Chinese Photographer Documents Catholic Resilience
Lu Nan exhibit at Loyola University shows that faith thrives in China despite government opposition
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The Loyola University Museum of Art in Chicago is displaying a collection of photographs that document the resilience of the Roman Catholic faith in China, an officially atheist country.

Lu Nan, a Beijing photographer specializing in humanitarian issues, photographs Chinese people engaged in simple acts of practicing their faith. The photos contain no grand churches or liturgical objects, but have been praised by viewers as “striking” and “stirring.”

One picture shows a small child carrying a large painting of Jesus down a dirt path, with only the child’s hands and feet visible. Another shows two old women praying at a grave marked by a rudimentary cross.

“It sort of shows people in very rural settings, in very simple places, carrying out the rituals of Catholicism,” says Donald Heider, the Dean of the School of Communication at the university.

The Communist government in China for years discouraged religious activities, so the church went “underground” as believers worshipped in private.

Lu Nan’s photographs bring these practices out into the open by showing the practices and private devotion of China’s hidden Catholics.