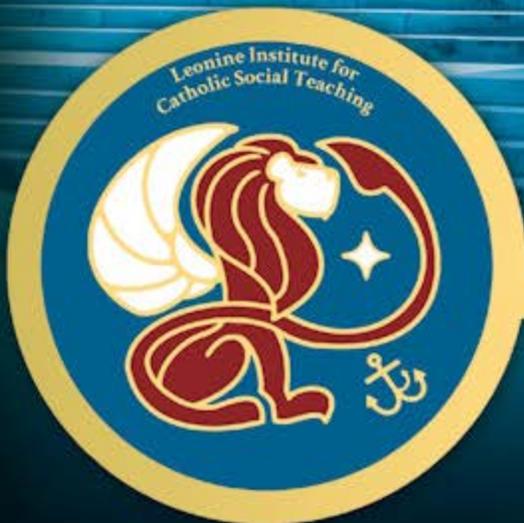


Social Justice

Quarterly



NATION

“Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her.” - G.K. Chesterton



Comprehendere et Doceo

Editor

Levi A. Russell, PhD

Contributors to this

Issue

Sara Sass

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Editor's Note

The nations of the west are in peril from within and without. The moral decay in the U.S. undermines the family, which is the subject of our first essay. Families are not just small building blocks of a nation, as if they were bricks that make up a building. No, they are self-contained societies of their own. Thus, undermining the family by undermining the institution of marriage destabilizes the nation on a fundamental level.

Our second essay in this issue relates to the nation at the macro level. Though those in control of our policy regime do not distinguish between them, economic migrants and refugees are not identical. Our border is effectively wide open and the social science literature can inform us of the consequences of this policy for our nation. Drawing on this literature and the words of Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, our second essay discusses the importance of a change to the open borders policy we currently live under.

We hope that this issue's essays will be edifying and educational for you! If you would like to contact the Institute or support our work, please visit us at leoinstitute.org.

Decline: Marriage Among American Catholics

By Sara Sass, author of [There Are Some Secrets](#)

The voice of Archbishop Fulton Sheen reverberates from The Fulton Sheen Program (1961-1968): "Our nation is too full of those that are crying Down... Down with schools. Down with the churches. Down with teachers. Down with government. Down with the police. Can you build anything down? You cannot!"

Yet today, some foundational elements among Catholics are down. With the overall American divorce rate hovering around fifty percent, for Catholics the divorce rate is just higher than one in four at twenty-eight percent. In 2013, Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [reported](#): "Catholics stand out with only 28% of the ever-married having divorced at some point." This figure compares favorably with the 40% divorce rate for Americans with no religious affiliation, 39% for Protestants and 35% for those of other religious faiths. The National Catholic Register dove into the [statistics](#) and found "overall, 26% of all American adults have divorced, whereas 20% of Catholics have done so." Various researchers credit sharing the same faith contributing to the lack of divorce. Christian Meert, diocesan director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life in Colorado Springs, CO was interviewed by the National Catholic Register in 2013 on these results: "If they [husband and wife] are both Catholics and practice the sacraments and pray together, they will grow through every event in their lives," Meert [told](#) the Register. "They also have received an incredible grace through the sacrament of matrimony, a grace that helps them through the difficulties life brings."

With such a positive foundation, why do we see a drop in Catholic weddings? As Catholic World News reported in 2011: "The number of weddings celebrated in American Catholic churches has dropped by 60% in the past generation, at a time when the overall Catholic population was growing by almost 17 million." The overall Catholic population growth should coincide with an increase in Catholic weddings. In 2014, thirteen percent of Catholics parents [reported](#) living together with a partner

without being married. Living together without marriage and all the benefits marriage brings, both legally and otherwise, may be contributing to the lack of Catholic marriage. Cohabiting relationships [tend to be shorter](#) than western marriages. While cohabiting may be contributing to the lack of marriage, it cannot be the only factor. Marriage rates were [reviewed](#) in 2010 and an exponential drop from 8.6 marriages per 1,000 U.S. Catholics in 1972 to 2.6 marriages per 1,000 Catholics in 2010 was discovered.

Coinciding with the drop in Catholic marriages is the drop in Catholic formal schooling among Americans. [In 2014](#), 68% of all Catholic parents do not have any of their children enrolled in formal Catholic religious education. This drop continues a trend where Catholics move from urban cities with readily available parochial schools to the suburbs where public schools are more accessible. Detroit is a prime example of Catholic flight, with its Polish Catholic population helping build hundreds of parochial schools by the 1960s. Starting in the 1920s, 108 Catholic grade schools enrolled students in Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park, Michigan. By 2015, there were only 25 parochial schools left in Detroit – a drop of over 75%. In the mid-1960s, nationwide enrollment in Catholic parochial schools reached an all-time high of 4.5 million American elementary school pupils, with about 1 million students in Catholic high schools.

The lack of Catholic formal schooling should not eliminate religious instruction for American Catholics. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reported in Public Affairs in 2014, “22% of Catholic parents attend Mass weekly, compared to 24% of all adult Catholics. And 53% of Catholic parents [attend Mass at least once a month](#), compared to 43% of all adult Catholics.” Yet Catholic adults continue to be unmarried. In June 2022, Pope Francis [released a draft Vatican document](#) which stated:

What emerged was the serious concern that, with too superficial a preparation, couples run the real risk of entering into a marriage that is null and void or has

such a weak foundation that it 'falls apart' in a short time and cannot withstand even the first inevitable crises.

What is contributing to this “superficial” preparation Pope Francis alludes to? Could it be that porn and social media addiction steer Catholic adults towards appreciating physical beauty over morality, faith and loyalty? Catholics are [not immune](#) to porn addiction, a condition with which at least six percent of the entire American populace are afflicted. According to a [2019 report](#) by Salamanca University researchers in Spain, problematic porn “use might have adverse effects in sexual development and sexual functioning, especially among the young population.” Seventy-seven percent of Americans view porn once a month, with men viewing much more porn than women. Seven percent of Christian males admit to watching porn several times a day. Adverse [effects of porn addiction](#) include ignoring other responsibilities such as dating and marriage to view pornography, normalizing dangerous fetishes, viewing progressively more extreme pornography to get the same release that less extreme porn once offered, spending large sums of money on pornography (at the expense of saving to pay for a house or other family expenses) and skewing the view of men and women towards sexual objects.

Pope Francis also alludes to “inevitable crises” in marriage. Every relationship encounters issues, whether in marriage, friendships or familial relationships. Yet we see a refusal to engage in problem solving and discussion in today’s relationships. Conflict avoidance can stem from the fear of negative evaluation or approach-avoidance conflict. Approach-avoidance conflict occurs when a person fears winning and losing at the same time, resulting in deadlock. Conflict avoidance is not an insurmountable problem. However, with a lack of Catholic formal schooling, the tools traditionally used to address these traits may be missing.

Moreover, while America watched as the National Legion of Decency, also known as the Catholic Legion of Decency, scored wins against degenerate Hollywood films in the 1930s, today’s Catholics are not as organized. Part of what made the National

Legion of Decency successful was a nationwide network of women's groups who pledged to not watch films which offended decency and Christian morality. Ladies who lunched were also ladies who wrote letters and voted with their wallets.¹ The National Legion of Decency agreed as one on thousands of films before its splintering in the early 2000s. Even if members personally disagreed with each other, each pledged to "strengthen public opinion against the production of indecent and immoral films, and to unite with all who protest against them."² (emphasis mine) There was no anti-outsider attitude during the golden years of the National Legion of Decency. Today, coffee hours and Catholic social events regale gossip and outside/inside attitudes.

As Bishop Sheen said, my intellect, and your intellect, and our intellect, does not make truth. We attain it. We discover it. The issue of marriage decline among Catholics should be pursued and righted. This article's Sheen saying is: "Physical idleness deteriorates the mind; spiritual idleness deteriorates the heart."

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1 See "A Candid Portrait of Hedy Lamarr", Liberty magazine, December 1938, pp. 18–19.

2 Pledge of the Legion of Decency (1934).

Immigration Policy as Cultural Preservation

Levi A. Russell

The average person might not think of Pope Francis and an economics professor as likely sources of arguments in favor of policies directed at the preservation of national culture and borders. Yet, Pope Francis provides such arguments in *Fratelli Tutti*. Economics professor Garrett Jones recently published a book arguing that immigrants can have significant effects, whether positive or negative, on the countries they land in. We are not only permitted to love and respect our nation, but we are positively commanded to do so by Pope Francis. Professor Jones persuasively argues, using references to published academic work, that immigration presents a measurable threat to the preservation of that culture.

Pope Francis on Love of Our Own Nation

After admonishing the faithful against closing ourselves off from the rest of the world, Pope Francis gives us a beautiful treatment of the importance of our culture and heritage. Below is the entirety of paragraph 143 of [Fratelli Tutti](#):

The solution is not an openness that spurns its own richness. Just as there can be no dialogue with “others” without a sense of our own identity, so there can be no openness between peoples except on the basis of love for one’s own land, one’s own people, one’s own cultural roots. I cannot truly encounter another unless I stand on firm foundations, for it is on the basis of these that I can accept the gift the other brings and in turn offer an authentic gift of my own. I can welcome others who are different, and value the unique contribution they have to make, only if I am firmly rooted in my own people and culture. Everyone loves and cares for his or her native land and village, just as they love and care for their home and are personally responsible for its upkeep. The common good likewise requires that we protect and love our native land. Otherwise, the consequences of a disaster in one country will end up affecting the entire planet. All this brings out the positive meaning of the right to property: I care for and cultivate something that I possess, in such a way that it can contribute to the good of all.

Some important themes are developed here. First, an acknowledgement of differences. This is a strong rebuke of the universalism and equity-ism of the progressive liberal ideology. We are different! One culture is distinct from another and that is just fine. In fact, we were created that way. In the next paragraph, Pope Francis cites the Tower of Babel as a sinful attempt to deny these differences.

Second, Pope Francis admonishes us to love and cherish our own. Not to the detriment of the other, but as an expression and understanding of subsidiarity. The pope understands that on a practical level we owe more to our family and community than we do to those distant from us. In [paragraph 145](#) he cites *Evangelii Gaudium*:

Whatever the case, “we constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God. We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective... The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren”

One could imagine a progressive talking head screeching about naziism upon reading this paragraph. “The pope is talking about blood and soil! He’s a fascist!” they would cry. This response would betray the inherent hatred of self in the progressive liberal mind. This hatred manifests in all manner of internationalist, globalist policy, including that of open borders. Pope Francis clearly rebukes this mindset and commands us to be stewards of our own culture, our own nation. Thus, if immigration has measurably negative impacts on our nation, we have a positive duty to manage that immigration wisely.

Immigration’s Impact on Culture & Nation

Several years ago I ran across an article by Prof. Garrett Jones on the Economics website. I was shocked to see the article published on a left-liberal site because it directly contravened the narrative that immigration is either benign or beneficial in all cases and that anyone who opposed immigration in any way was simply a racist.

According to this narrative, nothing but blind hatred could explain a preference for less immigration.

Unsurprisingly, the article has been removed from the site, but I republished it from an archived copy on my [own website](#). Late last year Prof. Jones published a [book-length treatment](#) of the subject which I have not yet read. From the original article, we can glean a few insights that will inform the immigration policy discussion. Are there reasons other than blind hatred of others to prefer less immigration? Do immigrant populations mold culture? Do they change policy? If so, given Pope Francis' comments in *Fratelli Tutti*, we might find some justification for limiting immigration so as to reduce its negative impacts on our nation and culture.

Beginning as economists often do with material prosperity, Jones discusses what he calls the “deep roots” literature on economic development. He identifies three components: how long ago a nation’s ancestors lived under a state, how long ago they began to use Neolithic agriculture, and how much of the technology available anywhere on the planet a specific nation used at given time periods such as 1000 B.C., 0 B.C., or 1500 A.D. Those countries with a longer history of living under a state, using agriculture, and using available technology are much wealthier today than others. More specifically to the point of immigration, [he states](#) “Countries in the top 10% of [migrant-adjusted technology](#) (T) in 1500 are typically at least 10 times richer than countries in the bottom 10%.”

Next, Jones investigates whether immigrants affect what he calls “attitudes.” Of course, these attitudes are part of the culture of the migrants and thus are of interest here. The degree to which migrants are trusting of others, their attitudes toward family and nepotism, political participation and action, job security, innovation and traditional gender roles all travel with the migrants themselves. On top of this, Jones states that the literature also finds that “many migrant attitudes persist to their descendants,” “migrants and their descendants seem to make their new homes quite a bit like their old homes,” and “migrants and their descendants tend to influence the

attitudes of their new fellow citizens, so that all groups in society become at least a bit more like each other.”

So far, the conclusions Jones comes to are enough to conclude that some control over migration is justified based on the preservation of culture that Pope Francis discusses in *Fratelli Tutti*. If migrants bring their culture with them, and this bringing of their culture tends to impact the culture of their new homes, respecting your ancestral home and its culture would entail limiting migration to your country. From Pope Francis we are given the mandate to respect our home and its culture and to resist the homogenizing influence of a global-only focus. Jones gives us the facts upon which we can act on Pope Francis' mandate.

If this isn't convincing enough, Jones adds more. Citing evidence of massive policy change during the abolition of poll taxes and women's suffrage, Jones argues that migrants who become voters affect public policy as well. A national government's first duty is to the good of its citizens. Thus, it has a duty to protect the culture of the nation. That culture can be influenced by public policy, since the law is often our teacher. If, as Jones argues, that new voters mean new policies, then the government has a duty to limit migration with an eye toward the preservation of the nation.

None of this is to deny that cooperation with others can improve us. In paragraphs 146-150, Pope Francis explicates the many ways in which we can learn from and improve by our interaction with others at the international level. We are part of the human family, but we are different from one another. Striking the appropriate balance with regard to policy is a challenge. It's clear that maximizing immigration into our country, as those in power seem intent on doing, is not in line with striking this balance.