Overview & Acknowledgments

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THE JOURNAL OF GLOBAL CATHOLICISM is an international, interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal. Its purpose is to foster the understanding of diverse forms of lived Catholicism with attention to their significance for theoretical approaches in anthropology, history, sociology, media studies, psychology, theology, and philosophy.

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ON THE COVER

The iconic Triple Hill design of the altar at Our Lady of Csíksomlyó Hungarian National Shrine was obscured by roofing installed for the pope’s visit in 2019, raising the ire of hundreds of Hungarians who expressed their outrage on Facebook. See article inside.

Photo: Romkat.ro, Mária Csúcs, László Dezső.
Marc Roscoe Loustau is Managing Editor of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* and a Catholics & Cultures contributor. An anthropologist and scholar of religion, he earned a masters of divinity and a doctoral degree in religious studies from Harvard Divinity School. He holds a bachelor of arts in social anthropology from Reed College. He is author of *Hungarian Catholic Intellectuals in Romania: Reforming Apostles*, *Contemporary Anthropology of Religion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). He is editor, with Eric Hoenes del Pinal and Kristin Norget, of *Mediating Catholicism: Religion and Media in Global Catholic Imaginaries* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022). He is the recipient of multiple awards and research grants, including a Dissertation Finishing Grant from the Panel on Theological Education, an East European Language Training Grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, a Frederick Knox Traveling Fellowship from Harvard University, and a John L. Loeb Fellowship from Harvard Divinity School. He has taught courses on Global Catholicism, Ethnographic Research Methods, and Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianities.
With this issue, the *Journal of Global Catholicism* now welcomes all submissions. To this point we have published Special Issues of articles that gathered around and reflected on a single theme, like our issue on “Mediating Catholicisms” (vol. 3, no. 2, 2019). Others were based on research in a particular region of the world, like “Brazilian Catholicism” (vol. 5, no. 2, 2021). We are happy to announce that going forward we will also publish issues of individual articles submitted to us via our online system at [https://crossworks.holy-cross.edu/jgc](https://crossworks.holy-cross.edu/jgc).

This issue includes two articles describing a mixed-methods research project on girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically in the Republic of Congo (RoC) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Both articles befit the JGC’s focus on lived Catholicism, which foregrounds the dynamic and conflictual nature of faith in a changing world. This dynamism and disagreement are most evident in the focus group conversations convened by Geneviève Bagamboula Mayamona, Jean-Christophe Boungou Bazika, and Quentin Wodon in the DRC and by Boungou Bazika, Wolf Ulrich Mféré Akiana, and Wodon in the RoC.

In the focus groups, the researchers described participants reflecting on trends toward marriage for “choice” and “love.” In some communities in the DRC, they write, parents influence marital decisions, while in others girls receive advice from multiple sources and the value of modern choice is growing. Anthropologists have noted similar diversity in views about marriage, even in neighboring villages, while doing research in sub-Saharan Africa, and growing recognition of urbanization and social change in this area has led to a conversation about “African marriages in transformation.”

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While the researchers are also advocates for girls’ education, which they believe is hindered by the practice of early marriage in these countries, they also note that family and friends accord great status value to marriage, lineage, clan, and family; even research that emerges from a normative perspective can recognize that lived Catholicism is Catholicism embedded in and activated by multiple overlapping and meaningful social communities.

Eszter Kovács, a historian and social scientific researcher at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, describes present-day recollections on “underground” and “informal” Catholic practices of gathering and celebration during Romania’s Communist period before 1989. Her research, drawn from a dissertation that will be published next year, focuses on Catholic parish choirs that, beginning in the late 1980s, gathered to perform for each other and improve the quality of their singing. One enlightening moment in her article notes the element of strategy and access to resources that led leaders of these parish choir festivals to organize informally. They might have sought help from the state to acquire buses for transportation and food for the post-festival party, but this would have required making certain concessions in the festivals’ timing and content. It’s not that faith was “illegal” or “forbidden” in this period. Rather, Kovács’s appropriation of the concept of informality captures the catch-as-catch-can sense of choice within limits that characterized collective practices of faith under Communism.

This issue also includes an article by myself about online controversies surrounding the arrival of Pope Francis to a Catholic shrine in Romania’s Transylvania region. The controversy did not take up liturgical issues over traditional versus new forms of worship, a question that has divided English-speaking Catholics in North America. Instead, I reflected on the historical background that explains how architecture became the privileged site for debating the national character of Catholicism in Hungarian-speaking parts of Eastern Europe, a reality reflected by the fact that online commentators were incensed by architectural changes Vatican officials requested prior to the pope’s arrival at Our Lady of Csíksomlyó.
My gratitude goes to Mathew Schmalz, the JGC’s Founding Editor, and Thomas Landy, Director of the Catholics & Cultures initiative at the College of the Holy Cross. Special thanks also go to Danielle Kane, Associate Director for Communications at the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J. Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture, and Ruby Francis, Program Coordinator for the McFarland Center at Holy Cross.

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