



The Catholic Virginian



Serving the People of the Diocese of Richmond for 90 years

Vol. 95, No. 15

www.catholicvirginian.org

May 18, 2020

Celebrating Mass again!

Exercising precautions, parishes will welcome congregations May 23-24

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI
The Catholic Virginian

Beginning the weekend of May 23-24, the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Richmond will again be celebrating Masses in their parish churches.

Per Gov. Ralph Northam's Executive Order 61, places of worship may have services for up to 50% of the lowest occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy of the room or facility in which the Mass is celebrated.

Included in an updated "Emergency Preparedness Instruction Manual" are details about how Masses are to be celebrated. It details precautions to which parishes must adhere, including social distancing and the wearing of masks by all congregants ages 3 and older.

The manual, written by the diocesan Office of Preparedness, was sent to priests, deacons, seminarians, principals, campus ministers and lay leaders on Wednesday, May 13 and reviewed at a webinar that day.

Dispensation from obligation continues

While the celebration of Masses has resumed, Bishop Barry C. Knestout continues to dispense "all of the faithful of the Diocese of Richmond from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days until further notice."

The dispensation is due to the capacity limit for liturgies which is reducing the number of congregants and recognizing that those who have been categorized as "vulnerable," i.e., anyone 65 and older and those who are immunocompromised, should remain at home.

"Parishes should continue livestreaming/recording Mass for the faithful unable to attend, e.g., those in a vulnerable category," the document stated.

However, those in the vulnerable category are not prohibited from attending Mass. According to the guidelines, "In light of many parish communities having a large number of parishioners in a vulnerable category, when establishing adjusted Mass times, parishes may wish to consider a Mass time designated/reserved for those in a vulnerable category."

Mass times

The guidelines stipulate that "if/when more than one Mass occurs on a given day, there must be, at minimum, three hours between the start time of each Mass," e.g., 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.; 9:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.

It continues, "This allows for people to arrive and be seated, the Mass to be celebrated, receipt of Communion (which may take longer than normal due to social distancing requirements),

the people to depart the building through the appropriate exit, the church and restrooms to be cleaned and disinfected prior to the next Mass, and avoid possible interaction of the faithful leaving/arriving at a Mass in an effort to maintain indoor capacity percentages."

Due to capacity limitations in worship spaces, parishes will need to devise a system for inviting parishioners to attend Mass. Among the possibilities for a particular Mass are alphabetically; by envelope number or via online sign-up.

Once invited, parishioners will be advised to arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of Mass so they can be ushered to their seats.

Receiving the Eucharist

Only the priest and deacon, each wearing a mask, will distribute Communion at Masses. Communicants receiving the Eucharist in their hands will come forward wearing their masks, will receive the host, step aside, lift their face covering, consume the host, replace the face covering and return to their seat.

Since the CDC and WHO have recommended against distributing and receiving Communion on the tongue, the manual states, "In response to the divine law to love our brothers and sisters, and out of special concern for the vulnerable and the

See Mass, Page 3



As encouragement for health care workers and others during COVID-19, teens from Holy Family, Virginia Beach, painted "signs of hope" the weekend of May 1. Parish social justice coordinator Brian Alexander and his son Nathan mounted the artwork and displayed it along North Great Neck Road. (Photo provided)

'Signs of hope' in Va. Beach

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI
The Catholic Virginian

With their gifts of time, talent and money, parishioners of Holy Family, Virginia Beach, have been signs of hope to their community during COVID-19.

In April, an anonymous parishioner approached Father René R. Castillo, pastor of the parish, and said he would contribute \$5,000 to Foodbank for Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, and that his company would do the same, if parishioners matched the \$10,000 gift.

With the support of the parish council and finance council, Father Castillo, pastor of the 1,400-household parish since last July, made the

See Hope, Page 3

Inside This Edition

Bishop updates
bicentennial
plans for diocese
Page 3

Fulfill baptismal
commission to
share the Spirit
Page 7

God 'sent her job'
to serve those
in need
Page 10

Let Holy Spirit inspire you to live your faith



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

Thanks to the inspiration of my father, I have a particular devotion to the Holy Spirit. Dad was immersed in the Charismatic Renewal and was on fire with the Holy Spirit. Who he was and what he did was the result of his living a life in the Spirit. He brought energy, zeal and enthusiasm for living and proclaiming that faith, sharing it with everyone around him. It eventually led to his discerning a vocation to the permanent diaconate.

Shortly after I arrived in Richmond, I received a gift of a beautiful pencil drawing of the Holy Spirit. This drawing hangs in my private chapel, just under the eucharistic vigil light where it serves as a reminder of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in all that we undertake.

While devotion to the Holy Spirit is not as well known as other Church devotions, it is tied to Marian devotions because Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was with her at the time of her own Immaculate

Conception to protect her from original sin; he overshadowed her at the Annunciation. When Jesus appeared in the upper room and bestowed the power of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, she was there as an example to them of what it meant to live life in the Spirit.

From the letters and emails I have received, I know that one of the greatest sacrifices you have made during COVID-19 has been not being able to receive the Eucharist. While you have to be distant from the eucharistic presence of our Lord, the Holy Spirit is never distant from us.

In reports regarding COVID-19, actions we should take regarding its spread are described as critical. What is critical to our spiritual well-being at this time is devotion to the Holy Spirit.

While we may be temporarily distant from some of the sacraments, consider how the fruits of the Holy Spirit can provide sustenance for our spiritual lives when we apply them to the challenges presented daily as a result of the coronavirus. There is no shortage of opportunities, individually and collectively, during which we can draw upon charity, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meek-

ness, mildness, faith and continence.

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of our Church, it is important that we be encouraged by our communion with the Holy Spirit who dwells within our hearts, and who guides us in our faith and inspires us to *live* that faith — even in the most difficult of times.

CLERGY ASSIGNMENT

The Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout, bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, has announced the following, effective Wednesday, May 6, 2020:

OFFICIAL

Father Mark White is suspended from public ministry, effective immediately.

While restricted from his ministerial role, Father White is prohibited from any form of practicing Church ministry which includes the public celebration of the sacraments and exercising any official functions related to the office of a pastor.

Under the Code of Canon Law, while seeking recourse, Father White still retains the title of pastor, but any responsibilities or public duties associated with the title are suspended.

As communicated Monday, April 13, **Father Kevin Segerblom**, episcopal vicar for the Western Vicariate, is appointed as administrator overseeing the pastoral care and administrative duties for the parishes of St. Joseph, Martinsville, and St. Francis of Assisi, Rocky Mount.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

THE EUCHARIST

1820

TIME CAPSULE

2020

THE LEGACY OF THE POPE OF THE EUCHARIST

Throughout the Catholic Diocese of Richmond's bicentennial year, a time capsule recalling a particular time in diocesan history is scheduled to be published in each issue of *The Catholic Virginian*. The bicentennial time capsules have been researched and compiled by Father Anthony E. Marques, chair of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond's Bicentennial Task Force.

Veil and white dress for girls, shirt and tie for boys: most Catholics never forget the day — usually in May in the United States and other Western countries — when they received the Eucharist for the first time.

But the age for First Holy Communion has varied over the course of history. Baptized infants evidently received the Eucharist during antiquity, with local custom determining the frequency of this practice.

Around 1200, this rite fell out of use in the Western, Latin-speaking Catholic Church, but has continued uninterrupted in the Orthodox Churches and in the Coptic (Egyptian) Catholic Church. (Other Eastern Catholic Churches began restoring the practice of infant Communion in the mid-1990s.)

The minimum age for First Holy Communion in the West became the “age of reason.” This development likely occurred out of concern for safeguarding the eucharistic species.

Previously, infants and young children had



Celebration of First Holy Communion at St. Bede Church, Williamsburg, in 1956. The banner on the right features an image of Pope Pius X, who had been canonized in 1954. The words beneath the image enshrine his legacy: “Pope of the Eucharist.” (Photo/Diocese of Richmond Archives)

mostly received the consecrated wine alone, so when the chalice was gradually withdrawn from the laity for fear of spillage, infant Communion disappeared. Reception of the Eucharist took place at an age when it seemed that a child could reverently consume the consecrated host — the “age of discretion.”

Lateran Council IV (1215) solidified the “age of reason” as the time for First Holy Communion when, in response to infrequent lay Communion, it mandated at least yearly reception of the Eucharist, together with sacramental confession, for those who reached the “age of discretion” (canon 21). But the council never specified

in what year of their lives people attain this age.

Significantly, too, Lateran IV did not claim that understanding of the Eucharist was a requirement for receiving the sacrament. For its part, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) only taught that Communion before the “age of reason” was unnecessary, since young children could not sin gravely and therefore lose the grace of baptism (Doctrine on Communion under Both Species and the Communion of Young Children, 1562, canon 4).

A rationale was eventually supplied for having the age of reason as the minimum age

See *Time Capsule*, Page 8

Blessings for moms



During the May 10 Mother's Day drive through blessing at St. Mary, Richmond, Father Michael Renninger blesses parishioners Mary DeAlto, back seat, and Mary Katherine Duffer, front seat. Volunteers distributed prayer cards, a floral arrangement and an ornament featuring the Blessed Mother and infant Jesus. (Photo/Joyce Park)

Mass

Continued from Page 1

priest/deacon, communicants who normally receive on the tongue are respectfully asked to make a sacrifice of personal preference. They are asked to prayerfully consider the reverent act of receiving in the hand, which practice is attested in our Catholic Tradition since the ancient Church."

Other stipulations

The manual, which also includes directives previously put in place, also notes:

- Because social distancing is still in effect and due to the small size of many of the adoration chapels in the diocese, the Blessed Sacrament should continue to be secured in the tabernacle in the larger main body of the church so that social distancing can be maintained for private prayer.
- While use of a choir is suspended and singing by the assembly is discouraged, a cantor and one musician may be present. "It has been

demonstrated that singing can increase the spread of the virus," according to the manual.

- Parishes are to suppress the passing of baskets for the offertory collection. They can place the baskets at the front of the church for the faithful to place their offertory in immediately before stepping forward to receive Communion or have an usher hold a basket into which people can place their offertory as they depart the church.
- Baptismal and holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
- All parishes should remain open during normal operating hours. If hours must be adjusted, the pastor should ensure this is communicated to parishioners. Either the pastor or a designated staff member should ensure that the phone is answered and email is responded to in a timely manner.

Editor's note: Those with questions regarding the reopening of churches for the celebration of public Masses should contact their parishes or email prepared@richmonddiocese.org.

Hope

Continued from Page 1

appeal at the end of his livestreamed Mass on Sunday, April 19. Under the heading of Faith + Food = Love, the parish posted the undertaking on Flocknotes.

"Within six hours we had raised \$10,000," said Brian Alexander, part-time social justice coordinator at the parish, noting that almost all of the 195 donations were made online. "People have become savvy and comfortable with online giving during this time (of COVID-19)."

In less than a week, parishioners had donated another \$12,000 to the appeal.

Calling people's desire to contribute "uplifting and amazing," Alexander said, "They saw a need and answered a call to action."

Father Castillo called Alexander, a retired earth sciences teacher hired by the parish in February, a "treasure" for his commitment to social

justice concerns.

"He is very involved in our Haiti and prison ministries; he is easily immersed into social justice," the priest said, noting that Alexander oversees 30 ministries.

On Friday, May 1 Alexander invited youth in the parish to create "signs of hope." He cut sheets of plywood into 2x4' sections and delivered those and cans of paint to 17 teens who made signs that are displayed along North Great Neck Road.

He said that besides offering encouragement to passers-by, the project "gives teens a voice."

Alexander enlisted Roseann Boucher, a parishioner who helps with the LifeTeen program, to help recruit teens to paint the signs. Several of them, including her daughter, painted one of the signs — maintaining social distancing by taking turns — in the family's garage.

"They were awesome; they really went to work," Boucher said.

While Alexander provided the sayings, the teens determined how they would be conveyed.

"They came out really well," Boucher said, noting it took about two hours to complete one sign.

Among the 17 messages were: "Superheroes wear masks"; "God is love"; "Be not afraid" and "Love heals."

"People wanted to share some hope, and art helps us through these times," said Alexander who, along with his son Nathan, a physical education teacher at Charlottesville High School, built the bases to which the signs were mounted.



According to Holy Family social justice coordinator Brian Alexander, "People wanted to share some hope, and art helps us through these times." (Photo provided)

BISHOP UPDATES BICENTENNIAL PLANS

For more than 18 months leading up to 2020, the Diocese of Richmond had big plans for the commemoration of its bicentennial. It still does, but COVID-19 has forced the diocese to rework those plans

In a May 4 letter to the faithful, Bishop Barry C. Knestout wrote, "When planning began for the diocesan bicentennial, I could not have imagined that we would be facing a pandemic during this jubilee year."

Due to the coronavirus, the bishop said plans for the following events have been modified:

■ The pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, which had been scheduled for Saturday, May 9, has been postponed until the fall.

■ The Bicentennial Regional Masses will occur as previously scheduled. The Mass on Saturday, July 11, which will also be the Chrism Mass, will take place at 10:30 a.m. at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond; the Mass on Saturday, Sept. 26 will be at 10:30 a.m. at St. Andrew, Roanoke.

"These will occur even if only lives-treated and limited numbers of people are permitted to attend," Bishop Knestout wrote.

■ The Octave of Service — Sunday, Sept. 27 through Sunday, Oct. 4 — which is centered upon the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, patron of the diocese, will take place as previously scheduled, with safeguards as appropriate for the common good.

■ The Eucharistic Congress will take place only on Saturday, Nov. 7 and in a different format. Instead of gathering at the Greater Richmond Convention Center as had been planned, there will be a series of synchronized events in parishes, and speakers will give online presentations.

■ A Mass marking the close of the bicentennial is scheduled to be celebrated on Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. at a site to be determined.

Bishop Knestout noted that when the diocese "faced numerous hardships over the course of two centuries," e.g., the Civil War, yellow fever and the Spanish flu, the Church adapted.

"In good times or bad, God has never abandoned us. Moved by this conviction, many Catholics responded to the needs around them by making sacrifices for the sake of the Church, for those who were poor, and for the common good, by seeking ways to alleviate the pain of others," he wrote. "As we grapple with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pestilence, I pray that we too may be strengthened to serve others and give witness to our faith."

The bishop asked parishes, schools and campus ministries to continue promoting the bicentennial by praying the bicentennial prayer, using the bicentennial hymn, completing the evangelization spiritual preparation, publicizing bicentennial events and learning more about the history of the diocese.

Editor's note: All the information about the bicentennial can be accessed at <https://2020.richmonddiocese.org/>.

Teen studies COVID-19 prevention, treatment

PCHS student's work earns top honors at Tidewater science fair

JENNIFER NEVILLE

Special to The Catholic Virginian

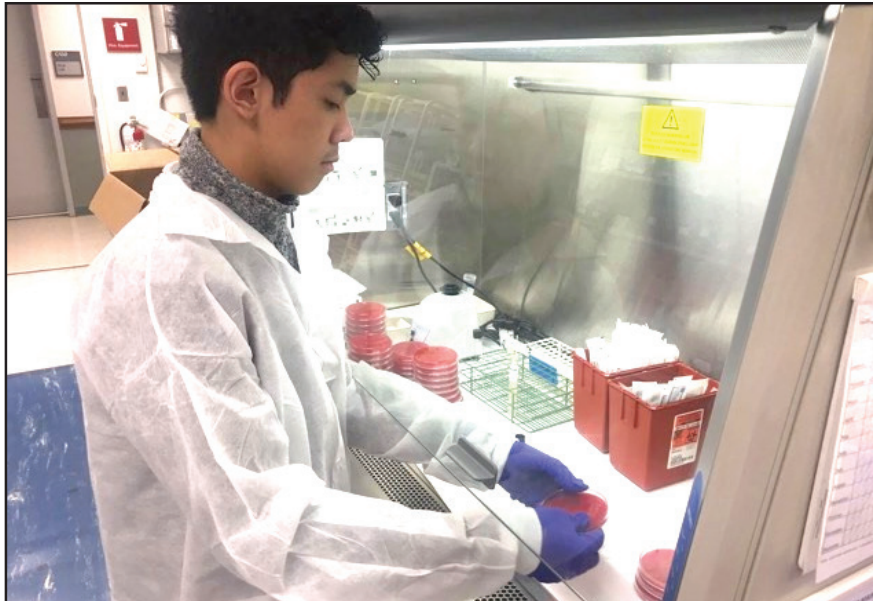
As you walk along the ocean-front you might spot an oyster shell. You may simply pass it by, or you may pick it up to add to your shell collection. Either way, it's just a shell to you.

But for 15-year-old Parker Cruz in Hampton, it's much more. Parker, a sophomore at Peninsula Catholic High School in Newport News, won first place in the Microbiology Senior Division of the virtual 2020 Tidewater Science and Engineering Fair (TSEF) in March with his project on whether chitosan, found in oyster shells, can be used to prevent and treat COVID-19.

Scientific studies, mainly with water in water treatment facilities, have shown that chitosan has anti-fungal, anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties, Parker said. He explained that what makes his experiment novel is that he used chitosan derived from oysters rather than that of crabs and shrimp which are commonly used. He added that one benefit of chitosan from oysters is that it is hypoallergenic.

To put it simply, for his experiment, Parker added chitosan to *E. coli* in petri dishes, allowed the solution to set for 30 minutes, administered viruses to each petri dish and let them incubate for 24 hours. The *E. coli* grew back in all but the control experiment, leading Parker to conclude that chitosan may protect its host from viral infections.

Parker and his 12th-grade sister Madison participate in the science fair each year on their own volition rather than as a result of a class assignment. This year Madison won first place in the Biochemistry Senior Division for her experiment to de-



As part of his award-winning experiment for the Tidewater Science and Engineering Fair, Parker Cruz, a student at Peninsula Catholic High School, tested the antiviral properties of chitosan on *E. coli* bacteria in infected with a virus.

(Photo provided)

termine if chitin can relieve chronic pain, thus making it a possible substitute for addicting opioids.

This is Parker's fourth year in the science competition. Previous projects included testing oyster chitosan for hemostatic and anti-tumor properties.

The marine science program at Star of the Sea School in Hampton, which he attended in elementary and middle school, sparked his interest in oysters as did an essay contest sponsored by Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association which he won in middle school.

As he was brainstorming ideas for this year's competition, Parker said he became intrigued with the coronavirus and its trajectory in its early stages. Social media had alerted him that "something was happening in China," and subsequent news coverage showed the situation worsening.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) website, China first reported "a pneumonia of unknown cause" to WHO on Dec. 31, 2019. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, and a pandemic March 11. On Feb. 11, WHO announced a name for the new disease: COVID-19, short for coronavirus disease 2019.

"Once it started spreading, I realized I could do something on this," Parker said. "I always want to make a difference in the world. Working on a project that is relevant right now made it a lot of fun."

His father Martin said Parker's science project is "the perfect time to combine faith and science because solving these global concerns is a pro-life issue."

Both of Parker's parents work in healthcare — his mother Karen as a nurse at Bon Secours Mary Immac-

ulate Hospital in Newport News and his father as a pharmacist at the VA hospital in Hampton and Walmart in Gloucester. Each year Parker's father encourages him and Madison to create projects that are health-oriented and have the potential to have "a big impact on a large population."

That's in line with Parker's aspiration to major in biology and then go to medical school to become a surgeon.

Parker said he enjoys science because it is "ever evolving" with "new discoveries."

"I try to be part of it, try to discover new things that could possibly change the world," Parker said.

Emily Jensen, who taught Parker in her honors chemistry class last semester, said Parker has "a natural talent" for science, and although he is a quiet student, he participates in class discussions and helps fellow pupils.

His mother shared a similar reflection about Parker and Madison, both of whom volunteer at Mary Immaculate Hospital during school breaks.

"They're willing to share their blessings and talents as God uses them to give back to the community," Karen said. "They love volunteering and discovering new things and helping people with what they discover."

Jensen and PCHS principal Janine Franklin praised Parker for his winning science project.

"We are very proud of this accomplishment, especially as it took a great deal of time and effort outside of his regular school hours," Franklin said. "The fact that he was so interested and curious about COVID-19 and its impact before it even became a serious concern in the United States speaks to his awareness of and compassion for his fellow humans."

Pandemic expedites Saint Gertrude High School move

Will co-locate with Benedictine for upcoming school year

The religious superiors of Saint Gertrude High School and Benedictine College Preparatory announced Thursday, April 30 that its two institutions would co-locate a year earlier than originally planned.

A release from the schools noted that the decision comes as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the economic uncertainty associated with it. With its move to the Goochland campus this summer, Saint Gertrude will be ready to support its students for the 2020-21 school year.

When the schools announced the formation of the Benedictine Schools of Richmond in January, it included plans for Saint Gertrude to begin operating in Goochland at the

start of the 2021-22 school year, and that a girls-only building would be built in time for the 2022-23 school year. The Benedictine Schools of Richmond is the umbrella organization that includes the two high schools.

Economic uncertainty driven by the coronavirus pandemic, however, served as a catalyst for the schools' leadership teams to review that timeline. While that uncertainty is yet to be fully manifest, there is a strong possibility that it will do so in the form of negative impacts to family finances, as well as businesses — including independent schools.

All national and state independent school associations have recommended that all member schools

plan for major budgetary impacts as a result of the pandemic. As such, costs associated with maintaining two campuses during such uncertainty was a proximate reason for considering, and ultimately approving, the expedited schedule.

The leadership of both schools have stated their strong support of single-sex Catholic education in Richmond, a tradition both schools have maintained since their founding — Saint Gertrude in 1922 and Benedictine in 1911.

While the move will have students of both schools sharing some facilities, with few exceptions, classrooms will remain single-sex. In essence, the schools will continue to operate as two independent schools, with different start and end

times to their school days, different class durations and separate student social gathering areas.

Leadership teams of both schools are in the process of finalizing the detailed plans for optimization of the River Road campus. The construction schedule for the Saint Gertrude High School building is unaffected by this change, with development set to start this fall.

For much of the 20th century, the two schools were located within a block of each other in the Richmond Museum District, until Benedictine moved to River Road in 2013. The relocation of Saint Gertrude to Goochland County will eventually replicate that physical closeness of the past while retaining each school's distinctiveness.

General Assembly session yields sweeping changes

GUEST COMMENTARY

JEFF CARUSO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
VIRGINIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

The 2019 elections swung the Senate and House from majority Republican to majority Democrat. With the switch in power came a seismic shift in leadership priorities and a rush by the new majority to enact sweeping changes that Gov. Ralph Northam was eager to sign. In just two months, nearly 1,300 bills passed, some drastically altering or even erasing decades of state policy.

For the Virginia Catholic Conference, this session was far different than any other in its 15-year history. The sheer number and striking severity of threats, especially to life and religious liberty, created a triage-like environment for VCC advocacy this year.

What passed

- Abortion expansion legislation that dis-

mantles decades of pro-life protections. It eliminates health and safety regulations for abortion facilities, allows non-doctors to perform first-trimester abortions and removes nearly all requirements of informed consent before an abortion. Northam announced his signature in a press release issued on Good Friday.

- Reversal of the Hyde Amendment restrictions against abortion funding that VCC advocacy had helped secure one year ago.
- Ratification of the ERA, even though its language has already been used to challenge and overturn pro-life laws in other states.
- Legislation adding “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” as protected categories in many areas of state law. VCC efforts to amend the legislation to ensure religious liberty protections for religious employers, churches, schools and other ministries to practice their beliefs — including the beliefs that God created each person male or female and established marriage as the union of a man and a woman — were thwarted at every turn.

VCC involvement was, however, instrumental in ensuring these new provisions do not change existing law on state contracts and thus do not impact partnerships between Catholic Charities and the Commonwealth to provide refugee resettlement and other services.

- Legislation requiring health benefit plans to cover gender transition treatments and surgery. VCC efforts to add an exemption for religious employers whose beliefs do not permit this coverage were defeated.
- Legislation requiring background checks for firearm purchases.
- Legislation ensuring that crime victims and witnesses are not asked their immigration status when they report crimes.
- Legislation protecting borrowers from predatory lending practices.

What did not pass

- Bills to legalize assisted suicide, to re-

See Commentary Page 8

Bishops’ response ‘laudable but weak’

The sentiments of Bishops Knestout and Burbidge in response to Gov. Northam’s signing virulent, anti-life legislation, reversing hard-fought gains in the fight to protect women and the most vulnerable among us, the pre-born and the just-born, were laudable but weak (Catholic Virginian, April 20). They were evocative of similar sentiments expressed by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan when New York Gov. Cuomo led the way for Northam some months ago.

Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen taught, “Moral principles do not depend on a majority vote. Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is wrong. Right is right, even if nobody is right.”

Like Cardinal Dolan, our Virginia bishops missed the opportunity to remind the faithful that anyone who participates or lends consent to abortion incurs the penalty of excommunication. I also regret that your consigning this story to the last, rather than the first, page of the newspaper sends its own message of relative importance.

– Robert R. Kaplan
Midlothian

Appreciates antiphons during bishop’s Mass

I want to express my appreciation for the content of our diocesan livestream Masses celebrated by Bishop Knestout with the assistance of our wonderful cathedral

musicians, but especially the choice to utilize sung antiphons during the Mass. The content within these antiphons complements the readings at each Mass.

The Church has officially set these antiphons to Gregorian Chant in the “Graduale Romanum” and “Graduale Simplex,” the two official songbooks of the Roman Rite. However, there exist many approved vernacular settings of these Antiphons in chant, metrical, even praise and worship settings.

My parish, All Saints in Floyd, chants the antiphons in addition to hymns during our Masses. We have seen a huge benefit to the liturgical life of our parish from the introduction of this venerable tradition.

In its document “Sing to the Lord” the USCCB praises the practice of singing the antiphons: “Proper antiphons from the liturgical books are to be esteemed and used especially because they are the very voice of God speaking to us in the Scriptures.”

I encourage more parishes to consider incorporating this ancient practice into our liturgies. These songs have occupied a place within our heritage for ages but unfortunately in the past half century we have seen them all but abandoned. Following the lead of the Second Vatican Council we should aim to recover our sacred musical heritage, giving “pride of place” to these beautiful songs.

– William Yearout
Willis

Letters

Suffering, death are part of life

In the May 4 Catholic Virginian, a reader implicitly asks Father Doyle if it was necessary for Jesus to suffer and die for our salvation, and if so, why.

Jesus pleaded with God the Father just before his crucifixion if it was possible to avoid it, so it definitely was necessary. We might never know the fullness and depth of this mystery, but it is central to our faith, as Jesus emphasizes in John chapter 6.

Suffering and physical death are part of life. Parents show love by suffering and giving their lives for their children. Students suffer in obtaining knowledge and skills. Athletes and artists willingly suffer to perform well. At Fatima an angel told Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta to offer their sufferings for souls in purgatory.

Suffering becomes evil only when separated from our life in God. To make it possible that we remain in God beyond physical death, Jesus had to die, both to show the way to the Father and to permit us to unite our death to his.

Many people have unjustly died shameful deaths involving great suffering, so Jesus had to suffer the same. Therefore, at Mass when the priest receives the gifts of bread and wine, we offer not only our gifts and works, but also our sufferings, shortcomings and even sins that

we have confessed.

As St. Paul says, in our bodies we complete Jesus’ suffering. God thereby takes what we might regard as evil and unjust and transforms it into his unbounded love through us.

Thanks be to God.

– Joe Rudmin
Harrisonburg

Work for solidarity in the new normal

COVID-19 is the constant subject of conversations, news reports and internet searches. No surprise as everyone has been affected in at least one aspect of daily life. The ways we learn, socialize, shop, work and eat are not what they were two months ago. Lately the hot topic is what the “new normal” will look like after these upheavals to our status quo.

Pope Francis addressed this topic in his homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, saying, “The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer. We are all frail,

all equal, all precious. May we be profoundly shaken by what is happening all around us: the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family.”

There are so many injustices (racial, economic, environmental, etc.) that have been spotlighted by this pandemic. As Catholics we are called to work for solidarity. St. John Paul II laid this out in “Sollicitudo rei Socialis”: “[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”

As we start forming the new normal let us think of our brothers and sisters first and work to create a just community both locally and globally.

– Anna Cave
Henrico

Mail: The Catholic Virginian Press, 7800 Carousel Ln., Richmond, VA 23294
Phone: (804) 359-5654 • www.catholicvirginian.org
Circulation changes to: acarneal@catholicvirginian.org

Publisher: Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Editor: Brian T. Olszewski (804) 622-5225 bolszewski@catholicvirginian.org
Creative Director: Stephen Previtera (804) 622-5229 sprevitera@catholicvirginian.org
Circulation: Ashly Krebs (804) 622-5226 akrebs@catholicvirginian.org
Eastern Correspondents: Wendy Klesch and Jennifer Neville
Western Correspondents: Karen Adams and Joseph Staniunas
Central Correspondent: Kristen L. Byrd and Rose Morrisette

Postmaster: Send address change to The Catholic Virginian, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA 23294. The Catholic Virginian ISSN 0008-8404 – Published every other week on Monday by The Catholic Virginian Press, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA. Periodical postage paid at Richmond, VA and at additional mailing office. Twenty-five cents per copy, \$12.50 per year

SOWING FAITH IN A CATHOLIC FRONTIER: A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

Editor's note: Throughout the Catholic Diocese of Richmond's bicentennial year, The Catholic Virginian will publish the history of the diocese in the Shine Like Stars in the World section that will appear in the last issue of each month. The content of this section is provided by the Bicentennial Task Force.

FATHER ANTHONY E. MARQUES
Chair, Catholic Diocese of Richmond
Bicentennial Task Force

Wheat Among Weeds: Challenges and Changes (1841–1888)

Pope Gregory XVI restored the Richmond Diocese to independent status in 1841.

This decision inaugurated a new era for the Church in Virginia, which included territorial changes and the ravages of the nation's bloodiest war.

Bishop John McGill:
"Know-Nothings," *Yellow Fever and the Civil War* (1850–1872)

With Richard V. Whelan's transfer to Wheeling, John McGill (1809–1872) was appointed the third bishop of Richmond in 1850. McGill, who was born in Philadelphia, was a priest of the Diocese of Louisville (formerly Bardstown), Kentucky.

In Richmond, he assumed responsibility for a diocese with 7,000 Catholics, 10 churches, and eight priests. McGill's long episcopate was filled with adversity: the rise of the anti-Catholic "Know-Nothing" movement, a yellow fever epidemic in Tidewater and the bloodshed of the Civil War.

The Know-Nothing party (ca. 1850) took its name from the reply its members were to give when asked about their membership in this quasi-secret organization: "I know nothing." The American Party, as it was formally called later (1855), spread throughout the United States, and falsely accused Catholic immigrants of seeking to overturn religious liberty.

In Virginia, stalled public works — projects that typically employed immigrants — strengthened the movement's influence. Bishop McGill, who was a skilled apologist, vigorously defended the Catholic Church against the Know-Nothings (1854–1855).

While the Know-Nothing controversy was in full swing, an outbreak of yellow fever devastated Norfolk and Portsmouth in the summer of 1855, claiming 3,000 lives. Two priests, Father Matthew O'Keefe (1828–1906) in Norfolk and Father Francis Devlin (1813–1855) in Portsmouth, courageously alleviated the sufferings of Catholic and Protestant victims.

O'Keefe was infected twice and survived; Devlin died from the pestilence. In Norfolk, Ann Behan Plume Herron (1802–1855) made her home into a makeshift hospital where she nursed her slaves. Herron donated her house to the Daughters of Charity before succumbing to the disease herself.

This was the first Catholic hospital in the diocese, which was incorporated as the Hospital of

St. Vincent de Paul (today DePaul Medical Center) in 1856. All of these heroic acts of charity lessened anti-Catholic bigotry in the region.

The Civil War erupted several years later (1861–1865). During this most violent conflict in American history, the territory of the Diocese of Richmond was the heart of the breakaway country. In fact, St. Peter's Cathedral was located just one block from the Capitol of the Confederate States of America.

Like most Catholics in the South, Bishop McGill was an ardent supporter of the Southern cause. Few Catholics in Virginia owned slaves but they supported others' right to do so. McGill did not regard slavery as a grave sin, and he blamed the abolitionist movement for the breakup of the Union.

Numerous popes, beginning in 1435, had condemned racial slavery, or at least some aspects of it, but their pronouncements went unheeded. Leading up to the Civil War, American bishops were divided along regional lines over the issue of slavery.

Once the Civil War began, McGill was unable to visit or even govern parts of the diocese (1861–1865). Union forces occupied cities such as Martinsburg (1861–1864) — it changed hands 37 times — Norfolk (1862), and Richmond (1865). Consequently, McGill had no communication with his priests who were across battle lines.

Following the Union occupation of Norfolk, O'Keefe suggested to Archbishop Francis Kenrick (1797–1863) of Baltimore that he administer those sections of the Diocese of Richmond that were cut off from McGill (February 1863). The archbishop was already doing so in the case of Fort Monroe in Hampton.

O'Keefe, although himself a Confederate loyalist, and Father Michael Ferrin, had braved gunfire to minister to Union troops at the fort who were Catholic. Kenrick then asked Redemptorists from Annapolis, Maryland to assume pastoral responsibility for the installation (November 1862).

Among these priests who celebrated Mass, heard confessions and cared for the sick was Father Francis Xavier Seelos (1819–1867). Like his mentor and colleague, St. John Neumann, Seelos was a missionary (from present-day Germany). The "cheerful ascetic," as he was known, ministered at Fort Monroe for a brief time beginning in December 1862. Seelos was beatified in 2000.



A priest celebrates Mass during the Civil War.

Even as the war raged and casualties mounted, parishes in the Diocese of Richmond continued normal activities such as celebrating Mass, holding meetings and providing religious education. Few Catholic churches were damaged during the war, but the conflict still placed a strain on inhabitants of cities occupied by Union forces.

The Civil War also had territorial implications for the diocese. After Virginia seceded and became part of the Confederacy (1861), the northwestern part of the commonwealth formed the new state of West Virginia and joined the Union (1863).

As a result, the border of the Dioceses of Richmond and Wheeling crossed state lines (Richmond now included the northeast panhandle of West Virginia, while Wheeling encompassed southwest Virginia). This discrepancy between civil and ecclesiastical boundaries lasted until 1974.

By the end of the war, the South was devastated. Nevertheless, the image of the Church improved in Virginia and throughout the region, owing to the ministry of chaplains, the heroic work of religious sisters in caring for wounded soldiers on both sides and the service of Catholics in the Confederate army.

The formal boundaries of the Richmond Diocese were altered in 1868, when the Eastern Shore of Virginia became part of the newly-created Diocese of Wilmington (which also covered the Eastern Shore of Maryland and the entire state of Delaware). Father Thomas A. Becker (1832–1899), a priest of the Diocese of Richmond who was an adult convert and a graduate of the University of Virginia, was named Wilmington's first bishop.

Pope Pius IX convened the First Vatican Council (1869–1870). This was the first truly "worldwide" (ecumenical) council, in which dozens of American bishops, including John McGill, took part. Significantly, Vatican I proclaimed that the pope's teaching on matters of faith and morals was infallible under certain conditions. McGill, who left the council early because of health reasons, died in 1872.

A BICENTENNIAL SKETCH OF A PARISH AND DIOCESE: THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER

FATHER ANTHONY E. MARQUES

The setting of the first cathedral and oldest church still in use in the Diocese of Richmond is significant. A stone's throw from the Virginia State Capitol, St. Peter's has expressed the perennial aspirations of Catholics in Virginia for acceptance and participation in society.

Since a cathedral is usually a parish as well as the bishop's church, it reflects the local community and the diocese as a whole. A historical sketch of St. Peter's tenure as a cathedral (1841–1906) illustrates Catholic life in Richmond and the development of the institutional Church in Virginia.

The earliest records indicate that resident or itinerant priests ministered to the relatively few Catholics in Richmond in the decades after the American Revolution (1794–1821). The city was chosen as the seat of a new diocese established in Virginia (1820) because it was the capital, even though most of the sparse overall Catholic population lived in Norfolk, a shipping hub. The first bishop of the diocese, Patrick Kelly, remained in Norfolk and never even reached Richmond during his brief tenure (1820–1822). There was no cathedral, nor any sizeable Catholic churches in Virginia at that time, but only small chapels.

St. Peter's was built in the following decade

(1834), a period in which the Richmond Diocese had no bishop of its own and was instead administered by the archbishop of Baltimore (1822–1841). During that time, the majority of the Catholic population shifted from Norfolk to Richmond. The Catholic community there, as elsewhere in Virginia, was predominately immigrant (French and Irish) and poor.

Father Timothy O'Brien — a resourceful, innovative, and maverick priest who spent 22 years in Richmond (1832–1850) — purchased the land for the church “in the genteel part of the city and within a few yards of the western gate of the Capitol.” By doing so, he sought to raise the profile of Catholics because “there is but little sympathy for us & unfortunately we are a degraded caste in one of the most aristocratic dens in the world.”

Named after the “prince of the apostles” — likely as a statement of Catholic identity — St. Peter's was modeled on the church of Saint-Philippe-du-Roule in Paris. The architectural beauty of the new church (neoclassical), and its grandiose dedication (May 25, 1834), dazzled Richmond. The church became a cathedral when Richard V. Whelan, a priest working in the diocese (in present-day West Virginia), became the second bishop of Richmond (1841–1850).

Over the next seven decades (1841–1906), St. Peter's hosted significant diocesan events: the first ordination to the priesthood (1842); the installation (1850, 1872), ordination (1878, 1889), and funeral (1872) of diocesan bishops; and two synods or formal meetings of priests (1855, 1886).

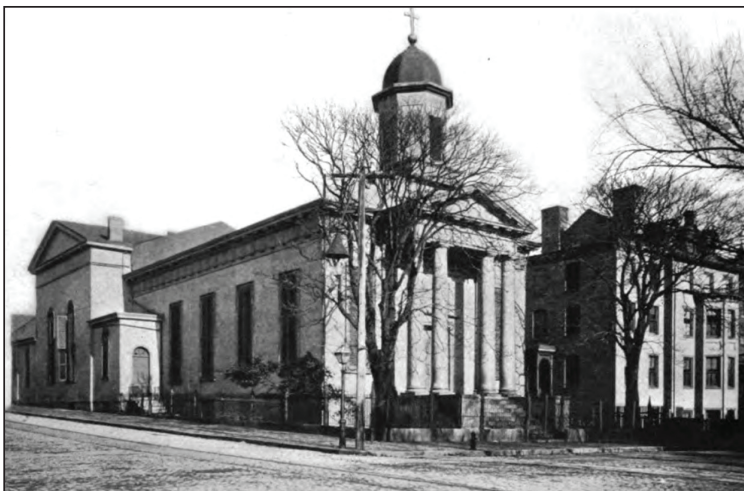
Prominent worshippers at St. Peter's facilitated the wider acceptance of Catholics in Virginia society. Notables included Roger B. Taney, chief justice of the United States and author of the Dred Scott decision (1857). The daughter of President John Tyler, Margaret Pearl Tyler Ellis, a Catholic, was married at St.

Peter's (1884). The funeral of her mother, former first lady Julia Gardiner Tyler, was also conducted there (1889).

St. Peter's was the center of Catholic life in Richmond. Parishioners' support for the Confederacy (1861–1865) — which proved that Catholics in Virginia could be patriots — was organized during the tenure of John McGill, the third bishop of Richmond (1850–1872). In the basement of the same church, John J. Keane, the fifth bishop of Richmond (1878–1888), preached to African Americans, the first step in his wider effort to evangelize the black community (1879).

The parish was also the nucleus of Catholic education, charitable activity and religious life in the diocese, beginning with the opening of St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum and Free School by the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph (1834). There followed other schools (ca. 1854–1873), a second orphanage (1872) and a home for the elderly (1874).

Furthermore, St. Peter's engendered five “daughter” parishes in Richmond during its time as a cathedral. Among these were St. Mary, the first national parish in the diocese for Germans (1848); St. Joseph (1885), the first parish for black Catholics; and Sa-



cred Heart (1887), which was eventually replaced by the new cathedral.

Once the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was consecrated, St. Peter's reverted to being a parish church (1906). Today, it is a relatively small community that forms a cluster with two nearby parishes. St. Peter's has a dedicated worshipping community during the week, given its proximity to Richmond's business district, and is a popular wedding venue. The parish provides sacramental care to nearby VCU Medical Center and an extensive ministry to the city's poor and homeless.

St. Peter's has undergone several renovations over the course of its 185-year history, just as the local community and diocese it has represented has evolved over that same time span. A fire on Good Friday in 1848 badly injured Father O'Brien and an acolyte, and nearly destroyed the church. Later, Bishop John McGill adorned the edifice with two paintings he purchased in Rome, having traveled there for the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1854).

These respective “scars” and ornaments bear witness to a local parish and diocese that have strived to live out the Catholic faith in Virginia for 200 years.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

COMPILED BY REVEREND ANTHONY E. MARQUES (2019)

1850 July 19 Pope Pius IX creates the Diocese of Wheeling from Richmond and appoints Richard V. Whelan as its bishop.

1850 December John McGill, a priest of Louisville (formerly Bardstown), Kentucky and the third bishop of Richmond, takes possession of the diocese.

1854~1855 The “Know-Nothing” movement, which falsely accuses Catholic immigrants of seeking to thwart religious liberty, arises in Virginia.

1855 July~November A yellow fever epidemic sweeps through Norfolk and Portsmouth, killing three thousand people. Among the victims is Father Francis Devlin, who ministered to those infected by the disease.

1856 March 3 The Virginia General Assembly incorporates St. Vincent's Hospital in Norfolk, making it the first Catholic hospital in the Diocese of Richmond. The hospital was begun in the home of Ann Behan Plume Herron during the yellow fever outbreak (1855). Herron had given her house to the Daughters of Charity before dying from the disease herself.

1861~1865 The Civil War: Bishop John McGill is a strong supporter of the Southern cause; Catholics in Virginia fight for the Confederacy, demonstrating their patriotism; and religious sisters heroically nurse battlefield victims on both sides, improving the image of the Catholic Church in the commonwealth.

1861 April 17 Virginia secedes from the Union and then joins the Confederacy (May 23); Richmond becomes the capital of the Confederate States of America (May 30).

1862 December Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos, a Redemptorist priest, ministers to Union soldiers at Fort Monroe in Hampton.

1863 June 20 The northwestern part of Virginia, having opposed secession, forms the new state of West Virginia and joins the Union, causing the boundaries of the Dioceses of Richmond and Wheeling to cross state lines.

1866 October 7~21 The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore urges the evangelization of freed slaves.

1868 March 3 Pope Pius IX erects the Diocese of Wilmington, which includes the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The first bishop of Wilmington, Thomas A. Becker, is a priest of Richmond.

1869~1870 Vatican Council I, which Bishop John McGill attends, proclaims that, under particular conditions, the pope's teaching on matters of faith and morals is infallible.

1872 January 14 Bishop John McGill dies while in office.

How the sacrament of reconciliation has evolved



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE
 CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Q. When I was a Protestant, I never went to confession, and no such practice existed in any of the churches to which I belonged over the years. Now, as a Catholic, I've been told that confession is based on a passage in the Letter of James (5:16) that says, "Confess your sins to one another."

That verse to me seems more like a general instruction to admit it when we've done a person some wrong and ask each other's forgiveness than it does a mandate to have a confessional in every church. Can you explain? (New Middletown, Indiana)

A. I have always learned that the Church's power to forgive sins was based primarily on a different scriptural text from the one you cite. This passage comes from the Gospel of John (20:22-23); on the night of the Resurrection, when the risen Jesus appeared to the apostles who were huddled in fear, he said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

The exact form in which that forgiveness is dispensed has varied considerably over the years, as detailed in the Catechism of the Cath-

olic Church (No. 1447). In the early centuries, reconciliation for particularly grave sins consisted of a one-time-only public profession of guilt and a course of manifest penance, sometimes for a number of years, before readmission into the eucharistic community of the Church.

During the seventh century, Irish missionaries brought to the European continent the practice of the private confession of sins to a priest, opening the way to the regular use of the sacrament for both mortal and venial sins — and this has continued as the basic structure of the sacrament up to the present day.

Q. Due to COVID-19 and restrictions to prevent its spread, public Masses are currently suspended in our diocese. If I "attend" a livestreamed Mass on the computer during this time, have I fulfilled my Sunday obligation? (By not participating at all, I feel as if I am falling away — and it is becoming much too easy to enjoy this "time off.") (Richmond)

A. No, you have not fulfilled your Sunday obligation by watching Mass on television. But not to worry — in your case, you have no obligation! During the coronavirus pandemic, Richmond — like many dioceses — has simply lifted the responsibility of Catholics to attend Mass. (The Archdiocese of Washing-

ton says on its website, "The right thing to do is to stay home for your safety and the safety of others.")

Whenever circumstances make it impossible or unwise to go to church — illness, caring for a sick child, a non-negotiable work assignment, etc. — your Sunday obligation is simply lifted. But what you should still do is to try to make Sunday special.

The bishop of the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, for example, wrote that during the coronavirus, "Those members of the faithful who do not attend Sunday Mass should devote some time to prayer on the Lord's Day, either alone or as a family."

Many parishes and dioceses have offered suggestions as to how that might be done — watching Mass via television or online, looking over the Sunday readings in advance, praying the Our Father and offering prayer intentions aloud as a family.

During a weekday televised Mass from his residence in March, Pope Francis suggested that viewers who find themselves unable to receive the Eucharist during the coronavirus make a "spiritual Communion," and he offered the following text:

"My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most holy sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there

and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you."

Q. When I was going through the RCIA program to join the Catholic Church, the presenter said that there are some sins that can be absolved only by the pope. What sort of sins are they? (Little Rock, Arkansas)

A. There are, in fact, certain sins that are also crimes in the Church — named specifically in the Church's Code of Canon Law — that are so egregious they can be pardoned only by the pope. Probably the reason you might not know what they are is that (thankfully) these offenses rarely, if ever, happen.

Some examples are: a person who throws away, or otherwise desecrates, the consecrated bread or wine of the Eucharist; a priest who breaks the seal of confession by revealing the nature of the sin and the identity of the person who confessed it; someone who uses physical force against the pope; or, a priest who has sex with a penitent and then offers that penitent sacramental absolution for that very sin.

It should be noted that if a penitent were in danger of death, any priest could absolve that person from any sin, including those listed above. This would apply even if that priest had been deprived of his faculties to hear confessions.

(Questions may be sent to askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.)

SAINT MARY
STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

Register Now!

Full Day Camp: Ages 4 - 12
7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Weekly Activities:

- STEM Challenges
- Guest Speakers
- Fitness Games & Sports
- Arts & Crafts
- Teambuilding
- Fishing
- Gardening
- Cooking Projects
- Math & Science Activities
- Camp Journaling
- Swimming
- Library
- Field Trips

www.saintmarystarofthesea.com

757-723-6358 14 N. Willard Ave., Hampton, VA

Guaranteed return for you. Guaranteed generosity for the Diocese.

Charitable Gift Annuity Rates	
Age (Single Life)	Annual Payout Rate
65-69	5.1 – 5.4%
70-74	5.6 – 6.1%
75-79	6.2 – 7.1%
80-84	7.3 – 8.1%
85-89	8.3 – 9.2%
90+	9.5%

Charitable Gift Annuities (CGA) offer better rates than many CDs, give you a tax deduction, and are excellent ways to pass on our Catholic heritage. A minimum contribution of \$10,000 is required to establish a CGA through the Foundation. Joint Annuity Rates differ and are available upon request. To learn more about the benefits of a CGA visit www.richmondcatholicfoundation.org or contact Maggie F. Keenan, Ed.D., Director of Planned Giving at (804) 622-5221.

**Catholic
Community
Foundation**
of the Diocese of Richmond

Blessed Mother can prepare us for unknown future



“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair” begins the “Tale of Two Cities” by Charles Dickens.

As we look at history, the author’s salient observation could apply to almost every time, city, state, nation or organization. Good and evil have always co-existed side. Every crisis has the potential to give birth to heroic acts of kindness as well as acts of cruelty.

Through the ages, God has raised up saints who have been agents of charity, bearing witness to the truth that goodness triumphs over evil. It was true in the past and is true today as we navigate uncharted waters.

Amid countless heroes risking their lives for victims of the coronavirus are those who have grown weary of social distancing. It took less than a few weeks for protesters to take to the streets, defying recommended guidelines while ignoring long-term consequences.

Waiting is never easy, and patience is not one of our societal virtues. We look for the shortest line at the supermarket, change lanes when traffic is moving too slowly and look for a quick fix when problems arise. However, the feasts of Ascension and Pentecost remind us that before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told the apostles to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Advocate whom he promised that the Father would send.

Taking his advice to heart, Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James and Simon the Zealot and Judas, son of James, returned to the



upper room in Jerusalem where they had been staying since Jesus’ death. Scripture tells us, “All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14).

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles were again facing the unknown. Who was this Advocate that Jesus spoke about and what would its coming mean for them?

Amid growing confusion, there were more questions than answers, not unlike the situation we find ourselves in today. Fortunately for Christians there is a precedent. Like the apostles, we can heed Jesus’ advice and spend time preparing for what lies ahead because we have no idea what the future holds.

However, like the apostles, we have Mary to prepare us, guiding us through prayer and attentive listening. Just as the apostles found strength in this gentle woman who remained at the foot

of the cross when all but John deserted Jesus, so now we can turn to her for strength and wisdom.

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez re-consecrated the United States of America to the Blessed Virgin Mary on Friday, May 1. Turning to the Mother of the Church and the Queen of Peace, the archbishop reminded us that under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mary has accompanied the Americas from the very beginning. Praying for all of us, he asked her to intercede to God to deliver us from the evil of the coronavirus.

During her many apparitions, Mary has asked her children to pray the rosary so that we may be filled with light and truth. As Archbishop Gomez noted, our current crisis is an opportune time to rediscover the beauty of the rosary by praying it with our families so that we may be kept safe and grow in holiness.

As we prepare for Pentecost, may we not lose sight of the role that Mary played during that first Pentecost novena. Just as we gather with family and friends and share stories of our loved ones after they are taken from us, so it seems plausible that Mary told them about the coming of the Holy Spirit during the Incarnation and more.

How else would the events surrounding the early years in Jesus’ life have made their way into the Gospels? Mary was the only person who could tell of the wondrous events that set the stage for the Church on earth.

As we ponder Mary’s role in salvation history, we can take comfort in knowing that her presence was not a passing phenomenon. As our Mother and the Mother of the Church, Mary remains invested in our salvation and so we pray, “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us!”

Barbara Hughes is an author, retreat facilitator and spiritual guide. She lives in Virginia Beach and can be reached at brhughes16@gmail.com.

Fulfill your baptismal commission to share the Spirit



In their book “Resurrecting Easter,” John and Sarah Crosson discuss the difference between the Eastern and Western views of the Resurrection of Jesus as depicted in icons and images. The Western view is that of an individual event. All the Western images and icons of the Resurrection depict Jesus coming from the grave by himself.

The Eastern view of the Resurrection is that of an event that involves many people. The icons and images in the Eastern Church show Jesus bringing people with him from the dead, including Adam and Eve at the front of the line.

Regardless of which view you hold, the message that Christ has risen from the dead is meant for everyone for all time. Jesus died for all people; he rose from the dead for all people.

Just as the Resurrection of Jesus is for all

people, so too is the Ascension. The Ascension has special significance for us because it adds to the message of Jesus’ ministry. Both versions of the Ascension that we hear on this feast — one in the reading from Acts and one in the Gospel — mention the baptism of the Spirit.

In the Gospel, Jesus says “all power in heaven and earth have been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son and in the name of the holy Spirit.”

In Acts, Jesus tells those gathered they will be baptized in the Spirit and that when they are born again in the Spirit, they will receive power. This reflects the teaching of Jesus early in his ministry. In his interaction with Nicodemus, Jesus says that unless a person is born again of water and the Spirit, they cannot have eternal life (Jn 3:3-5).

The message is clearly a charge for the early followers of Jesus. In the New American Bible, St. Joseph Edition, this section of the Gospel is titled the “The Commissioning of the Disciples.” To commission someone is to give them certain powers or authority. In this passage Jesus commissions his disciples, giving them power to

convey this same Spirit, this same new life to not just a few but to the whole world.

This is a message for us as well. By virtue of being baptized in water in the name the Father, Son and Spirit, we have the same commission. Everyone who has been baptized has received this same Spirit, the same power to lift people up to new life. Those of us who have been confirmed have been strengthened in that Spirit. Just like those early disciples of Jesus we have the power and authority to share God’s Spirit.

The physical presence of Jesus may not be with us but we need not be afraid. Jesus said, “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). He remains with all of us who have been baptized and he lives within us in the Spirit.

What can we do with the Spirit and Jesus living within us? How can we help those who are isolated or lonely? How can we help people who are in need for whatever reason?

We have been given the command to go out to all the world and share that Spirit of God. How can we share God’s love which Jesus has shared with us?

Deacon Christopher Colville serves at Church of the Redeemer, Mechanicsville.

Feast of the Ascension

Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23
Mt 28:16-20

OPPORTUNITIES

Full-time third grade teacher needed for the 2020-21 school year at St. Mary Star of the Sea School, Hampton. We provide a Christ-centered Catholic education to PK3 through eighth grade students of all faiths under the leadership of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. Interested candidate should have experience with instructional methods focused on student engagement and hands-on learning, possess good communication skills and be able to work collaboratively with an instructional team. Eligible candidates must have a current VA teaching license, be a practicing Catholic in good standing and able to teach all subjects. Please forward résumé, diocesan application, reference letters and a copy of the VA teaching license to: admin@saintmarystarofthesea.com. St. Mary Star of the Sea School, 14 N. Willard Ave., Hampton, VA 23663. Phone: 757-723-6358. Website: www.saintmarystarofthesea.com

Catholic Diocese of Richmond Director, Office of Safe Environment

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond seeks a Director for the Office of Safe Environment.

The Director of Safe Environment manages the Safe Environment program for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and is responsible for implementing the U.S. bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." The Director manages the background screening and safe environment training for clergy, employees, and volunteers across the diocese and identifies and trains qualified facilitators to deliver the VIRTUS' training program, "Protecting God's Children."

The Director supervises the Victim Assistance Coordinator and works with the Vicar General/Vicar for Clergy, diocesan attorneys and the Diocesan Review Board regarding alleged claims of sexual abuse. The Director also completes the annual USCCB audit, ensuring the diocese is in compliance with the Charter. In addition to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, the Director supervises administrative support staff.

Qualifications: The Director must be a Catholic in good standing. The Director will possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in human resources, counseling, or a related field, and at least 5 years of experience, preferably in a nonprofit environment. Required skills include supervisory skills, communication, leadership, facilitation, planning and organizing and pastoral sensitivity. Other qualifications include the ability to maintain confidentiality, possess solid working knowledge of MS Office, an ability to resolve problems and analyze data/metrics, and the capacity to multi-

task, prioritize, and meet deadlines. This is a full-time position with the expectation of some nights and weekends.

Interested candidates should please send a cover letter, résumé and completed diocesan application to Sara Board, Acting Recruiter, to jobs@richmonddiocese.org.

St. Peter the Apostle (Ebony) and St. Richard (Emporia) is seeking a bright, friendly person to perform Secretarial/Clerical duties and also to oversee the parish finance systems in accordance with the diocesan policies while maintaining a responsibility to effectively run a smooth operation in the office and in the church during weekdays in the absence of the pastor (except in spiritual matters). This is a full-time position of 30 hours per week and salary is commensurate with experience. Interested candidates should please submit a cover letter, résumé and a diocesan application to bettieberndt@gmail.com, or mail these materials to the attention of Father Joker R. Bayta, Pastor, St. Peter the Apostle, 31 Ebony Road, Ebony, VA 23845. Deadline to apply is Sunday, May 31. A detailed job description can be requested by emailing bettieberndt@gmail.com.

PUBLIC NOTICE OF INTENT TO RELOCATE INTERMENTS WITHIN THE BASILICA OF ST. MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, CITY OF NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

The Basilica of St. Mary proposes to exhume and relocate interments found beneath the floor during renovations to the church building. Pursuant to the requirements of VA Code §10.1-2305, the Church intends to apply for a burial permit through the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to allow the archaeological excavation and relocation of the aforementioned individuals. The complete notice may be viewed online at the church website <https://www.basilicaofsaintmary.org/> and at www.dhr.virginia.gov and has been posted in hardcopy at the entrance of the Basilica located at 232 Chapel Street, Norfolk, VA 23504 and in the church office at 1000 Holt Street, Norfolk, VA 23504.

To provide comments on this project, or to request a copy of the application, please contact Joanna Wilson Green, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, VA 23221 or at burialpermits@dhr.virginia.gov. Written comments should be received by the close of business on May 26, 2020.

Blessings and benevolence



As part of the drive-up Mother's Day blessing at Sacred Heart, Norfolk, parishioners were invited to donate food, clothing and backpacks to support the Ghent Area Ministries (GAM), a homeless support ministry. Above, Nicholas Ramirez and Grand Knight Dan Doyle of Knights of Columbus Council 367 sort some of the contributions on Sunday, May 10. (Photo/Napoleon Caragan)

Time Capsule

Continued from Page 2

for First Holy Communion: a person must have some understanding of the Eucharist and devotion toward it in order to receive the sacrament fruitfully (see *Roman Catechism*, 1566, II, 4, 26, 32).

Over time there arose different understandings of the "age of discretion" in regard to sacramental confession and Communion — even though Lateran IV had decreed that both sacraments be received at this age.

The minimum age for receiving the sacrament of penance was determined to be that time when a person could distinguish between right and wrong, and therefore commit a sin (*Roman Catechism*, II, 4, 45). This was generally reckoned as age 7.

A deeper level of knowledge, however, was deemed necessary for grasping the significance of the Eucharist. As a result, the age for receiving Communion was typically

set between 10 and 14 years, depending on the place.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a historic change took place as part of a movement promoting enhanced eucharistic devotion. Pope St. Pius X (reigned 1903–1914) lowered the age of First Holy Communion to approximately 7, asserting that children should be nourished by the Eucharist, which could help them to avoid grave sins (*Quam singulari*, 1910).

He stipulated that it was only necessary for children to be able to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary food (no. 3). They were then obliged to gradually learn about the entirety of the Catholic faith (no. 2).

Pius X had earlier encouraged frequent and even daily reception of the Eucharist, which significantly altered Catholic piety and practice (*Sacrosancta Tridentina Synodus*, 1905). For having made the Eucharist more widely available as he did, Pius X is honored as the "Pope of the Eucharist."

Commentary

Continued from Page 5

peal the law that protects the religious liberty of faith-based adoption and foster-care agencies, and to repeal the Education Improvements Scholarships Tax Credits program.

Proactive advocacy by the VCC and partnering organizations was key in keeping each of these three bills from receiving committee votes this year. In each case, however, the legislation is likely to resurface, requiring vigilance and intensified efforts by the VCC and its advocacy partners.

- Legislation to exempt from the death penalty those who had a severe mental illness at the time of the crime. The bill passed the Senate in a strong bipartisan vote but then stalled in a House subcommittee. Bills to abolish the death penalty also failed to advance, but there were positive indications that movement could occur next year.

- Legislation that would have required parental consent for a child to participate in a public school FLE program.

Editor's note: View the full VCC vote report at www.vacatholic.org (see "2020 General Assembly," "Read the Vote Report").

A time for the domestic Church to flourish

HOSFFMAN OSPINO, Catholic News Service

Catholics love the family. To be Catholic, one could say, is tantamount to affirming family life in its manifold expressions. We affirm the many good things that happen at the heart of the home as essential to nurture individual lives and to build society.

Family life holds a special place in the Catholic imagination. It is in the family where we learn to relate to others, love, share our feelings, argue, listen, forgive, negotiate and grow in the great adventure of being human.

At the heart of the family, we learn about what is true, good and beautiful. The younger members of the family often rely on the guidance of the more experienced ones to discern values. We learn from one another as we face our mistakes and their consequences.

It is in the family where we first discover that God walks with us in history. Building upon the fragility of human love, one learns about God's merciful and infinite love in Jesus Christ. In the context of the family, we learn to be in conversation with God through prayer.

From antiquity, Christians have referred to the family as a domestic Church. So did the Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "Lumen Gentium" (No. 11).

The events affecting our lives during this time of pandemic have led many Catholics to reencounter our families. Ironically, many of us do so while asking, what does it mean to be family today?

Everyone is part of a family, one way or another. In fact, as we marry, befriend, travel and expand our horizons, we find ourselves belonging to many families. Still we ask the same question.

In the midst of the progress, energy and innovation that characterize our contemporary world, we seem increasingly aware that family life is not always a priority on our value scale.

The fact that at this time of crisis many seem to have rediscovered family as something novel, desirable and fulfilling — all great things — should give us pause. Why did many not experience this before? What were our priorities before the pandemic? At what point did we stop appreciating family as the domestic Church?

The tone of lament among many Catholics grieving lack of access to our large churches these days is quite revealing. I also miss my church, I must say.

The present circumstances, though, serve as an invitation to revisit with renewed appreciation other ways of being Church, especially the domestic Church.

Let's not capitulate before the idea that only people outside our homes can share the faith. While the sacraments are central to our identity, Catholicism has not ended because an ordained minister is not available day and night.

Let us remember that the early Christian communities were family-based and gathered mainly in homes where many family configurations celebrated their faith in the risen Lord.

In most parts of the world, Catholics live and practice their faith primarily in the context of the domestic Church. For millions of Catholics, having access to a priest or a large Church 24/7 is a rare privilege.

Every now and then, we need to revisit what sustains our Catholic imagination. Yes, let's hope for a return to our beautiful temples. Let's also affirm the value of the family as domestic Church, and let it flourish!

This is a perfect time for catechists of all ages to arise in the context of the home; a time for Gospel-inspired rituals and practices that make God present in the daily life of the family; a time to recognize the face of Christ in every member of our household.

Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College. / Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.

Momento propicio para que la iglesia doméstica florezca

Los católicos tenemos un amor especial por la familia. Podríamos decir que ser católico es prácticamente equivalente a afirmar la vida familiar en sus muchas expresiones. Afirmamos las muchas cosas buenas que ocurren al seno del hogar y sabemos que son esenciales tanto para cultivar a la persona como para construir sociedad.

La vida familiar tiene un lugar especial en el imaginario católico. Es en la familia en donde aprendemos a relacionarnos con otras personas, compartimos nuestros sentimientos, discutimos, escuchamos, perdonamos, negociamos y crecemos en la gran aventura de vivir como seres humanos.

En la intimidad familiar aprendemos lo que es verdadero, bueno y hermoso. Los miembros más jóvenes de la familia con frecuencia dependen de la guía de aquellos que tienen más experiencia para discernir valores. Aprendemos unos de otros al enfrentar nuestros errores y sus consecuencias.

Es en la familia en donde primero descubrimos que Dios camina con nosotros en la historia. Partiendo de lo frágil que es al amor humano, aprendemos sobre el amor misericordioso e infinito de Dios en Jesucristo. En el contexto de la familia, aprendemos a conversar con Dios por medio de la oración.

Desde la antigüedad los cristianos han hablado de la familia como una iglesia doméstica. Lo mismo hizo el Concilio Vaticano II en su Constitución Dogmática sobre la Iglesia, "Lumen Gentium" (No. 11).

Los eventos que afectan nuestras vidas durante estos días de pandemia han llevado a muchos católicos a encontrarnos de nuevo con nuestras familias. Irónicamente, muchos hacemos esto mientras nos preguntamos, ¿qué significa ser familia hoy en día?

Todos somos parte de una familia de una u otra manera. De hecho, al casarnos, establecer amistades, viajar y ampliar nuestros horizontes, nos damos cuenta que pertenecemos a muchas familias. Y aun así seguimos haciendo la misma pregunta.

A pesar del progreso, energía e innovación que caracterizan al mundo contemporáneo, cada vez somos más conscientes de que la familia no siempre ha sido una prioridad en nuestra escala de valores.

El hecho de que en este momento de crisis muchos parecen haber descubierto a la familia como algo nuevo, anhelado y realizador — lo cual es muy bueno — debería hacernos pensar un poco. ¿Por qué no experimentamos esto antes? ¿Cuáles eran nuestras prioridades antes de la pandemia? ¿En qué momento dejamos de apreciar a la familia como iglesia doméstica?

El tono de lamento que usan muchos católicos entristecidos porque no pueden ir a sus templos en estos días revela mucho. Debo decir que yo también extraño mi parroquia.

Sin embargo, las circunstancias presentes sirven como una invitación a mirar con ojos renovados y con mayor apreciación otras maneras de ser iglesia, especialmente la iglesia doméstica.

No nos rindamos ante la idea de que sólo quienes están fuera de nuestros hogares pueden enseñar fe. Aunque los sacramentos juegan un papel fundamental en la definición de nuestra identidad como creyentes, el catolicismo no se acaba por no tener acceso a un ministro ordenado día y noche.

Recordemos que las primeras comunidades cristianas crecieron en el seno familiar y se reunían primordialmente en hogares. Allí coexistían distintas maneras de ser familia mientras celebraban su fe en el Señor resucitado.

En muchas partes de mundo los católicos viven y practican su fe primordialmente en el contexto de la iglesia doméstica. Para millones de católicos tener acceso a un sacerdote o a una iglesia grande las 24 horas del día es un privilegio raro.

De vez en cuando necesitamos revisar las ideas que dan vida a nuestro imaginario católico. Sí, sigamos anhelando regresar a nuestros templos hermosos. ¡También afirmemos el valor de la familia como iglesia doméstica y hagámosla florecer!

Este es un momento perfecto para que surjan catequistas de todas las edades en el seno familiar; un momento para que prácticas y ritos inspirados en el evangelio hagan presente a Dios en la vida diaria de la familia; un momento para reconocer el rostro de Cristo en cada persona que vive en nuestro hogar.



Diocese of Richmond

4 de mayo de 2020

Queridos hermanos y hermanas de la diócesis de Richmond:

¡Feliz Pascua! Aunque hemos estado físicamente separados durante este tiempo, la conmemoración de la resurrección de Cristo nos trae alegría en medio de nuestras dificultades actuales. Cuando comenzó la planificación del bicentenario diocesano, no podía imaginar que nos enfrentaríamos a una pandemia durante este año jubilar.

Sin embargo, nuestra diócesis se ha enfrentado a numerosas dificultades a lo largo de dos siglos: los desafíos crónicos alrededor de un vasto territorio, la escasez de sacerdotes y la insuficiencia de recursos; el cataclismo de la Guerra Civil (1861-1865) y otros conflictos; y los males sociales del racismo y el fanatismo religioso. Incluso ha habido plagas como la que nos aflige ahora, como cuando la fiebre amarilla (1821, 1826, 1855) y la gripe española (1918-1920) se propagaron en Virginia.

En buenos o malos tiempos, Dios nunca nos ha abandonado. Movidos por esta convicción, muchos católicos respondieron a las necesidades que les rodeaban haciendo sacrificios por el bien de la Iglesia, por los pobres y por el bien común, buscando formas de aliviar el dolor de los demás. Mientras luchamos contra la peste del coronavirus (COVID-19), rezo para que nosotros también seamos fortalecidos para servir a los demás y dar testimonio de nuestra fe.

Los acontecimientos pasados hicieron necesario que la Iglesia se adaptara a las nuevas circunstancias; ahora la situación actual nos obliga a hacer lo mismo. Por lo tanto, estoy modificando los planes para nuestro bicentenario conservando los elementos esenciales de nuestra celebración, planificando lo siguiente:

1. La peregrinación a la Basílica del Santuario Nacional de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María en Baltimore (programada para el 9 de mayo) ha sido aplazada hasta el otoño.
2. Las misas regionales del bicentenario se celebrarán como estaba previsto. La misa del sábado 11 de julio, que también será la misa crismal, tendrá lugar a las 10:30 a.m. en la Catedral del Sagrado Corazón en Richmond; la misa del sábado 26 de septiembre será a las 10:30 a.m. en la Iglesia de San Andrés en Roanoke. Esto ocurrirá incluso si sólo se permite la transmisión en vivo y un número limitado de personas.
3. La Octava de Servicio (27 de septiembre - 4 de octubre), centrada en la Fiesta de San Vicente de Paúl, nuestro patrón diocesano, tendrá lugar como estaba previsto, con las salvaguardias apropiadas para el bien común.
4. El Congreso Eucarístico se llevará a cabo sólo el sábado 7 de noviembre y en un formato diferente. En lugar de reunirnos en el Centro de Convenciones del Gran Richmond como Pido a las parroquias, escuelas y ministerios universitarios que continúen promoviendo el bicentenario rezando la oración del bicentenario, usando el himno del bicentenario, completando la preparación espiritual de la evangelización, dando a conocer los eventos del bicentenario y aprendiendo más sobre la historia de nuestra diócesis.

Se puede acceder a toda la información sobre el bicentenario en <https://2020.richmonddiocese.org/>

Nuestro lema del bicentenario es: "Brillen como estrellas en el mundo, agarrándose a la palabra de vida" (Fil. 2:15-16). Que la palabra de vida nos dé esperanza para que brillemos en la oscuridad actual. María, Estrella del Mar, nos guiará hacia la luz perfecta de su Hijo.

Sinceramente en Cristo,

Exmo. y Rvdmo. Sr. Barry C. Knestout
Obispo de Richmond

God 'sent her job' to serve people in Newport News

For Brenda Orie, those in need 'are part of my family'

WENDY KLESCH
Special to The Catholic Virginian

When Brenda Orie retired from a career in management at Newport News Shipyard in 1999, she sensed that her work was not yet done.

"I still wanted to do something more," she said. "But I wasn't quite sure what."

Orie, a longtime parishioner at St. Vincent de Paul in Newport News, said that an ad in the church bulletin seeking a parish secretary eventually caught her eye, but when she went into the office to apply, she was asked, much to her surprise, if she might consider filling another position: that of the recently-vacated role of director of social ministries.

"The timing was perfect," Orie said. "I had the managerial experience, and although I had never done anything like that before, I've always loved helping people. I felt like God had sent me the job."

This March, after 20 years of service, Orie retired from her position, but in her heart, she said, her work continues. She hopes to return as a volunteer so that she might continue to work with the people who have become an irreplaceable part of her life.

"I loved the job," she said. "I thanked God every day for it. I loved the people who I helped, who I worked with. They became a part of my family."

Answering the call . . . and the tap

When Orie started her second career, she didn't realize that, in answering the call, she would literally be answering the call — not only in the form of emails and phone calls — but in calls across the parish courtyard, unexpected rings at the front door, and even taps on the glass of her office window.

"Sometimes, I'd be sitting at my computer and I would hear a faint

knock, right on the glass," she said with a laugh. "And I'd look up to see someone was trying to catch my attention."

The parish offices, located in downtown Newport News, are home to an extensive social ministry program called Backdoor Ministry, so named because it got its start when the rectory's housekeeper began serving food out of the kitchen door.

"We serve the people right where they are," Orie explained, "so it can get busy. Many of our clients don't drive, and they don't have transportation. Some are sick, some are elderly. They need somewhere they can go, right in the community."

Backdoor Ministry is kept aloft by the efforts of more than 60 volunteers. It encompasses a soup kitchen serving 70 to 140 hot meals daily, five days a week, and a clothing closet. It also offers assistance with finding employment, classes and services.

Running such a vibrant ministry has presented an array of challenges, Orie said, but a simple message in the parish bulletin under the heading of "Brenda's Bits" was usually enough to find the help she needed.

"I was always so grateful for our volunteers, for our parishioners," she said. "Whatever I needed, people would always come through."

'I can never thank her enough'

Anthony Smith said when he came to Virginia from New York nearly 20 years ago — with a felony conviction on his record — he had difficulty finding a job.

"It's hard, once you have that felony. Even now, it's been years since I was in trouble. I've done everything I could — completed programs, gone to speak at programs, but it's nearly impossible to get that erased," he said.



Brenda Orie

Smith said he went to seek help from Backdoor Ministry, where he met Orie, who helped him and his wife with groceries, clothes for their children and with finding employment. Later, Orie would become godmother to Smith's daughter, who was baptized at St. Vincent de Paul a few years later.

"She did everything she could for us, for our family. I can never thank her enough. Without her, I don't know where we'd be," he said. "I love her like an aunt, like she is part of my family. She deserves to be blessed."

In the era of COVID-19, Smith calls Orie every few days to see if she needs anything.

"If I can do anything for her, I would be happy to do it," he said. "Because what she did for me, for my family? I can never pay that back."

Bringing people together

Mary Pickerill, a parishioner of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hampton, has been volunteering with Orie since 2012. She credits Orie's talent for reaching across parish

and denominational lines — and for making volunteers feel welcome — with helping to build a thriving ministry.

"She has a way of making every single person who asks for help, or who asks to help, feel special, important," she said. "She makes them feel appreciated."

Pickerill said she has especially enjoyed working alongside Orie at the annual Christmas party held at St. Vincent de Paul in which the church doors are opened and gifts are distributed to people in need.

"The first year I volunteered, I came around the corner, and there were 200 people standing in line," she said. "It was amazing. And Brenda seemed to know everyone. She knew everyone by name."

"She moves with grace and ease from one thing to the next," Pickerill said. "I don't think she will ever stop. She's still at it."

A challenge to the end

Orie said that when she announced her intention to retire last December, she had no way of knowing that the ministry she had worked so long to support would soon be changed by the outbreak of COVID-19.

"It's sad," she said. "We've had to close the gates to stop people from congregating in the courtyard, so now all we can do is pass bagged lunches over the fence."

"I worry about everyone in these times," she said. "You grow close to people. You learn their backgrounds, their stories."

Although for now, services are limited, Orie said she hopes that Backdoor Ministry will be able to continue its work.

"I'm grateful for the chance I was given," she said. "Every now and then, I get a card or a letter from someone who says, 'You made a difference in my life.' And that means all the world to me."

Pope thanks nurses, midwives for 'service to humanity'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The coronavirus pandemic has drawn well-deserved attention to nurses and midwives, who are among "the saints next door," dedicated to helping people in some of the most joyful or painful moments of their lives, Pope Francis said.

"Every day we witness the testimony of courage and sacrifice of health care workers, and nurses in particular, who, with professionalism, self-sacrifice and a sense of responsibility and love for neighbor, assist people affected by the virus, even to the point of putting their own health at risk," the pope said in a message marking the May

12 celebration of International Nurses Day.

"Thank you for your service to humanity," the pope wrote.

Pope Francis also paid tribute to the nurses who contracted the virus and died, assuring their families that "the Lord knows each of them by name."

"In many countries," he said, "the pandemic has also brought to light a number of deficiencies in the provision of health care," including the need to invest in nurses and give them greater respect and recognition.

Pope Francis used his message to nurses to also "ask leaders of

nations throughout the world to invest in health care as the primary common good, by strengthening its systems and employing greater numbers of nurses, so as to ensure adequate care to everyone with respect for the dignity of each person."

Nurses and midwives, he said, have a "very special vocation" of being "guardians and preservers of life."

"You are an image of the Church as a 'field hospital' that continues to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ, who drew near to and healed people with all kinds of sickness and who stooped down to

wash the feet of his disciples," the pope said.

Nurses and midwives know that they need scientific and technical knowledge to help their patients, but that their vocation means also bringing "human and humanizing" qualities to their patient interactions.

"Taking care of women and men, of children and elderly, in every phase of their life from birth to death," he said, "you are tasked with continuous listening aimed at understanding what the needs of that patient are in the phase that he or she is experiencing."