



## Telling a New, More Inclusive Story

We have a way of telling the story of the settlement of America that doesn't do the subject full justice. We teach our children about the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. We may discuss how the Founding Fathers enshrined the right to religious liberty in the Constitution. We remember the waves of immigrants from England, Ireland, Italy, and Germany who built churches and filled pews throughout the land. But that is not the whole story.

Our origins are more complicated than that. There were Spanish-speaking Catholics in what is now Florida in the 16th century. The territories out west were Spanish and Catholic before they became states. A beautiful reminder of these roots may be found in Willa Cather's novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, about the appointment of the first bishop of Santa Fe and his journey from Ohio to his new diocese. The conditions were harsh, and Cather's fictionalized bishop frequently relied on the generosity of local families to sustain him. Like all great works of the imagination, her story tells a broader truth.

Near the end of that book the bishop is greatly affected by a tale he is told of Junípero Serra, the missionary who brought the Catholic faith to Native Americans of the Southwest in the 18th century. In the story St. Junípero (canonized by Pope Francis in 2015 on the very spot where we hold our Commencement) meets a poor Mexican family who hosts him so graciously that he begins to think he has met the Holy Family — “that They, after so many centuries of history and glory, should return to play Their first parts, in the persons of a humble Mexican family, the lowliest of the lowly, the poorest of the poor — in a wilderness at the end of the world, where the angels could scarcely find Them!”

At our Commencement ceremony this year Archbishop José Gomez reflected on the importance of telling this larger story for a new America. He and the other four recipients of honorary degrees at this year's ceremony came to this country as immigrants and have amply enriched us with their presence.

At Catholic University, we are making an effort to tell a more lively, adventurous, and inclusive version of American history. In this issue there is a Q&A with Julia Young, an associate professor in the Department of History and the author of *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War*. There is a story about a recent Campus Ministry trip with 16 students to the border at El Paso. My wife, Jeanne, accompanied them and sometimes drove.

Here on campus we have been hard at work on related issues throughout the past year. In response to recent developments the University established a working group responsible for keeping current on immigration matters and ensuring that we are doing all we can to support and provide resources to our faculty, staff, and students — especially those with temporary visas and those who are here on deferred action under DACA. We have been discussing immigration at programs like “On the Margins,” sponsored by the Institute for Human Ecology and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration and Refugee Services. We are strengthening our efforts to recruit from immigrant populations and increase diversity among our student population.

The story of how we have built America has always been larger than we might think. In remembering that simple truth we are better equipped to protect the marginalized, and open ourselves to the blessings that come from welcoming them with hospitality.