

NATION

Pandemic, Protests and a Presidential Election

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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The COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent lockdowns, turned U.S. economic and social life upside down. A video that captured the death of George Floyd, a Black man in police custody, went viral and convulsed the nation in grief and anger, leading to widespread social unrest.

Terrifying wildfires in the West that turned skies blood red and pummeling hurricanes in the Gulf Coast would add to the chaos of a tumultuous pandemic year. President Donald Trump's contesting of Joe Biden's election to the presidency left millions of voters reeling with questions over the future of U.S. democracy.

The Church and society in 2020 faced one challenge after the next. In an unprecedented U.S. achievement, Operation Warp Speed developed, tested and brought to market within a year new vaccines to turn the tide against the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, President Trump clashed with his national health advisers over health safety, eventually falling ill to COVID-19 himself in the last leg of the presidential race. For Catholics in the U.S., COVID-19 pushed parishes, schools and other entities to make a mad dash to enter digital spaces to keep communities connected and aid worship and education.

Catholic priests donned protective gear to provide sacraments in the hospitals and found innovative ways to bring the sacraments to the faithful amid the strain of civic safety protocols. Catholic churches eventually pushed back against severe restrictions on religious assembly, saying they, too, were "essential" during the pandemic.

The disturbing death of George Floyd and other Black men and women by police officers ignited nationwide anti-racism protests, which by June 6 saw an estimated 15 million demonstrators, according to Pew Research Center. In certain cities, protests flared into riots. The national conversation about racism also brought about a reckoning with public monuments, as statues of figures from the Confederacy, as well as those of abolitionists, Christopher Columbus, and even Catholic saints, were vandalized or removed.

The Church celebrated Washington Archbishop Wilton Gregory as the first Black man named a U.S. cardinal, and he received his red biretta Nov. 28 at the Vatican.

On Oct. 31, the Church beatified Father Michael McGivney, the Connecticut parish priest who founded the Knights of Columbus, the largest Catholic fraternal organization in the world.

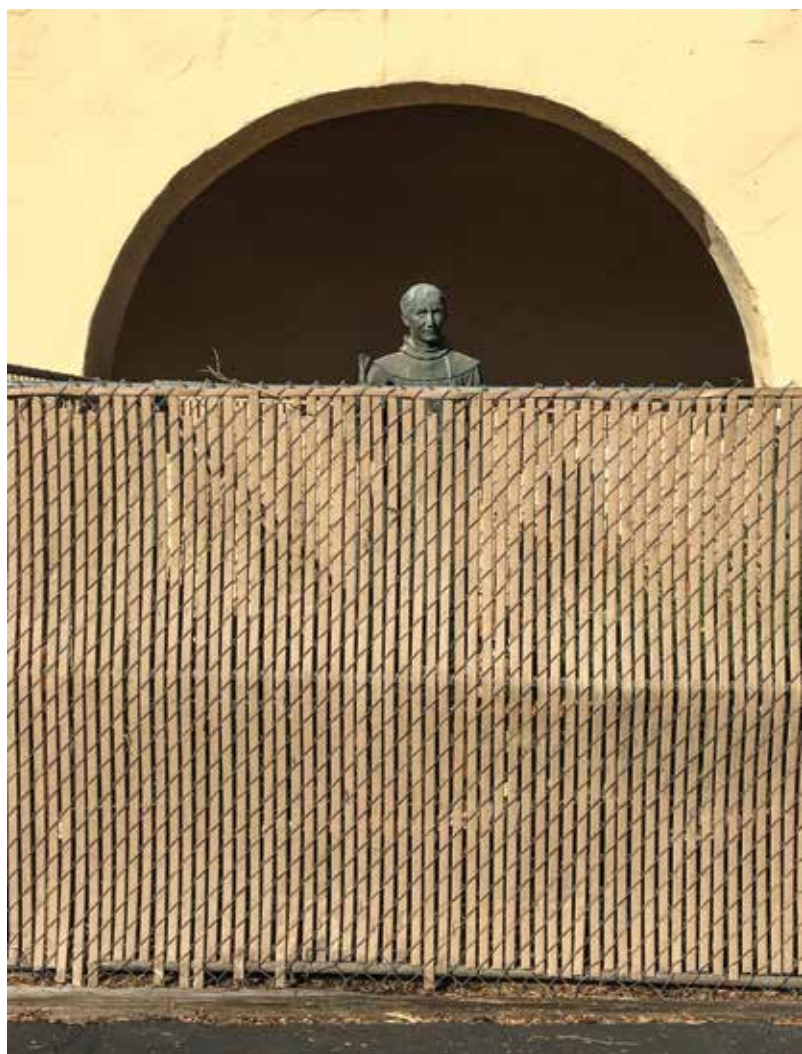
Trump's fall selection of Amy Coney Barrett, a mother of seven, to fill the U.S. Supreme Court seat vacated by the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg drew criticism because of Barrett's public avowal and practice of her Catholic faith. Her Oct. 26 confirmation brought the number of Catholics serving on the high court to six.

The Nov. 10 publication of the long-awaited McCarrick Report detailed the rise and powerful influence of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and Church leaders' failure to act on warning signs of his sexual predation. U.S. bishops grappled with the effects of the eroded confidence from the faithful over the report and continuing revelations of sex abuse by clergy.

Catholics, like the rest of the nation, found themselves deeply polarized over the closely contested Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election.

With the Electoral College's Dec. 14 certification of President-elect Joe Biden, a baptized Catholic who goes to Mass but opposes the Church's teaching on abortion and "LGBT" issues, the debate was renewed over whether pro-abortion politicians should be denied Holy Communion.

The U.S. bishops began mulling a course of action on how to engage the Biden administration.



NEW ICONOCLASM. A bronze statue of St. Junipero Serra, at the entrance to the Old Mission Santa Ines, is surrounded by a chain-link fence to protect it from vandals Nov. 2, in Solvang, California. George Rose/Getty Images



DOWN TO THE WIRE. The hotly contested presidential election between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden concluded long after Election Day, with Biden being declared the winner Dec. 14. Brendan Smialowski and Jim Watson/AFP via Getty Images



BRINGING THE SACRAMENTS. Above, Father Scott Holmer of St. Edward the Confessor Church makes the Sign of the Cross during confession in his church parking lot on March 20 in Bowie, Maryland. Below, Father Arturo Corral distributes Communion during Mass Dec. 12 at Our Lady Queen of Angels (La Placita) Church in Los Angeles. Rob Carr and Mario Tama/Getty Images



CONFIRMED. Newly sworn-in U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett and her husband, Jesse Barrett, look on during her ceremonial swearing-in on the South Lawn of the White House Oct. 26 in Washington. Tasos Katopodis/Getty Images



LIFE MARCHES ON. Pro-lifers rally in front of the U.S. Supreme Court during the 47th-annual March for Life Jan. 24. Tens of thousands came to the march, featuring the first attendance of a president: President Donald Trump addressed the throng. Olivier Douliery/AFP via Getty Images



NEW 'BLESSED.' Parish priest Father Michael McGivney was beatified in Hartford, Connecticut, on Oct. 31. In New Haven, Connecticut, the faithful prayed before a relic during a beatification-weekend celebration at St. Mary Church. Tom Wehner/National Catholic Register



PROTESTING. A man holds up a placard as people gather outside the South L.A. sheriff's station on Sept. 8 in Los Angeles to protest in the wake of Dijon Kizzee's killing. Protests marked the days and months following the death of George Floyd on Memorial Day in Minneapolis. Frederic J. Brown/AFP via Getty Images





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