarcerated co-parent are not only forced to find additional jobs, but their limited income can make it necessary for families to move to areas with a concentration of crime. Violence and inferior schools. Overall, there is a breadth of scholarship concerning the consequences of incarceration on the family, and of ignoring the catastrophic violence and trauma from carceral institutions.

In light of Catholic teaching, we have to ask: if the family is the cell of society and the fundamental place where socialization and values are implemented, how do we create thriving family units when prisons cause a detrimental chasm in the dignity of the familial institution? In fact, to be pro-prisons is to be anti-family and, ultimately, anti-life.

To authentically be pro-family, we have to abandon punitive justice as the remedy for a crime. To think we can excessively punish someone to reform them is a flawed notion of justice. Simply thinking prolonged periods of confinement to a cell or facility will cultivate a better conscience or moral interior is not the correct path. We have tried those methods. We created piecemeal reforms. We held people accountable while managing to let them off the hook. The era of attempts at reform is over.

By putting forward a humane alternative to prison, plenty of abolitionists aim for Trans-fonnational Justice (TJ) rather than punitive methods that maintain unfair systems. At its core, the TJ framework wants to understand the ways harm and violence originate in order to change the systems that create the issue. Moreover, looking at the big picture, TJ affirms that we want to (continued on page 6)

**Annazation Matters**

By RALPH E. MOORE, JR.

“You know, the one thing we did right, was the day we started to fight. Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.”

—Keep Your Eyes On The Prize

Let’s hear the truth: The fact that in 2023 there are no African American saints from the US that have ever been officially recognized by the Catholic Church, while there are eleven white US saints, is a civil rights issue. This is in the context of the Catholic Church having historically and institutionally ignored government laws that provided equal protection for all. Some Black Catholics can remember the start seconds-class membership-ship they were subjected to for decades by the white majority Catholic Church in the United States.

As the Supreme Court ruled against segregation in education in 1954, Catholics were banning Black students from being taught in seminaries and convents. As Rosa Parks sat down to protest unfair bus seating policies and practices in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, Black parishioners were required to sit in the back or on side aisles inside houses of worship for years after Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. won their victory. There were even separate holy water fonts in some churches just like the racially segregated drinking fountains in the large city in some churches, ushered blocked people of color from dipping their hand in the same holy water as white people. As Dr. King and his followers protested nonviolence and civil disobedience against segregation laws for racial justice, they were enforcing the command of Jesus Christ to “turn the other cheek.” Like Christ, those who endured beatings, dog bites, fire hoses and rejection were enduring unearned suffering. Dr. King in his Principles of Nonviolence reminded us that “unearned suffering is redemptive.” The correlation between the cruelties of slavery and the beatings, hoses and rejection from trees was powerfully expressed by Black theologian James Cone’s 2013 book, The Black Church and the Lynching Tree.

The point is that Black Catholics have always had to fight for their God-given and Constitutionally protected rights and liberties just as equals, as first-class citizens and as members of their Church. They were taught in school and in Church that everyone on Earth is “a creature made in the image and likeness of God.” And yet, with their excisionary practices, many white Catholics didn’t see themselves through the eyes of a God with love for all. Many white people made God in the image of their white selves superior, separate, subjugating and hateful.

Black Catholics have lived with these contradic-tions since the earliest days of enslavement in the United States in 1619, when they first arrived in this part of America. And now we find apartheid remains in the communion of Catholic saints. There are no churches in this country named for an African American because you must be a saint for that to happen. And until Black Catholics start seeing pictures of the first six African American prospects inside their churches, Catholic churches had subliminally seduced attendees into thinking they had succeeded in making God in their image: an exclusionary deity, a God who only loves some people to feel loved in God’s house. How in the hell did that happen?

There is a process for exceptionally good people to be honored with the distinctive treat-ment of sainthood in the Catholic Church. In six

guils and in one Baltimore Black Catholic church initiatives are advancing the causes of the Saintly Six from the United States: Mother Mary Lange, Father Augustus Tolton, Mother Henriette DeLille, Ms. Julia Greeley, Mr. Pierre Toussaint, and Sister Thea Bowman. Their stories can be found in Black Catholics on the Road to Sainthood edited by Michael Heinlen. A seventh candidate, Brazilian Father Martin de Porres Ward is added to the list of the Saintly Six by some. The process to be declared a saint is difficult, long, secretive and financially expensive. The net effect is that no African American has ever made it, despite enduring enslavement, segregation, mass incarceration and mass poverty, nevertheless living lives of generosity, courage, inspiration and faithfulness. Feels like that old saying, “No good deed goes unpunished.”

The $1,000,000 price tag often quoted as firmly attached to the canonization process is reminiscent of the poll tax which served as a precondition of Black and Brown people being able to exercise the right to vote (going back to the late 19th century in some states). Not having enough money is one of the reasons there are no Black saints from the United States. Incidentally, the United States Supreme Court ruled poll taxes unconstitutional on March 20, 1966. Isn’t it time for the Vatican to reform the process to name saints?

It may be the case that for Catholic lay per-sons, clergy, sisters and brothers who are still white supremacists and who consider themselves good Catholics, the poll tax did its excisionary job in the old days. The prohibitive price for sainthood may be intentionally maintaining an aspect of the Church’s segregation practices of the past, like a valued relic of those bygone days.

Passing a literacy test was also required in some states before persons of color were allowed to vote before the Voting Rights Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. The Church expects proven medical miracles. Perhaps keeping the Julian calendar through the prejudice and discrimination of living an enslaved person’s life, being treated as infi-niors, being excluded from Catholic institu-tions after contributing to church offerings, constructing churches, schools, houses and hospitals is a miracle in and of itself. The pontifice, the initial narrative submission part of the process, is the set of documents that make the argument for persons to be consid-ered suitable for sainthood. It is a subjective evaluation parallel to the literacy test of old. It too should be eliminated, particularly as it pertains to the African American candidates for sainthood.

The bottom line is that the sainthood process excludes Black Catholics from the US. It is a process made of rules to which exceptions have been and are continually applied.
GIVE ME A LIVING LOVE: The Poems of Ann Manganaro, SL edited by Kath-leen DeSutter Jordan introduces us to the poet, a member of the Passionists and a religious sister, in the 30th anniversary of her death at forty-seven. In her beautiful introduction, Jordan provides a whole-hearted answer to the deep faith, hope and love that defined Ann’s life and found expression in her poetry. Ann was “a vowed religious and a Catholic Worker, a teacher and a doctor. But Ann was also a poet.” Her poems are prayers: psalms of rejoicing, thanksgiving and praise, and psalms of grief and lament.

The poems in this collection reflect two significant periods in Ann’s life. The poems from January 1, 1971 until March 1981 were written when Ann was an active member of the Catholic Worker in Chicago. She lived at Koye House Catholic Worker in St. Louis and a medical student at St. Louis University. She wrote poems during these years, reflected on the city of St. Louis and the people who lived and worked there, especially the very poor/Of the feast you seek. Seek first the rich of God, the realm of God/The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.”

The philosophy of labor unions is to be able to make a living wage. It is work for all. In 2021 non-union members earned 37% less than union members. Unions provide great health care for their members, on the job. The benefits of union membership include: increased pensions, job protections, seniority, arbitration, and collective bargaining. Unions have improved the life of the worker through collective bargaining or political action. Unions are not perfect. However, where would we be without them? The employee would be at the mercy of the employer. Unions, would we be without them? The employee would be at the mercy of the employer. Unions, would we be without them? The employee would be at the mercy of the employer. Unions, would we be without them? The employee would be at the mercy of the employer. Unions, would we be without them? The employee would be at the mercy of the employer. Your poem in 1991 was for the wedding of two of the nurses. “You will become…God’s grace/Embodied in each other’s interwoven lives.”

After the death in 2012, Kavanagh sent the poems he received to the Loretto archives with a commentary, thus making a columnist at America. In the last two poems in the collection re-... The Catholic Worker is a good week…let me sing/A pure-pitched truth and the power/Of the feast you seek. Seek first the rich of God, the realm of God/The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.”

JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH

The Whitney Museum in New York is hosting an extensive exhibition of the art of Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, a Native American artist who explores the American landscape in her paintings and prints that span five decades and includes collaborations with her son Neal Ambrose-Smith, art and cultural critic of the National Museum of the American Indian, which function as a major survey of her work. The exhibition is on view until September 12, 2020. The show features over 70 works by Smith, including paintings, drawings, prints, and other graphic works, as well as a selection of her ceramic sculptures.

Dear Editors,

In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.” The season’s sensitivity to creation and the natural world: “a landscape of fallen stars,” “the season’s sorrows, a major Loretto feast) while Ann was living in Ann, I used to live in NYC’s downtown defensive to the healing power of God/ The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.” The season’s sorrows, a major Loretto feast) while Ann was living in Ann, I used to live in NYC’s downtown defensive to the healing power of God/ The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.” The season’s sorrows, a major Loretto feast) while Ann was living in Ann, I used to live in NYC’s downtown defensive to the healing power of God/ The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.” The season’s sorrows, a major Loretto feast) while Ann was living in Ann, I used to live in NYC’s downtown defensive to the healing power of God/ The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.” The season’s sorrows, a major Loretto feast) while Ann was living in Ann, I used to live in NYC’s downtown defensive to the healing power of God/ The place where God resides, where God is present. In the May 2023 issue of The Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day’s quote “God—Maurin—Our Co-Founder” originally written in May 1940. In it Dorothy says that Peter O’Connor is “the most charming man I know, it is, of most modern labor leaders.”