

Religion & Catholic Studies Resources from Panelists

A wide-ranging discussion of the present state and future prospects of Catholic studies, 60 years after the close of Vatican II. What do recent institutional crosscurrents (e.g., synodality and increasing lay participation versus an increasingly conservative American priesthood) mean for the field? What is the status of Catholic studies in the wider academy? What are the neglected areas in scholarship, whether historical, theological, or social scientific?

Peter J. Thuesen

[*The Catholic Studies Reader*](#) James T. Fisher and Margaret M. McGuinness, eds. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

[Introduction to Christianity Syllabus](#)

[*Tornado God: American Religion and Violent Weather*](#) (Oxford, 2020)

- One of the earliest sources of humanity's religious impulse was severe weather, which ancient peoples attributed to the wrath of storm gods. Enlightenment thinkers derided such beliefs as superstition and predicted they would pass away as humans became more scientifically and theologically sophisticated. But in America, scientific and theological hubris came face-to-face with the tornado, nature's most violent windstorm. Striking the United States more than any other nation, tornadoes have consistently defied scientists' efforts to unlock their secrets. Meteorologists now acknowledge that even the most powerful computers will likely never be able to predict a tornado's precise path. Similarly, tornadoes have repeatedly brought Americans to the outer limits of theology, drawing them into the vortex of such mysteries as how to reconcile suffering with a loving God and whether there is underlying purpose or randomness in the universe. In this groundbreaking history, Peter Thuesen captures the harrowing drama of tornadoes, as clergy, theologians, meteorologists, and ordinary citizens struggle to make sense of these death-dealing tempests. He argues that, in the tornado, Americans experience something that is at once culturally peculiar (the indigenous storm of the national imagination) and religiously primal (the sense of awe before an unpredictable and mysterious power). He also shows that, in an era of climate change, the weather raises the issue of society's complicity in natural disasters. In the whirlwind, Americans confront the question of their own destiny-how much is self-determined and how much is beyond human understanding or control.

Tricia Bruce

[National Study of the Catholic Priesthood](#), Ave Maria Radio

[Gen Z and the Sacred](#), Christian Chronicle

[Listening Practices in Global Catholicism](#) from Durham University Centre for Catholic Studies

[What We Know About Today's Church \(And How We Know It\)](#)- Podcast highlighting much of Bruce's work on the Church

[Called to Contribute](#): Findings from an In-depth Interview Study of US Catholic Women and the Diaconate by Tricia Bruce

- Women comprise the majority of US Catholics and the majority of lay ministers in the US Catholic Church. While the ordained diaconate remains the exclusive realm of men, women engage in expansive service that overlaps core diaconal functions in word, liturgy, and charity. Many women feel specifically called to be deacons or express an openness to discerning such a call should the vocational path become available to them. Escalating global attention to the question of women and the diaconate compels social scientific research to enhance knowledge regarding how contemporary women experience and fulfill their felt call in the Catholic Church. This report summarizes findings from a sociological study of women whose ministry in the US Catholic Church approaches that of ordained, exclusively male deacons – but for whom opportunities to live out their call fully are constrained by barriers to ordination. A team of five interviewers led by sociologist Tricia C. Bruce, PhD, interviewed forty women in depth to explore the characteristics, contexts, and contributions of women actively engaged in “deacon-like” ministry. The interview sample reflects diversity in age, race/ethnicity, marital status, parental status, region, language, and length and type of ministry involvement. Interviews lasted 75 minutes on average and were recorded, transcribed, translated into English, when necessary, coded, and analyzed.

Fun Fact: I ran 500 miles last year, including the Rome half marathon while I was consulting to the Synod!

Major Question: What does change in the Church look like?

Mike Pasquier

American Catholic History Syllabus

Religion in America: The Basics by Michael Pasquier (Routledge, 2017)

- *Religion in America: The Basics* is a concise introduction to the historical development of religions in the United States. It is an invitation to explore the complex tapestry of religious beliefs and practices that shaped life in North America from the colonial encounters of the fifteenth century to the culture wars of the twenty-first century. Far from a people unified around a common understanding of Christianity, *Religion in America: The Basics* tracks the steady diversification of the American religious landscape and the many religious conflicts that have changed American society. At the same time, it explores how Americans from a variety of religious backgrounds worked together to face the challenges of racism, poverty, war, and other social concerns. This thoroughly revised second edition now covers the Obama and Trump administrations, Black Lives Matter, Christian nationalism, pluralism, and the development of the "nones" and the "unaffiliated." With each chapter featuring concise summaries and suggested further readings, this book is an invaluable resource for students approaching the history of religion in America for the first time.

Fathers on the Frontier: French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789-1870, Religion in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Pasquier.

- Michael Pasquier examines the "lived" religion of French missionaries in their daily encounters with anti-Catholic Protestants and anti-clerical Catholics on the American frontier. Focusing on the collective thoughts, feelings, and actions of priests who found themselves caught between the formal canonical standards of the church and the informal experiences of missionaries in American culture, Pasquier illuminates the historical intersection of American, French, and Roman interests in the United States.

Fun fact: I once performed as a vampire at a joint ACHA/ASCH gathering, which involved a biting incident with Dr. Anthea Butler. No one was harmed.

Susan Wood

[“Ecumenism,” in Cambridge Companion to Vatican II](#), ed. by Richard R. Gaillardetz, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 282-302.

- The Second Vatican Council officially launched the Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. A reexamination of these texts more than fifty years later suggests areas of critique as well as further developments that were underexplored at the time, even though the seeds for these developments were planted at the council.

[A Shared Spiritual Journey: Lutherans and Catholics Travelling Toward Unity](#). Co-authored by Susan K. Wood and Timothy J. Wengert. New York: Paulist Press, 2016.