

## Religious Studies Department's Optional Reading Suggestions 2022

“But racism still profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victims, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or prejudicial thoughts. As Christians, we are called to listen and know the stories of our brothers and sisters. We must create opportunities to hear, with open hearts, the tragic stories that are deeply imprinted on the lives of our brothers and sisters, if we are to be moved with empathy to promote justice. Many groups, such as the Irish, Italians, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Poles, Jews, Chinese, and Japanese, can attest to having been the target of racial and ethnic prejudice in this country. It is also true that many groups are still experiencing prejudice, including rising anti-Semitism, the discrimination many Hispanics face today, and anti-Muslim sentiment. Especially instructive at this moment, however, are the historical and contemporary experiences of Native and African Americans. By listening to one another's experiences, we can come to understand and to empathize, which leads to those right relationships that unite us as brothers and sisters. This justice finds its source and strength in the love of Christ who laid down his life for his friends (see Jn 15:13).” ***United States Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism: Open Wide our Hearts, the Enduring Call to Love.*** November 2018

*Through this year's summer reading list, the Religion Department invites you to examine and learn about social injustices in our modern world and how those injustices often lead to conflicts between people, society, cultures, races, and religions. Often the injustices that are written about in novels and works of non-fiction occur in the real world; they are difficult to read about and could make some readers uncomfortable. We have included information about the social issues addressed in the books on the reading list and a brief summary of the book. This will help our students make an informed choice and provide many different options. It is our hope that each of these books will foster discussions on the theme of justice and how we are called to respond as people of faith.*

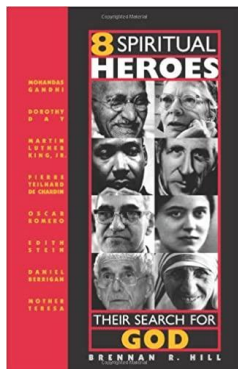
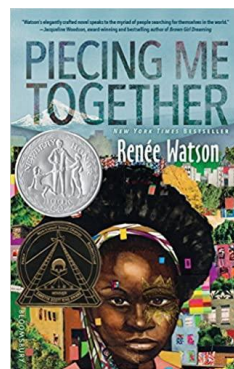
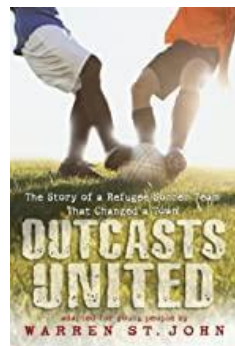
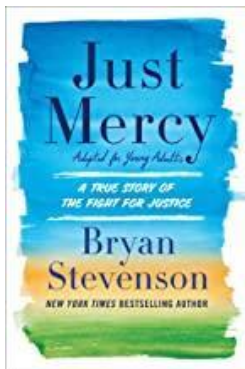
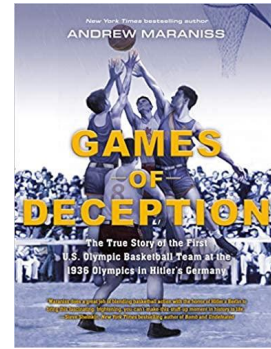
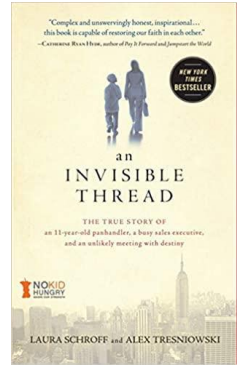
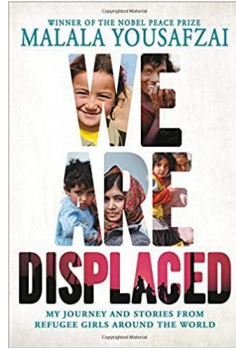
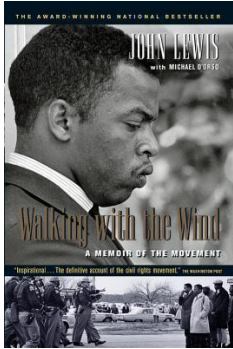
**Before you start reading: How do you (the reader) define "justice?"**

**While you are reading, please consider the following questions:**

- ~Did your own perception of justice or injustice change as you read your book, and if so, how?
- ~What injustices are present in your book? Think of the specific examples. (Racism, sexism, poverty, religious intolerance)
- ~How are the characters in the book affected by injustice?
- ~If there is more than one injustice in the book, are the injustices connected?
- ~How are injustices addressed?
- ~How are conflicts resolved in your book?
- ~How did you feel about the way the injustices were resolved? Would you suggest another way to have addressed or resolved the injustice?
- ~Who takes a stand in the story and what inspires them to take action?
- ~How does power or the lack of power affect individuals in this work?
- ~How are prejudice and bias created? How do characters overcome them?
- ~What does power have to do with justice and fairness? Is it ever necessary to question the status quo?
- ~How do labeling and stereotyping influence how characters look at and understand the world?
- ~What are the causes and consequences of prejudice and injustice and how does an individual's response to them reveal his/her true character and his/her moral, ethics, and values?

## For Grades 9 and 10

Students in grades 9 and 10 would benefit from reading any of the following books. This list is only for enrichment purposes and does not involve any summer assignment.



### 1. *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* by John Lewis and Michael D'Orso

The son of an Alabama sharecropper, and now a sixth-term United States Congressman, John Lewis has led an extraordinary life, one that found him at the epicenter of the civil rights movement in the late '50s and '60s. As Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Lewis was arrested more than forty times and severely beaten on several occasions; he was one of the youngest yet most courageous leaders of the movement. Lewis takes us from the Nashville lunch counter sit-ins to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, where he led more than five hundred marchers on what

became known as "Bloody Sunday." (*Winner of the 2015 Christopher Award, Robert F. Kennedy Book Award Grand Prize Winner, American Library Association Top of the List Award*)

**2. *We are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai**

In her powerful new book, Nobel Peace Prize winner and *New York Times*-bestselling author Malala Yousafzai reminds us that every single one of the 68.5 million currently displaced is a person -- often a young person -- with hopes and dreams. Malala's experiences visiting refugee camps caused her to reconsider her own displacement -- first as an Internally Displaced Person when she was a young child in Pakistan, and then as an international activist who could travel anywhere in the world except to the home she loved. In *We Are Displaced*, which is part memoir, part communal storytelling, Malala not only explores her own story, but she also shares the personal stories of some of the incredible girls she has met on her journeys -- girls who have lost their community, relatives, and often the only world they've ever known.

**3. *An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-Year-Old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny* by Laura Schroff (A 2019 Young Read's Edition of this book is also available)**

She was a successful ad sales rep in Manhattan. He was a homeless, eleven-year-old panhandler on the street. He asked for spare change; she kept walking. But then something stopped her in her tracks, and she went back. And she continued to go back, again and again. They met up nearly every week for years and built an unexpected, life-changing friendship that has today spanned almost three decades. The author writes, "Whatever made me notice him on that street corner so many years ago is clearly something that cannot be extinguished, no matter how relentless the forces aligned against it. Some may call it spirit. Some may call it heart. It drew me to him, as if we were bound by some invisible, unbreakable thread. And whatever it is, it binds us still." (*A Parents' Choice Recommended Award Winner and Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection*)

**4. *Games of Deception: The True Story of the First U.S. Olympic Basketball Team at the 1936 Olympics in Hitler's Germany* by Andrew Maraniss**

1936 was a turbulent time in world history. Adolf Hitler had gained power in Germany three years earlier. Jewish people and political opponents of the Nazis were the targets of vicious mistreatment, yet were unaware of the horrors that awaited them in the coming years. But the 14 players of the first-ever U.S. Olympians on board the *S.S. Manhattan* and other international visitors wouldn't see any signs of trouble in Berlin. Streets were swept, storefronts were painted, and every German citizen greeted them with a smile. It was all just a facade, meant to distract from the terrible things happening behind the scenes. (*Winner of the 2020 AJL Sidney Taylor Honor; A 2020 ALA Notable Children's Book and a 2020 CBC Notable Social Studies Book*)

**5. *Just Mercy: A True Story of the Fight for Justice (Adapted for Young Adults)* by Bryan Stevenson**

Bryan Stevenson delves deep into the broken U.S. justice system, detailing from his personal experience his many challenges and efforts as a lawyer and social advocate, especially on behalf of America's most rejected and marginalized people. The founder of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, recounts his experiences as a lawyer working to assist those desperately in need, reflecting on his pursuit of the ideal of compassion in American justice. The book centers around his efforts to exonerate Walter McMillian, an innocent man who was condemned in Alabama and spent 6 years on death row. Last year, *Just Mercy* was made into an award-winning film starring Jamie Foxx and Michael B. Jordan and is

currently available on Netflix. (*Winner of the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction; Winner of the NAACP Image Award for Nonfiction; Winner of a Books for a Better Life Award; Finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; Finalist for the Kirkus Reviews Prize and An American Library Association Notable Book*)

**6. *Outcasts United: The Story of a Refugee Soccer Team That Changed a Town* by Warren St. John**

Luma Mufleh, a young Jordanian woman educated in the United States and working as a coach for private youth soccer teams in Atlanta, was out for a drive one day and ended up in Clarkston, Georgia, where she was amazed and delighted to see young boys, black and brown and white, some barefoot, playing soccer on every flat surface they could find. Luma decided to quit her job, move to Clarkston, and start a soccer team that would soon defy the odds. Despite challenges to locate a practice field, minimal funding for uniforms and equipment, and zero fans on the sidelines, the Fugees practiced hard and demonstrated a team spirit that drew admiration from referees and competitors alike. *Outcasts United* explores how the community changed with the influx of refugees and how the dedication of Luma Mufleh and the entire Fugees soccer team inspired an entire community. (*2013 Christopher Award Winner and 2013 Junior Library Selection*)

**7. *Piecing Me Together* by Renee Watson**

High school junior Jade is an "at-risk" student from a rough neighborhood in Portland, OR. She is also a talented collage artist, and she attends an elite private school on scholarship. More than anything, she wants to go on a study abroad week offered at her school to use her Spanish skills. Instead, she is given an invitation to join Woman to Woman, a mentorship program for young women like her: poor and black. Her mentor, Maxine, is from a more privileged background, and Jade doesn't see what she can learn from her. But in spite of her early resistance to Maxine, Jade begins to open up and gain confidence, and, eventually, she is able to express the importance of her family, her community, and her art. (*NPR's Best Books of 2017; 2017 New York Public Library Best Teen Book of the Year; Chicago Public Library's Best Books of 2017; School Library Journal Best Book of 2017 and Kirkus Reviews' Best Teen Books of 2017*)

**8. *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* by Jane Goodall**

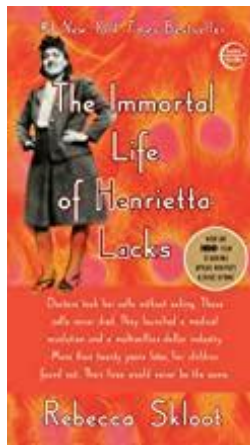
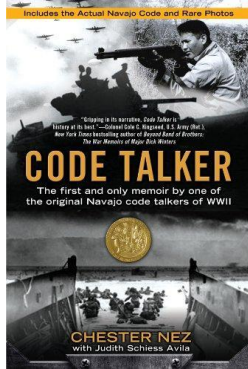
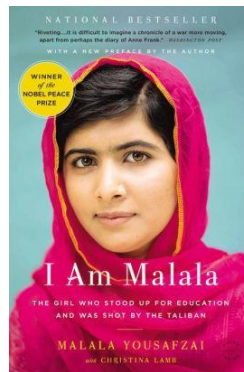
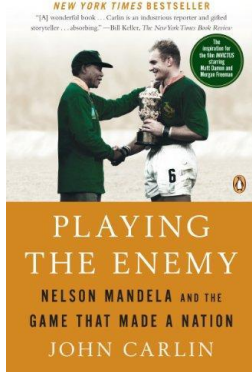
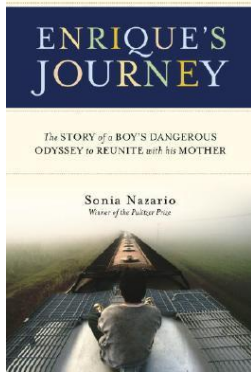
From world-renowned scientist Jane Goodall, as seen in the new National Geographic documentary *Jane*, comes a poignant memoir about her spiritual epiphany and an appeal for why everyone can find a reason for hope. Dr. Jane Goodall's revolutionary study of chimpanzees in Tanzania's Gombe preserve forever altered the very definition of humanity. Now, in a poignant and insightful memoir, Jane Goodall explores her extraordinary life and personal spiritual odyssey, with observations as profound as the knowledge she has brought back from the forest.

**9. *Eight Spiritual Heroes and Their Search for God* by Brennan R. Hill**

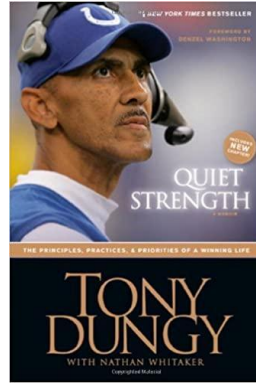
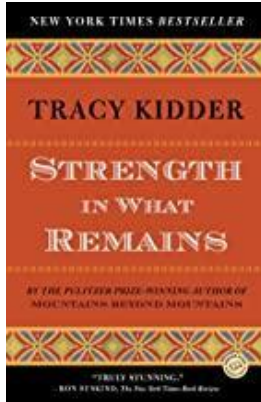
How does a person imagine God? How does that image change as the person matures spiritually and undergoes a significant religious experience? What influences—political, social, gender, faith tradition—shape and change a person's view of God? In this compelling and inspiring book of biographical theology, Brennan Hill uses stories and historical and theological sources to tell us how eight modern religious heroes see God. Hill's religious heroes are diverse: a Hindu (Mahatma Gandhi), a Jewess who converted to Christianity (Edith Stein), a black Baptist minister (Martin Luther King, Jr.), a Catholic laywoman (Dorothy Day), a Salvadoran archbishop (Archbishop Oscar Romero), two Jesuit priests (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Daniel Berrigan) and a nun (Mother Teresa of Calcutta).

## For Grades 11 and 12

Students in grades 11 and 12 would benefit from reading any of the following books. This list is only for enrichment purposes and does not involve any summer assignment.







**1. *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with his Mother* by Sonia Nazario**

Based on the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper series that won two Pulitzer Prizes, this page-turner about the power of family is a popular text in classrooms and a touchstone for communities across the country to engage in meaningful discussions about this essential American subject. *Enrique's Journey* recounts the unforgettable quest of a Honduran boy looking for his mother, eleven years after she is forced to leave her starving family to find work in the United States. Braving unimaginable peril, often clinging to the sides and tops of freight trains, Enrique travels through hostile worlds full of thugs, bandits, and corrupt cops. But he pushes forward, relying on his wit, courage, hope, and the kindness of strangers.

*(2006 Christopher Award Winner: California Book Award, Silver Medal, Non-fiction and 2003 Pulitzer Prize, feature writing, for "Enrique's Journey.")*

**2. *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation* by John Carlin**

Beginning in a jail cell and ending in a rugby tournament- the true story of how the most inspiring charm offensive in history brought South Africa together. After being released from prison and winning South Africa's first free election, Nelson Mandela presided over a country still deeply divided by fifty years of apartheid. His plan was ambitious if not far-fetched: use the national rugby team, the Springboks-long an embodiment of white-supremacist rule-to embody and engage a new South Africa as they prepared to host the 1995 World Cup. The string of wins that followed not only defied the odds, but capped Mandela's miraculous effort to bring South Africans together again in a hard-won, enduring bond. *(This book was the inspiration for the film, Invictus, starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon.)*

**3. *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb**

When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala refused to be silent and fought for her right to an education. When she was 15, she was shot in the head a point-blank range while riding the bus home from school. Few expected her to survive. Instead, at 16 she became a global symbol of peaceful protest and used her passionate voice to inspire change in the world. Malala was the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Her book has been translated into more than 40 languages. *(2013 Goodreads Choice Awards, Best Memoir & Autobiography 2014 Political Book Awards, Finalist, Political Book of the Year.)*

**4. *Code Talker: The First and Only Memoir by One of the Original Code Talkers of World War II* by Chester Nez**

His name wasn't Chester Nez. That was the English name he was assigned in kindergarten. And in boarding school at Fort Defiance, he was punished for speaking his native language, as the teachers sought to rid him of his culture and traditions. But discrimination didn't stop Chester from answering the call to defend his country after Pearl Harbor, for the Navajo have always been warriors, and his upbringing on a New Mexico reservation gave him the strength—both physical and mental—to excel as a marine. During World War II, the Japanese had managed to crack every code the United States used. But when the Marines turned to its Navajo recruits to develop and implement a secret military language, they created the only unbroken code in modern warfare—and helped assure victory for the United States over Japan in the South Pacific. “Today, we marked a moment of shared history and shared victory. We recall a story that all Americans can celebrate and every American should know. It is a story of ancient people called to serve in a modern war. It is a story of one unbreakable oral code of the Second World War, messages traveling by field radio on Iwo Jima in the very language heard across the Colorado plateau centuries ago.”— President George W. Bush. (*The author, Chester Nez, received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2001.*)

#### 5. ***The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak**

*When Death has a story to tell, you listen.* It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still. Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement. “The kind of book that can be life-changing.” —*The New York Times*. “Deserves a place on the same shelf with *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank.” —*USA Today* (2006: *School Library Journal Best Book of the Year*; 2006 *National Jewish Book Award for Young Adult Literature*; Michael L. Printz Honor Book- ALA Award that annually recognizes the "best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit and 2006 Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year for Young Adult Literature.)

#### 6. ***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot**

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine: The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, which are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb's effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown, buried in an unmarked grave. Henrietta's family did not learn of her “immortality” until more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using her husband and children in research without informed consent. And though the cells had launched a multimillion-dollar industry that sells human biological materials, her family never saw any of the profits. As Rebecca Skloot so brilliantly shows, the story of the Lacks family—past and present—is inextricably connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we are made of. (*National Academies Best Book of the Year Award, the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Young Adult Science Book award, and the Wellcome Trust Book Prize, awarded annually to an outstanding work of fiction or nonfiction on the theme of health and medicine. It also won the Heartland Prize for non-fiction, awarded to books that reinforce the values of heartland America.*)

#### 7. ***Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson**

Bryan Stevenson delves deep into the broken U.S. justice system, detailing from his personal experience his many challenges and efforts as a lawyer and social advocate, especially on behalf of America's most rejected and marginalized people. The founder of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, recounts his experiences as a lawyer working to assist those desperately in need, reflecting on his pursuit of the ideal of compassion in American justice. The book centers around his efforts to exonerate Walter McMillian, an innocent man who was condemned in Alabama and spent 6 years on death row. Last year, *Just Mercy* was made into an award-winning film starring Jamie Foxx and Michael B. Jordan and is currently available on Netflix. (*Winner of the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction; Winner of the NAACP Image Award for Nonfiction; Winner of a Books for a Better Life Award; Finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; Finalist for the Kirkus Reviews Prize and An American Library Association Notable Book.*)

#### **8. *Strength in What Remains* by Tracy Kidder**

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tracy Kidder tells the story of one man's inspiring American journey and of the ordinary people who helped him, providing brilliant testament to the power of second chances. Deo arrives in the United States from Burundi in search of a new life. Having survived a civil war and genocide, he lands at JFK airport with two hundred dollars, no English, and no contacts. He ekes out a precarious existence delivering groceries, living in Central Park, and learning English by reading dictionaries in bookstores. Then Deo begins to meet the strangers who will change his life, pointing him eventually in the direction of Columbia University, medical school, and a life devoted to healing. Kidder breaks new ground in telling this unforgettable story as he travels with Deo back over a turbulent life and shows us what it means to be fully human. (*2010 Christopher Award Winner; Named one of the Best Books of the Year by Los Angeles Times • San Francisco Chronicle • Chicago Tribune • The Christian Science Monitor • Publishers Weekly.*)

#### **9. *Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, and Priorities of a Winning Life* by Tony Dungy with Nathan Whitaker**

Tony Dungy's words and example have intrigued millions of people, particularly following his victory in Super Bowl XLI, the first for an African American coach. How is it possible for a coach—especially a football coach—to win the respect of his players and lead them to the Super Bowl without the screaming histrionics, the profanities, and the demand that the sport come before anything else? How is it possible for anyone to be successful without compromising faith and family? In this inspiring and reflective memoir, now updated with a new chapter, Coach Dungy tells the story of a life lived for God and family—and challenges us all to redefine our ideas of what it means to succeed. (*2008 Retailer's Choice Award Winner*)

#### **10. *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* by Immaculee Ilibagiza and Steve Erwin**

Immaculee Ilibagiza grew up in a country she loved, surrounded by a family she cherished. But in 1994 her idyllic world was ripped apart as Rwanda descended into a bloody genocide. Immaculee's family was brutally murdered during a killing spree that lasted three months and claimed the lives of nearly a million Rwandans. Incredibly, Immaculee survived the slaughter. For 91 days, she and seven other women huddled silently together in the cramped bathroom of a local pastor while hundreds of machete-wielding killers hunted for them. It was during those endless hours of unspeakable terror that Immaculee discovered the power of prayer, eventually shedding her fear of death and forging a profound and lasting relationship with God. She emerged from her bathroom hideout having discovered the meaning of truly unconditional love—a love so strong she was able seek out and forgive her family's killers. The



triumphant story of this remarkable young woman's journey through the darkness of genocide will inspire anyone whose life has been touched by fear, suffering, and loss. (*Immaculée holds honorary doctoral degrees from The University of Notre Dame and Saint John's University, and was awarded The Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Reconciliation and Peace 2007.*)