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“A Bible People”: Post-Conciliar U.S. Catholics, Scripture, and Holy Land Pilgrimage

Hillary Kaell

Each year, approximately 250,000 U.S. Christians, including 60,000 Catholics, journey to Israel and the Palestinian Territories to “walk where Jesus walked.”¹ U.S. Catholics have a long and essentially unstudied history of such pilgrimages dating back to the late nineteenth century.² Once connected to devotions like the Stations of the Cross and the rosary, Holy Land pilgrimage has prospered in recent decades even as other devotions have showed precipitous decline.³ As U.S. Catholics advanced socio-economically and trans-Atlantic commercial flights made international travel more efficient and affordable, pilgrims have flocked to the Holy Land in unprecedented numbers.

The lack of scholarship on these contemporary Catholic pilgrimages is surprising. Sociological and anthropological studies of Christian pilgrimage developed around, and still largely focus on, Catholic sites. By contrast, work on the Holy Land has centered almost entirely on U.S. evangelical Protestants and, more specifically, the impact of Christian Zionism.⁴ In these studies, Catholic

1. “Walking where Jesus walked” is a common industry tagline. Department of Statistics, *Statistical Report, Tourism 2007* (Tel Aviv: Israel Government Printing Office, 2008), 22-23; Ernest & Young LLP, *Tourism Market Study Summary Report* (unpublished: November 2006), 146-148, 157-160.

2. Pertinent work includes: David Klatzker, “The Franciscan Monastery of Washington DC: The Holy Land of America,” in *America and Zion: Essays and Papers in Memory of Moshe Davis*, eds. Eli Lederhendler and Jonathan Sarna (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); chapters in Gershon Greenberg, *Holy Land in American Religious Thought, 1620–1948* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); one chapter in Paul Charles Merkley, *Christian Attitudes Towards the State of Israel* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001).

3. Jerome P. Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live their Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22-23.

4. Social scientific research on pilgrimage largely began with Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978),

pilgrims rarely appear “in person.” Instead, they provide a ready counterpoint in that they are imagined by Protestants to exemplify devotionism (Catholic “ritualism”) in contrast with evangelical Biblicalism.⁵

In fact, few U.S. Catholics who set out to “walk where Jesus walked” are part of the devotional revival associated with conservative Catholicism.⁶ Moreover, far from being Biblically illiterate or uninterested in Scripture, they often describe themselves as “Bible people.” The typical pilgrim is a devoted, weekly communicant and scripturally-focused. More than others, he or she is likely to participate in Bible studies and articulate the desire for a “personal relationship” with Jesus. For these U.S. Catholics, the significance of Holy Land pilgrimage lies in how it is located at the nexus of traditional devotionism and Bible-focused knowledge and experience. The pilgrimage opens up opportunities to negotiate flexible relationships with the institutional Church, to reaffirm links to Christian tradition, and to ground faith more firmly in Biblical study, interpretation, and meditation.⁷

Studying the Holy Land

In 2009, I travelled to the Holy Land on a twelve-day pilgrimage. The first day I shared a meal with Janine and Frank, a couple in their mid-60s

which focused exclusively on Catholic sites. Numerous studies of U.S. evangelicals include: Yaniv Belhassen and Jonathan Ebel, “Tourism, Faith and Politics in the Holy Land: An Ideological Analysis of Evangelical Pilgrimage,” *Current Issues in Tourism*, 12:4 (2009), 359-378; Jackie Feldman, “Constructing a Shared Bible Land: Jewish Israeli Guiding Performances for Protestant Pilgrims,” *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 2 (May 2007): 351-374; Faydra Shapiro “To the Apple of God’s Eye: Christian Zionist Travel to Israel,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 23, no. 3 (2008): 307-320.

5. See, e.g. a defining essay in the field: Glenn Bowman, “Christian Ideology and the Image of a Holy Land,” in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Culture*, eds. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (London: Routledge, 1991), 98-121. Bowman’s work is exceptional because it includes a (British) Catholic group. Yet the basic pattern holds: Catholics (and Orthodox) “do” traditional rituals, while evangelicals read the Bible and talk politics.

6. James P. McCartin, *Prayers of the Faithful: The Shifting Spiritual Life of American Catholics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 174-175. Some Marian pilgrimages (e.g. Fatima, Portugal; Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bayside, New York) overlap with, in Michael Cuneo’s words, “Vengeful Virgin” conservatism, as notes Ian Reader, “Pilgrimage Growth in the Modern World: Meanings and Implications,” *Religion* 37, no. 3 (2007): 206-207.

7. Little scholarship on Catholic Bible study groups exists to date. Work on small Christian communities is therefore instructive since 78% of such groups also discuss scripture. Bernard J. Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 84, 89-93. On Biblical scholarship, see Gerald P. Fogarty, *American Catholic Biblical Scholarship* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989); Albert Vanhoye, “Catholicism and the Bible: An Interview,” *First Things* 74 (1997): 35-40; John R. Donahue, “A Journey Remembered: Catholic Biblical Scholarship 50 Years after *Divino Afflante Spiritu*,” *America* 169, no. 7 (1993): 6-11.

from Boston, Massachusetts. We were making small talk—the weather, the falafel, our favorite Christmas carols—when Janine turned to topics more profound. “We’re the middle generation,” she said, leaning towards me for emphasis, “and we’re becoming a Bible people.” Janine and Frank have hosted a Bible study in their home for more than a decade. No priests attend these gatherings—just the People of God and scripture. “It’s something our parents never would have done,” Janine noted, referring to the changes she has experienced since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

Anthropological studies of Christian pilgrimage typically focus on the journey and the shrine itself (the “center out there” in Victor Turner’s well-known phrase).⁸ My interest lies in drawing a fuller portrait of how pilgrims like Janine and Frank incorporate the trip into their everyday religious lives, including the Bible studies that so often precede it. To this end, I rely on an interdisciplinary methodology that includes archival research, in-depth interviews, and “multi-sited” ethnography. Between 2008 and 2012, I participated in two Holy Land pilgrimages and conducted pre- and post-trip interviews with 131 pilgrims from seven different groups.⁹ Our conversations lasted between two and four hours, conducted in person when possible. I focused on Catholic groups from Massachusetts, Maryland, and North Carolina, which collectively consisted of participants from seventeen states.

I highlight the stories of three of these pilgrims below: Janine, Frank, and Paula. Janine and Frank travelled in 2009 with a Boston-based group and Paula in 2008 with her Maryland parish. They are typical of American Catholic pilgrims in background (Euro-American, U.S.-born, “cradle” Catholics), gender (more women than men), age (about fifty to seventy), and socio-economic status (varied). Frank, now retired, has a master’s degree and worked as an industrial chemist, while Janine stayed home with their children. Paula, a single mother of four without a college degree, has supported her family with a series of administrative jobs.

Their stories provide a jumping off point to examine two common approaches to the trip and to the Bible. Janine and Frank connect their own journey—spiritual and physical—to the post-conciliar Church’s own “pilgrimage” towards revitalization. Paula, although similarly Jesus- and scripture-focused, is ambivalent about the institutional Church, characterizing her spiritual growth in opposition to what she refers to as Rome’s rule-

8. Victor Turner, “The Center Out There: Pilgrim’s Goal,” *History of Religions* 12, no. 3 (1973): 191-230.

9. Evangelical Protestants occupy a significant portion of my research, though I do not draw on that data directly here.

bound approach.¹⁰ I conclude with a discussion of the Stations of the Cross on Janine and Frank's pilgrimage. It provided a chance to perform, and thereby constitute, the sense of "middleness" that Janine and other baby-boom Catholics experience, having grown up before and then raised their children after the Second Vatican Council.

The Dynamics and Development of U.S. Catholic Bible Studies

A month before our departure for Israel, I met with Janine and Frank to talk about whether they felt prepared for the trip ahead. "We started a Bible study [group] twelve years ago," Janine responded, "...I think I'm ready to be in the Holy Land because we've been doing Bible study for so long." Frank agreed, adding that the opposite is also true. He visited the Holy Land in 1999, as an add-on to a business trip, and it made him more committed to studying scripture: "I felt, having had that good experience, I felt and I still feel a calling, like a ministry, to pass on the value of studying the Bible.... So when I ran for parish council [after the trip] I said one big priority was introducing Bible study."¹¹ While the couple continued their original Bible study, Frank also began a new group in the parish.

Though Janine and Frank draw a connection, few Bible study courses or materials explicitly encourage visiting the Holy Land.¹² Yet in my sample of ethnographic interviews, 66% of Catholic pilgrims had participated in ongoing Bible study within ten years of their trip, most within the last two. Another 20% read the scriptures daily. By comparison, a 2002 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine survey found that only 27% of Mass-going U.S. Catholics had ever attended a Bible study.¹³ A 2011 study of middle generation Catholics in the Raleigh, North Carolina diocese, where I also con-

10. All names are pseudonyms. Two less common but notable Catholic viewpoints are not represented here (social justice and traditional devotionism). They are discussed in my forthcoming book, *Walking Where Jesus Walked: American Christians and Holy Land Pilgrimage* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

11. Janine, "Pre-trip Interview," 2 May 2009; Frank, "Post-Trip Interview," 18 April 2010.

12. Cf. James S. Bielo, *Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 108-109.

13. Unpublished 2002 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine study provided courtesy of Mary Elizabeth Sperry, Associate Director, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, correspondence, 13 April 2010. This matches qualitative assessments by Bible study experts (e.g. Daniel Harrington, interview, 21 September 2009) and a Catholic Biblical Federation survey: Vincenzo Paglia, ed. *Thirsting for the Word* (Rome: Catholic Biblical Federation, 2008), 122-123. See also Joseph Gremillion and David Legee, "Post-Vatican II Parish Life in the United States: Review and Preview," *Report 15* (University of Notre Dame, 1989).

ducted research, offers a more pointed comparison. It found that 11% of Mass-going Catholics “regularly” and 16% “occasionally” attended Bible studies (or other adult faith formation). In the Raleigh pilgrimage group, which included participants from several parishes, fully 71% had gone to Bible studies regularly within the last three years.¹⁴

Though scholars have not yet examined Catholic bible study groups, based on research done with Protestants, Janine and Frank’s study represents a common pattern.¹⁵ It consists of about ten lay people who gather weekly, usually at a group member’s home, for one to two hours to discuss previously assigned Bible passages. Since the mid-1990s, they have studied most books in the New and Old Testaments and, like many groups, also incorporate extra-scriptural sources, such as popular Christian books and teaching videos. They aim for a democratic structure, where anyone may suggest the next book or teaching tool, although certain members (Frank, for example) exert more influence than others. They frequently rely on Little Rock Scripture Study (LRSS) materials, a Catholic program developed in 1974 in Arkansas, described as the most popular American Catholic scripture study tool today. Based on pre-existing evangelical Bible study models, the LRSS developed in response to Vatican II’s Constitution of Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, which emphasized the shared importance on scripture and tradition as the source of divine revelation.¹⁶

Bible studies usually incorporate fellowship and prayer, a model that also characterizes Small Christian Community groups (SCCs).¹⁷ Nearly one hour of Frank and Janine’s ninety-minute weekly session is devoted to “faith sharing”—talking about group members’ feelings and going far beyond the assigned scriptural reading. It is a fundamental part of the experience according to Frank:

What’s really valuable is not just the specific studying that chapter or this chapter [but] that ... there is a wonderful aspect of faith sharing. ... I never knew anything like that from my own family or friends in college, you know, we never got that close that we could talk about our faith like

14. Christopher James Born, “Post-retirement Religiosity among Migrating Northern Catholic Baby Boomers” (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2011), 280.

15. Bielo, *Words Upon the Word*; Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America’s New Quest for Community* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 68-70, 310-311.

16. “Little Rock Scripture Study ‘Great Expectations’ Realized”: www.littlerockscripture.org/en/about_history.html. In SCCs, Lee identifies *Quest* (Hartford Diocese) and *Sunday by Sunday* (Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet) as popular lectionary-based programs. Lee, *The Catholic Experience*, 90.

17. Bielo, *Words Upon the Word*, 70, 128, 209; Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 242-251; Lee, *The Catholic Experience*, 83-99.

that. You know, admitting some of the terrible things they might have done themselves or the things they lived through [but] that they got through with God's help. It's just mind-boggling. You see God working in amazing ways all around you.

Although Catholic Bible study in this faith-sharing mode is new, personal Bible study has ample precedent. Before the Second Vatican Council, American Catholics heard the Bible read to them during Mass and, from the 1930s on, had access to missals in the vernacular. In 1936, the U.S. bishops' Committee on the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) convened a meeting of scripture scholars. They formed the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) and produced a modern translation of the New Testament for laity in 1941, promoted through yearly observance of a "Bible Sunday," which became a Bible Week in 1952. The CCD, allied with the Holy Name Society, distributed thousands of Bibles across the United States. Pope Pius XII's encyclical letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) also opened the way for historical-critical approaches to biblical scholarship and translations of scripture from its original languages.¹⁸ The sum of these various developments, notes historian Joseph Chinnici, was that mid-century laypeople began to think about scripture in new ways and, importantly, had greater access to the Bible than ever. The "movement of Scripture out of the ritual space of the liturgy and ... into the home and hands of the people" resulted in gradual, but significant, changes in how laypeople prayed.¹⁹

In the 1950s, educated lay members of "Mr. and Mrs. Clubs" attended talks by CBA priests, the Knights of Columbus encouraged family Bible reading as a defense against communism, and popular TV personality, Bishop Fulton Sheen, used the Bible regularly on his show.²⁰ Later in the decade, some parishes introduced Bible Vigils, a devotion designed "to make the parishioners more aware of the place and importance of the Bible."²¹ The vigils, conducted in a church sanctuary, generally consisted of a ceremonial procession with the Bible, a scripture reading, and homily. Writing in 1960, Father Kilian McDonnell, a Benedictine at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville,

18. *Divino Afflante Spiritu* led to a new translation, the *New American Bible*, published in 1969.

19. Joseph P. Chinnici, "The Catholic Community at Prayer, 1926-76," in *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth Century America*, ed. James M. O'Toole (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 34, 38.

20. Chinnici, "The Catholic Community at Prayer," 30-39; Barnabas Mary Ahern, "Gathering the Fragments: Bible Study in the U.S." *Worship* 36, no. 2 (1962): 100-106; "The Catholic Family Bible," Advertisement, *Columbia* (January 1955): 1; Christopher Owen Lynch, *Selling Catholicism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 96.

21. From a set of 1964 instructions in a Pennsylvania parish in Chinnici, "The Catholic Community at Prayer," 24.

Minnesota, and a promoter of the ritual, said, “the Mass excepted, [the Bible Vigil] takes precedence over other forms of Bible reading: a Bible study group, classroom reading, private reading” because it links scripture and liturgy, rather than privileging one over the other.²²

Vigils, McDonnell implies, provided one way to mediate the nagging question of lay authority: what is the relationship between rite, led by a priest, and scripture, once made accessible to laity? This question gained importance as Vatican II more thoroughly uncoupled rite and word. Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, articulated a theology of the Church as the People of God, recognizing the “universal call to holiness” of all its members. This new model privileged lay people’s faith as vocational, and thus narrowed the gap between lay and clerical interpretive authority.²³ U.S. Catholics responded with a burst of activity in the 1970s and 1980s, forming lay-led small groups (SCCs), notably through the RENEW program. The Charismatic movement flourished, creating its own small groups and focusing on an interior experience of God. Bible study groups, which had begun in the 1950s, multiplied, moved into people’s homes and took on characteristics like Frank and Janine’s.²⁴ This trend toward specialized, interactive small groups in American Catholicism corresponded with a major shift in U.S. Christianity generally.²⁵

At the level of personal experience, however, becoming a “Bible People” has not always been easy. The very act of opening up and reading the Gospels made American Catholics reevaluate how they related to the book that, for many of them, served as a potent symbol of what made Protestants Protestant. Theresa, who organized and accompanied Janine and Frank’s trip, recalled, “When I first opened my Bible to read, my mother said, ‘What are you doing? Are you going to become a Baptist or something?’” Since the 1950s, Catholic clergy have acknowledged these fears, assuring laypeople

22. Kilian McDonnell, “Organizing a Bible Vigil,” *Worship* 34, no. 3 (February 1960): 144-148.

23. “Interpretive authority” drawn from Michele Dillon, *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith and Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35.

24. Chinnici, “The Catholic Community at Prayer,” 37; Thomas J. Csordas, *Language, Charisma, and Creativity: Ritual Life in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* [1997] (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xiv. On the roots of personal experiential faith, see McCartin, *Prayers of the Faithful*. Jay Dolan notes that Bible Vigils and Bible reading largely failed among “people in the pew.” While certainly true of vigils, much more data would be needed to assume the same of Bible reading. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 242; Lee, *The Catholic Experience*, 84; Lee and Michael A. Cowan, *Conversation, Risk and Conversion: The Inner and Public Life of Small Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 10.

25. Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 43-45.

that all Christians share in the common heritage of the Bible and reading it helps to stave off threats—materialism and secularism—that breed immorality.²⁶ Yet a lingering uneasiness persists. Contemporary Holy Land pilgrims, self-conscious about their focus on the Word or a “personal relationship” with Jesus, sometimes express concern that others think they are “Protestantizing,” a term Catholic sociologists popularized in the late-1960s.²⁷ Catholic magazines continue to reassure readers that Bible study does not lead to Protestant “fundamentalism.”²⁸

It would be incorrect to dismiss these concerns as vestiges of outmoded pre-conciliar thinking. The Second Vatican Council officially sanctioned openness to the modern world as U.S. Christianity stood at the precipice of a significant shift: in the 1970s, an explosion of vibrant non-denominational evangelicalism and Pentecostalism began to dominate Christian politics and pop culture in unprecedented ways. U.S. Catholics have navigated the post-Vatican II world in this cultural and political context, absorbing, rejecting, and adapting the diffuse evangelicalism around them. This engagement is evident, not least, in successful Catholic Bible study programs such as the LRSS, developed in the mid-1970s based on an evangelical template.

Returning to the Source in the Holy Land

From an organizational perspective, Holy Land pilgrimage and Bible study have much in common as voluntary, small-group activities, increasingly popular with “middle generation” retirees having ample leisure time. Unlike Bible studies, however, Holy Land pilgrimage remains free of any discomfiting associations with Protestantism. It is a longstanding Catholic practice associated with the Franciscans, the Holy See’s appointed Holy Land custodians since the fourteenth century. Yet pilgrimage too has changed. Until the mid-twentieth century, its narrative emphasized following in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims, crusaders, and Franciscan martyrs who died defending the holy places against Orthodox “schismatics” and Muslim “infidels.”²⁹ The crucifixion and the person of Mary were also of central impor-

26. Eugene E. Ryan, “Is the Catholic Church Going Protestant?” *Christianity Today* (18 March 1966): 5; Walter M. Abbott, “Bishops and the Common Bible,” *America* 8 (December 1962): 12-14.

27. Andrew Greeley, Richard Schoenherr, and Dean Hoge are best known for popularizing the term, e.g. William McCreedy and Andrew Greeley, “The End of American Catholicism?” *America* 127, no. 13 (1972): 334-338.

28. Eugene La Verdere, “There’s no such thing as a Catholic Fundamentalist,” *U.S. Catholic* 54, no. 9 (September 1989): 36-39; Megan Sweas, “Are you well versed in the Bible?” *U.S. Catholic* 72, no. 9 (September 2007): 18-20.

29. J.L. Lynch, “Franciscan Missions in the Moslem Empire,” *Franciscan Tertiary* 2 (August 1892): 124; Eugene Hoade, *Guide to the Holy Land* [7th ed.] (Jerusalem: Franciscan



Jerusalem as seen from the Mount of Olives. The Dome of the Rock is the focal point, a site sacred to Christians, Jews, and Muslims (Courtesy of the editor).

tance. In the 1888 announcement for the first U.S. Catholic group trip to the Holy Land, Mary is described as the first Holy Land pilgrim, and thus pilgrims were encouraged to trace *her* footsteps. While pilgrims should envision Christ's sacrifice, continued the announcement, they will *feel* Mary's "pang of piercing pain" as Jesus died. Before setting out, each pilgrim received a silver medal depicting Mary at Christ's crucifixion and the Sacred Hearts of Mary and Jesus.³⁰ A century later, this framing had changed significantly, even in traditional publications like the Franciscans' *Holy Land Review*. By 1980, *Review* articles concluded that the Holy Land "is not a pilgrimage like any other but a wish particularly in these days to return to the source, to rediscover the Bible...."³¹

Printing Press, 1973), 111, 128; Ignazio Mancini, "The Meaning of Pilgrimage," *The Holy Land Review* 2 (Summer 1976): 59-64.

30. Charles Vissani, *Pilgrim of Palestine and Messenger of Saint Francis* (5 February 1888): 81-82. Cited in Greenberg, *Holy Land*, 293-294.

31. "Returning to sources" evokes *ressourcement*, a stream of twentieth-century theology that advocated reengaging with ideas from the early Church. This theology greatly impacted discussions surrounding Vatican II (though the work of French theologian Yves Conger, for example) and thus influenced contemporary Catholic pilgrims in a general sense. However, pilgrims do not refer to such influences directly. *Holy Land Review* was published for the U.S. by the Franciscan Printing Press in Jerusalem. For the traditional view see Mancini (above). Maurizio Sacchi, "Sanctuaries and Pilgrims Over the Years," *The Holy Land Review* 6, nos. 1-4 (Spring-Winter 1980): 43-49; quote at 49. This language echoes the Holy See. Laffey, *Catholic Theology*, 39.

A return to sources—meaning the Bible and Jesus—has a particular importance for Father Mike, the leader of Janine and Frank’s group, and for those pilgrims deeply affected by the often-demoralizing narrative of U.S. Catholicism in crisis. During the pilgrimage, Father Mike stressed repeatedly: “You can go to Mass every day for 25 years or 40 years and never know Jesus. That’s why we come here. We don’t come to live in the past. The present is a mess. Let me live in the past. That would be easy. We come here to live in the present.” For Father Mike, the “messy present” includes the decline in U.S. Catholics’ weekly Mass attendance from about 70% in 1960 to 25% in 2000, while the number of priests and women religious has plummeted.³² For all American Catholic pilgrims, and certainly those in his Boston-area group, sex-abuse scandals and parish closures have augmented a sense of crisis.³³

Urging the pilgrims to “live in the present,” Father Mike did not mean accepting the messy present “as is.” Instead, the trip offered pilgrims a new present, one focused not on failure but on developing a personal relationship with Jesus and a community modeled on the idealized early church. Throughout the pilgrimage, participants discussed how Jesus taught his followers to love each other, to remain committed to each other. At sites like Tabgha, where the Gospel recounts that Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, Father Mike carefully downplayed the miraculous in favor of lessons for “the present:” how to share, how to live in community. This discourse, widespread in the Small Christian Community movement, is what SCC leader Father Bernard J. Lee calls a “refounding impulse” (in studies of American Protestantism a similar theology is termed “primitivism”). Its goal is to “imagine alternative futures” for the Church through a retrieval of early Christian models and feelings (love, care) that were, says Lee, “the project of Jesus.”³⁴

Later that day, Janine exemplified this approach in Capernaum, a Galilean village mentioned in the Gospels, now a must-stop archeological site for tour groups. I sat beside her in the impressive ruins of a late-fourth century synagogue. Today, pillars and four sections of wall mark the large, rectangular prayer room. Stone benches are carved around the perimeter. As we sat, our guide outlined the scholarly debate about whether this structure,

32. Kenneth C. Jones, *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II* (Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic Books, 2003), 9-10.

33. John Seitz, *No Closure: Catholic Practice and Boston’s Parish Shut-downs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011) describes the Boston Archdiocese, home to Father Mike, Janine and Frank. For an approach similar to Father Mike’s, see Boston-based Jesuit Daniel Harrington, “The Word Flourishes,” *America* 188, no. 9 (17 March 2003): 20-25.

34. Social justice is fundamental to Lee’s proscriptive SCC theology, as it is in Father Mike’s theology of pilgrimage. Lee, *Catholic Experience*, 4-7; Lee and Cowan, *Conversation, Risk and Conversion*, 29-30.



Altar at the Church of the Multiplication, Tabgha, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is the traditional site of the miracle of Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The mosaic under the altar likely dates from the fifth century (Courtesy of the editor).

clearly post-dating Jesus, covers the foundations of a first-century synagogue. He explained that women were excluded from the prayer room and its benches were modern additions. Although Janine heard him, such details were immaterial to her as she sought to visualize an ideal first century and bring it to fruition in the present. "It is so beautiful how everyone looked in at each other!" she said to me, referring to the placement of the benches along the walls. "It is how Jesus wanted it, that's how it began. No distractions with all the other things [in life and in the Church]. You are focused on each other, on loving each other and that's really the radical Gospel message, isn't it?"

For pilgrims like Janine, Frank and Father Mike, this act of imagined recreation is linked to the overarching goal of Vatican II: *ressourcement*, a return to the sources, the "pure" roots of Catholicism. They link their own pilgrimages (physical and spiritual) to Vatican II "pilgrim Church" theology, meaning that the institutional Church, like individuals, makes mistakes, but also journeys in faith. Janine says, "All my life I have been increasing my faith on a road to deeper understanding—or I hope it's always growing. I've been

able to benefit from how [the Church] sees things now ... how it grows with me, or I guess I grow because of it.”

These themes of change and growth came to the fore early in the trip, during our visit to the cave where St. Jerome reputedly translated the Vulgate (Latin) Bible from the Greek. The Vulgate serves as an ambivalent symbol. Translated when Latin was the vernacular language, pilgrims now associate Latin with the pre-Vatican II Mass. Unsurprisingly, Father Mike highlighted the Vulgate’s vernacular quality and, as we stood at the site, he gave his first spiritual reflection of the trip:

We were not a biblical church. Most of us did not learn the Bible. But this is a renewal for us to learn the Bible. I hope all of you have enrolled in some Bible class. They say that in the Reformation, we kept the Eucharist and gave the Protestants the Bible. Imagine if that were reversed! If we took the Bible back and gave the Protestants the Eucharist?

Father Mike framed the story as one of Catholics making mistakes, but nevertheless being in control of their future and their past. They “kept the Eucharist and gave [away] the Bible”—now Catholics should take the Bible back. For Father Mike, the Holy Land trip was an opportunity to live out this imperative and move actively into the present, a message that resonated immediately with pilgrims like Janine. Indeed, it was this visit to St. Jerome’s cave that prompted her initial comment about becoming a “Bible people.”

Middle generation pilgrims often contrast choice and spiritual activity with what they see as the passivity of their childhood faith, symbolized by the rote memorization of prayers and the catechism. Bob, a pilgrim from New Hampshire on Mike’s trip, expressed this: “[My wife and I] went there (to the Holy Land) with almost childhood thoughts like in arrested development from all the things you memorize in [parochial] school and being there it brought it together with our adult thoughts.” Janine used similar language regarding her effort to become a spiritual “adult.”³⁵ To do so meant putting away childish things. Most Bible study groups, including Janine and Frank’s, define getting “to know” the Bible as reading the whole text, not just the parts one likes best, and letting go of cherished (but unscriptural) saintly companions. Even Mary plays a lesser role if one studies the entire Biblical text.

This approach can be difficult, as noted above. Father Mike said, “I tell my parishioners all the time that having a ‘personal love’ or a ‘personal relationship’ with Jesus isn’t Protestant. It’s *Catholic*.... Some [pilgrims] are so

35. Bob, “Post-trip Interview,” 15 October 2009; Janine, “Pre-trip Interview,” 2 May 2009.

afraid. They don't even bring [a Bible] on the trip."³⁶ The language of Catholics having ownership, being unafraid, and embracing an adult spirituality was freeing for Janine, Frank, and Mike who believed that their own spiritual journeys were progressing with the "Pilgrim Church." For others it was upsetting, particularly because of the often-condescending way that traditional devotions were described as "immature" or "childish."³⁷ Glenda, age seventy-three, on Father Mike's trip, said, "No one used to study the Bible. Now it's a fashion, it's frustrating. I don't know that much because they always told you: *don't* study it!"

Other middle-generation Catholics, even if they are scripture readers, dispute the dominant narrative that pilgrims like Janine and Frank espouse. Ed and Nadine, a couple who travelled in 2008 with a Maryland parish, have been studying the Bible for fourteen years, but they firmly disassociate it from the trip. Indeed, they see the Holy Land as a "tour" compared with pilgrimages to Marian apparition sites. Ed explained, "The thing about the Holy Land is that it's so old. I mean, Christ was there a long, long time ago. Whereas Lourdes was just a hundred years ago so I can relate more to the visions [because Mary] was talking about issues now. And Medjugorje is going on now. So it's a time thing." Ed neatly reversed the logic of Jesus-centered pilgrims. Whereas for them the Holy Land's ancient sites created a physical and visual connection to Jesus that provides a model for today's Church, for Ed these same sites create a feeling of detachment. By comparison, the newer Marian apparition sites speak to "issues now."³⁸

Spirit-Filled and Empowered: Paula's Holy Land Pilgrimage

Slightly younger than most pilgrims, Paula, age forty-nine, described her life as "full mother mode," although the youngest of her four children was finishing high school so "the end," she laughed, "is in sight." Like Janine and Frank, Paula attends Bible study groups, however she understands scripture-reading and the pilgrimage differently. Though she does not identify as charismatic, the movement has clearly influenced her. She practices an emotional, spirit-filled Catholicism and believes that the Holy Spirit guides her.

36. Although Catholics anxiously compare themselves to U.S. evangelicals, the latter rarely carry Bibles on the trip and are often confused about the passages and stories to which guides refer.

37. Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 9.

38. Ed and Nadine, "Pre-trip and Post-trip Interviews," 7 October 2008 and 21 January 2009. See also, Gary W. McDonough, "Catholics Aesthetics in the South," in *The Culture of Bible Belt Catholics*, eds. Jon W. Anderson and William B. Friend (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 223.

She often calls Bible study and pilgrimage “empowering,” a term that encompasses both therapeutic and spiritual connotations. It refers, first, to the agency she has exercised in choosing these particular voluntary practices and, second, to how she believes that they provide a channel for the Holy Spirit’s power, the ultimate authority for how she interprets scripture and even Catholic doctrine.

“Power” is a loaded term, as Paula is aware. She uses it to emphasize what she characterizes as an ongoing cycle of disempowerment and empowerment in her interactions with institutions, namely her family and the Church. They stifled her ability to be herself, she says, until the Holy Spirit gave her the power she previously lacked. Telling her story, Paula began with her family: growing up, she felt out of place and pushed to be someone she was not. It led her to make rash decisions, including quitting college to marry a man with whom she had four children by her early thirties. Their tumultuous marriage ended when he divorced her and refused to pay child support. Shocked, humiliated and in dire financial straits, she desperately wanted to connect to God but felt unwelcome in her parish because of its interpretation of divorce. Eventually Paula found a Congregationalist counselor specializing in “Christian therapy,” which uses scriptural passages to help clients heal emotionally and spiritually. She recounts:

It wasn’t really until I got divorced [that I realized] that Catholicism, the one drawback, is that we don’t teach our kids to read the Bible.... I ended up going to Christian counseling because my ex-husband told me these were all my problems ... and at one of the sessions I realized Jesus died for me *personally*. That’s not a concept that being raised Catholic all my life, going to Catholic schools, I had ever really thought of. But [the counselor] made me read Job and Romans and I got this draw to read the rest of the Bible.

Although still deeply connected to the Catholic Church, her counseling experience helped Paula realize that she could speak to Jesus on her own through scripture. It gave her the freedom to loose herself temporarily from parish life (and liturgical rites) while she set about finding a new “spirit-filled” and “Christian” parish, meaning one that embraced single mothers and divorcees. One day she stopped by St. Cecilia’s, where she liked the music and developed a positive rapport with the pastor, Father McGibbons. She joined the parish shortly after.

Although Paula is an active member of St. Cecilia’s and relies strongly on Father McGibbons for support, she dismisses Church hierarchy. She equates the latter with her family—logical, unfeeling, and unable to make exceptions (demonstrated to her when she felt rejected as a divorcee). She peppered our

conversations with comments about the Vatican, continually defining it as “man-made” and thus fallible. “I think, there we go again! Man is screwing things up again. I guess I kind of look at Rome as the man part and the Holy Land as the God part. Rome was where it ended up after years of man’s involvement.”

For Paula, the Holy Land trip represented the culmination of her journey to become her “own woman,” precipitated by her momentous discovery, in Christian counseling, of the Bible and a personal relationship with Jesus. With this relationship sustaining her, she chose a new extended family, as she put it, meaning her parish friends and fellow pilgrims. Significant for her, she felt safe enough with them to take the trip. The actual distance they traveled—her first trip outside the U.S.—had symbolical importance for her personal journey, which she defined as a struggle to find emotional and physical distance from those who hurt her. International travel to a place that she considered exotic and dangerous affirmed the person she believes herself to be—brave and open to new experiences. At the same time, it supplanted past failures:

My mom never went and my grandmother never went—and she’s a pretty religious person. And none of my aunts—none of them have been.... I kind of feel like oh yeah! I’m finally the first in the family to do something! I wasn’t the first to finish college but you know? I get to be the first to do something! Other than the first to have a horrible divorce (laughs).

Upon returning to the U.S., Paula was most eager to describe a series of interconnected incidents related to communion that she felt illustrated the cycle of disempowerment and empowerment in her life. On the first day in Israel, another pilgrim tripped and fell. While Paula helped her, they missed the distribution of the Eucharist. Deeply hurt, Paula reflected, “Tears were just streaming down my face. I just couldn’t believe it. How did I miss communion in the *Holy Land*? What did I do God to deserve this, am I not a good enough person?” As a Catholic, Paula believes in Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and that receiving communion with her group unites them. Missing communion on the first day felt to her like being denied by God and her community—after investing so much emotionally and financially as a pilgrim.

The next day compounded the problem. Paula’s bus arrived too late for the Mass scheduled to take place in the church atop Mount Tabor. Because of strict time allotments for tour groups using the church, the first bus went ahead and Paula’s group remained stranded below—except for the priest, Father Brian, who rode to the top in a mini-van to ensure that the Mass would be celebrated. A priest from another U.S. group approached Paula, now visibly upset, and told her about “spiritual communion,” a personal

prayer to share in the benefits of the Eucharist. “I couldn’t believe it! It’s this *beautiful* prayer!” says Paula, tremendously excited, “And I was instantly at peace. It means you can receive Jesus whenever *you* want.” Elated, she later told Father Brian, who, she felt, had abandoned the group. She recounted his response, again setting her emotional, spirit-filled Catholicism against a rule-bound approach: “He didn’t understand why it meant so much to me. I said, ‘Father! You’re a priest! You should know why it means something! It’s the foundation of our faith. Without communion I could be anything, like Protestant.’ Father Brian’s response was like, ‘I followed proper procedure for blah blah blah.’”

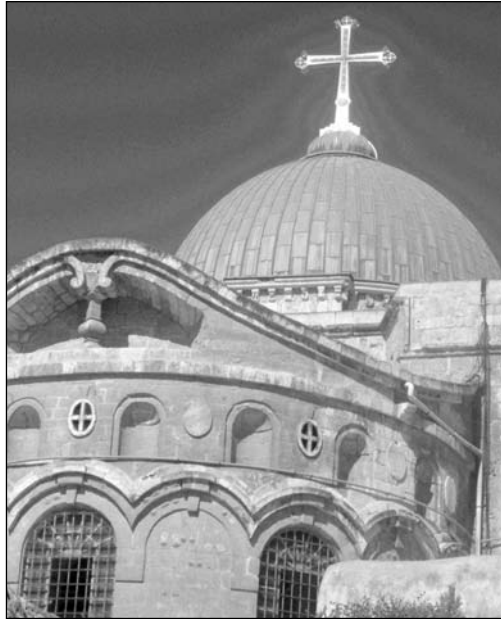
Paula’s way of being Catholic corresponds in certain ways to the therapeutic, narcissistic attitude that sociologist Robert Bellah named “Sheilaism” after one of his interviewees, Sheila Larson. Sheila believed in God but did not go to church, characterizing her faith as: “Sheilaism. Just my own little voice.... It’s just try to love yourself and be gentle with yourself.”³⁹ Like Sheila, Paula has been to therapy, talks about loving herself, and relies on her own conscience when her views on divorce, for example, clash with traditional Church teaching. However, Paula’s Catholicism is more expansive too. As sociologist Wade Clark Roof has noted of Sheilaism, remarkably little attention has been paid to the development of “both highly individualistic spiritual quests outside of the church ... *and* deep experiential expressions of faith within religious communities.”⁴⁰ Paula illustrates this second type. Her relationship with Jesus through scripture and her emotional, personal response to the Holy Spirit are intimately tied to rituals connecting her to a parish and even to the official Church: singing during Mass, receiving communion, participating in Bible study groups, and pilgrimage. Even her discovery of “spiritual communion” was thanks to a priest, lending it ecclesial sanction.⁴¹

Later, Paula received communion from Father Brian in the Holy Land, but her peak spiritual experience during the pilgrimage occurred one evening when she went alone to the Holy Sepulchre, the church marking the place where Jesus died and was buried. She approached the “anointing stone,” which Father Brian had previously identified as only “supposedly authentic,” and prayed. “So I was one of those weird people,” she concluded, referring to the divine presence she sensed. But she mentioned it with a shrug. Paula has worked hard to feel connected to Jesus—he died for her *personally*—and

39. Robert Bellah, et. al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 236.

40. Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 149. Italics in original.

41. Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in American since the 1950s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 3.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, believed to be the location of Golgotha (Calvary) where Jesus was crucified (Courtesy of the editor).

to her Catholic community, the one she has chosen for herself. And as she sat by the anointing stone, read Scripture, and recited her prayer for spiritual communion, she felt what she called, “zap!” The Holy Spirit was present.

Negotiating the Middle on the *Via Dolorosa*

When Janine referred to her generation as in “the middle,” she meant their demographic age, which for baby-boom Catholics corresponds with immense institutional change. “The world in which we live now,” she said, “is just so very different from the one in which we were raised.” She made this comment reflecting on her children, who have stopped attending Mass. She prays about it frequently, yet feels unable (and unwilling) to force the matter. Scholarly accounts of Vatican II’s implementation and reception often stress such inter-generational divides, and the fear that young people are increasingly less Catholic.⁴² Not entirely untrue—certainly in terms of church atten-

42. Dean R. Hoge et. al., *Young Catholic Adults: Religion in the Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 1; Wayne Ashley, “The Stations of the Cross,” in *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*, ed. Robert Orsi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 341-366; James T. Fisher, “Clearing the Streets of the Catholic Lost Generation,” in *Catholic Lives, Contemporary America*, ed.

dance, as Janine notes—jeremiads about the moral degeneracy of youth are a recurring, pervasive myth in the U.S.⁴³ Most middle-generation pilgrims are perhaps intuitively aware of this idea; certainly, even those who worry about the health of the institutional Church tend to be flexible in how they define a “good” Catholic when it applies to their own children.

Esther, age sixty-seven, travelled on the same trip as Paula. She recalled feeling very hurt at first when her adult son stopped attending Mass. Then she realized that “my son and daughter-in-law are totally post-Vatican II and they see helping the poor as just as important as Mass—and they are absolutely right.” Like many pilgrims, she identifies “helping the poor” (or, social justice) as “totally post-Vatican II,” though historians note its long-standing theological roots.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, equating social justice with a new way of being Catholic helps make sense of their children’s choices. Her son did not fall away from the Church: he embraced new religious priorities, which Esther connects to a new direction in Catholic theology. She offered a second explanation as well, related to natural life stage cycles: “It’s to be expected. When you’re young you have the energy for helping others and then you age—and [it’s] important too—[but] you help in other ways, pray more, understand the value of tradition.”⁴⁵ Like Esther, most pilgrims acknowledge generational divides but do not regard them as static. As she concluded, the middle generation should become “combination Catholics”: straddling the line between generations, understanding the good in both.

On Father Mike’s trip, this way of being “in-between” became particularly evident during the Stations of the Cross on the *Via Dolorosa*, a devotion which pilgrims walk between the fourteen stations commemorating Jesus’ last moments, marked by plaques in Jerusalem’s Old City. Given the group’s ongoing discussion about being a “Bible people,” I had expected that we would perform the new “Scriptural Way of the Cross,” a version that Pope John Paul II introduced in 1991, which adheres closely to the Gospel accounts.⁴⁶ The traditional stations include extra-biblical embellishments

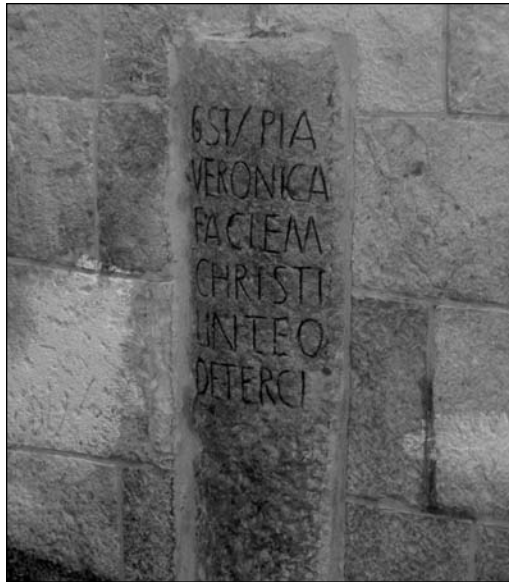
Thomas Ferraro (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 76-103; Michael Cuneo, *Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

43. Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), vii.

44. Chinnici, *Devotion to the Holy Spirit*, viii.

45. Michele Dillon and Paul Wink, *In the Course of a Lifetime: Tracing Religious Belief, Practice and Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 91; McCartin, *Prayers of the Faithful*, 179; Cf. Cuneo, *Smoke of Satan*, 149-150.

46. Joseph M Champlin, *The Stations of the Cross with Pope John Paul II* (St Louis: Liguori Publications, 1994); “Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum [2000],” Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: www.pcf.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000421_via-crucis_en.html.



A stop along the *Via Dolorosa* (“the way of suffering”), Jerusalem, the path that according to tradition Jesus walked carrying his cross. The sixth station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus (Courtesy of the editor).

(Jesus falls three times) and encounters with women like Mary and Veronica. It includes the traditional removal of Jesus’ body and lamentation, with his female followers taking the lead.

Traditional Stations

1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. Jesus is given His cross
3. Jesus falls the first time
4. Jesus meets His Mother
5. Simon carries the cross
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls the second time
8. Jesus meets the daughters of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls the third time
10. Jesus is stripped of His garments
11. Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross
12. Jesus dies on the cross
13. Jesus is removed from the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb, covered in incense

Scriptural Stations

1. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested
3. Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin
4. Jesus is denied by Peter
5. Jesus is judged by Pilate
6. Jesus is scourged, crowned with thorns
7. Jesus takes up His cross
8. Simon helps carry His cross
9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
10. Jesus is crucified
11. Jesus speaks to the repentant thief
12. Jesus speaks to Mary and the Disciple
13. Jesus dies on the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

Another variation on the traditional stations connects modern socio-political meanings to Jesus’ passion. For example, religion scholar Wayne Ashley describes this devotion as performed in 1990 at St. Brigid’s in New



Women have a prominent place in traditional depictions of stations, especially station thirteen (left): Jesus is taken down from the cross; and station fourteen (right): Jesus is laid in the tomb. This type of devotional artwork remains popular. Illustrations from *Stations of the Cross for Children* (1936); images copyrighted by Fratelli Bonella (used with permission).

York's Lower East Side. Station five (Simon carries the cross) was enacted in front of a medical clinic that the government had threatened to close. The presiding priest, who had fought to keep it open for the local Hispanic community, intoned, "Jesus suffers today in all the sick who are not receiving proper medical care. The sick are amongst the weakest in our community and, like Simon, we are asked to help carry their crosses."⁴⁷

Since at other points during our trip Father Mike's group had gone out of their way to meet Palestinian Christians and framed these encounters in terms of social justice, I had also expected echoes of what Ashley observed in New York.⁴⁸ Yet we not only performed the traditional stations, but did so at dawn, when the usually-crowded Arab Quarter streets were empty. Palestinians were no longer described in terms of social justice but, through their absence, effectively construed as potential distractions. The experience of walking the path where the pilgrims believe Jesus bore the cross was aug-

47. Ashley, *Gods of the City*, 352; McCartin, *Prayers of the Faithful*, 186-189; Albert Judy, "Stations of the Cross: A Scriptural Version," Central USA Province of the Dominican Friars website: www.domcentral.org/life/stations.htm.

48. For more on the pilgrims' relationship to Palestinians, see Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked*, 126-127, 148-155.

mented by devotional practices otherwise absent during the trip: we held small wooden crosses and touched the stones along the route; several women carried rosaries, murmured prayers, and wept quietly.

At each station we read a prayer aloud from a handout produced by Creighton University, a Jesuit institution in Omaha, Nebraska. Although the prayers partially reflected post-Vatican II changes (Jews went unmentioned and unblamed), Mary still played a significant role—when she meets her son and at the cross. Using language reminiscent of the 1888 announcement for the first U.S. Catholic pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we read aloud, “All his life, his mother had taught him the meaning of the words, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord.’ Now they look into each other’s eyes. How pierced-through her heart must be!”⁴⁹ When we reached the Holy Sepulchre, where the last stations are found, one pilgrim kneeled before the anointing stone, touched her wooden cross to it and raised it to her lips. Although our guide warned, “That place is not authentic,” several female pilgrims, including Janine, followed suit.

Walking the *Via Dolorosa*, the scriptural account was downplayed in favor of devotions and Mary played a larger role than a strict reading of the Gospels might warrant but in proportion with the images that pilgrims have nurtured from childhood. No one in the group referred to our actions as contradictory or hypocritical. The pilgrims are living links to their parents’ generation, and the ritual provided a tangible connection to that world. When we emerged from the Holy Sepulchre, we again talked about “living in the present,” “social justice,” and being a “Bible people,” linking the pilgrims just as firmly to the generation of Catholics they raised.

Living in the Present

Holy Land pilgrimage, and the Bible studies often preceding it, provides a compelling example of how laypeople negotiate “traditional” and “modernizing” strands in contemporary Catholicism. American pilgrims regularly attend Mass, but they also recognize multiple, overlapping ways of being a “good Catholic.” Increasingly American Catholics, and certainly the Holy Land pilgrims, tie their own spiritual progress to developing a personal relationship with Jesus. For some, like Paula, this connection to Jesus and his Word frees them from institutional control at moments when they feel it stifles their own spiritual goals. By contrast, most pilgrims, represented by Janine and Frank, see little (or no) contradiction between personal and insti-

49. Creighton University, “The Stations of the Cross,” *Pamphlet*, c. 2009. In possession of author.

tutional growth. They understand their spiritual journeys—of which our physical pilgrimage was part—to be in harmony with the Church’s progress towards a purer faith, reaching towards models derived from the Biblical era. Importantly, focusing on Jesus and an idealized early Christianity circumvents narratives of dispiriting institutional failure in the present, such as declining church attendance and the sex abuse crisis.

Although personal scripture reading and small group Bible study are both fully consistent with Vatican II renewal, in the American context they have also been a potent—albeit waning—symbol of Protestant-Catholic divisions. Thus laypeople engaged in this growing practice are, in some ways, on the frontline of renewal. As Father Mike made clear, their efforts pose challenges: U.S. Catholics may feel like they are playing catch-up with “Bible-believing” Christians or, worse, losing a sense of their own distinctiveness in the midst of vibrant evangelicalism. The pilgrimage, a practice fully Catholic yet intimately tied to scripture and to Jesus, powerfully brings together “the new and the old,” as the Gospels and the Church instruct.⁵⁰ Childhood devotions are renewed, and “Protestant” practices, like Bible study, are integrated into more traditional Catholic forms. The trip is thus an optimistic undertaking, affirming that middle generation Catholics can renew their faith and progress; theirs is a living Church and they are a “Bible people.”

50. Mt 13:52 (NAV); Piero Marini, “Returning to the Sources: A Service to the Liturgy (2006)”: www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/2006/documents/ns_lit_doc_20060323_ritorno-fonti_en.html.