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Commonwealth Catholic Charities program assistant Redhab Abdulrezaq, left, and program specialist Melissa Owen prepare donated food for distribution at Saint Francis House Food Pantry in Roanoke. (Photo/Karen Adams)

‘All God’s children’ served at St. Francis House pantry

No one is turned away in Roanoke

KAREN ADAM

Special to The Catholic Virginian

On a Monday morning in early February, Melissa Owen supervised the distribution of food at St. Francis House Food Pantry in downtown Roanoke.

Owen, who oversees the pantry, asked each client, “How many in your family?” — a number already verified by program assistant Redhab Abdulrezaq at the front desk — and packed boxes of non-perishables for them. She also directed them to take certain perishable items, such as one loaf of bread, one bag of apples, one package each of frozen chicken, beef and pork and “as many frozen apricots as you want.”

Every month, boxes and bags of donated food — six to 12 tons, or

more — stream through the door of St. Francis House Food Pantry, which is part of part of Commonwealth Catholic Charities (CCC).

Each weekday, people in need gratefully carry some of that food out the door: cans of green beans and soup, loaves of bread, bags of apples, boxes of macaroni and cheese and more. All of it is donated by local agencies, grocery stores and churches.

For those who are homeless and without can openers or a way to cook, Owen keeps boxes of pop-top cans, bottled water and easy-to-eat food for them. She also hopes to produce a recipe book to help people make good meals out of their assorted food.

“We don’t turn anyone away,” said Owen.

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Task force helping revise abuse guidelines

Vatican advising bishops

CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has set up a task force of qualified experts and canon lawyers to help bishops’ conferences and congregations of men and women religious with drawing up or revising guidelines for the protection of minors. The Vatican will also be releasing — at an “imminent,” but unspecified date — a handbook or vademecum, prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to help bishops and religious superiors clearly understand their responsibilities and the procedures for handling allegations of abuse.

The Vatican unveiled the new initiatives, which had been suggested one year ago at a Vatican summit on the protection of minors, at a news conference Feb. 28.

At the end of last year’s summit, Pope Francis expressed his intention to establish task forces “made up of competent persons” to assist those needing help in addressing and providing for the protection of minors, especially when they lack the needed resources and skilled personnel.

About a dozen bishops’ conferences in countries experiencing extreme hardship due to conflict or poverty still have not been able to draw up safeguarding guidelines as was called for in 2011 by the doctrinal congregation, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi told reporters at the press event.

However, the task force is

only meant to respond to requests for assistance since the responsibility for formulating the guidelines fully rests on bishops and religious superiors, Father Lombardi said.

While the group is there to help those needing to still establish guidelines, it also will help those wanting assistance to revise and update their procedures to comply with recently mandated Vatican norms, he added.

Those who have completed guidelines must constantly review, revise and improve them, said the task force’s new coordinator, Andrew Azzopardi, who is head of the Church’s safeguarding commission for Malta and Gozo.

Laws change, research on abuse reveals new insights and “the messages we get from victims always help us improve our procedures,” which should get revised at least every four or five years, he said.

The new task force, established by the pope, is currently made up of about a dozen canon lawyers and safeguarding experts. Requests for assistance are to be sent to taskforce@org.va where Azzopardi will relay questions and needs to experts, who will then provide the needed help.

The task force’s work and travel expenses will be covered by a special fund established by donors, said a Vatican communique.

The group will be under the authority of Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, the “substitute secretary for general

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The Catholic Virginian
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Program modeled after sacrament of reconciliation



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

Last month as we prepared to announce our Independent Reconciliation Program (“Program”) for those who, as minors, were sexually abused by clergy in our diocese, I traveled around the diocese and met with our priests, deacons, school principals and college campus leaders to explain the Program and why we were implementing it before it was announced publicly.

Because this is a jubilee year in our diocese, we prayed the diocesan bicentennial prayer. I then read Luke 4:14-21 in which Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Is 61:1-2).

That year of favor was a jubilee, a time for restoring people to the heritage that they had lost during the previous 50 or 100 years. A significant aspect of any jubilee is reconciliation — intentionally reaching out to those who have been alienated, distanced or broken over injustices committed in the past.

What Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue applies to us as Church. In our diocese’s bicentennial jubilee year, we seek to reconcile with members of our faith community who, as minors, were sexually abused by clergy. It is one of my responsibilities to reach out to them, to attempt to seek reconciliation.

The Independent Reconciliation Program is a means — not the only one — to try and repair the injury and overcome the estrangement that

has occurred due to the clergy sexual abuse of minors. Other means have included my Sept. 14, 2018 pastoral letter, “From Tragedy to Hope,” the regional Masses of Atonement, local listening sessions with lay leadership and the faithful in September and October of that year, and the publication in February 2019 of the list of priests against whom there are credible and substantiated claims of child sexual abuse.

When I speak about reconciliation with victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse, I do so in the context of the sacrament of reconciliation which includes confession of sins, contrition and reparation. Those three elements are necessary for the reconciliation we seek with victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

When we confess our sins, we lift up into the light of Christ the injury that we have inflicted and the affects that resulted from it. With the abuse crisis, we have done that by being transparent, thorough, honest and straightforward about what occurred. We have taken responsibility for it, speaking about it truthfully and charitably.

Authentic contrition for anyone seeking reconciliation requires penitents to make efforts to ensure that they are not repeating the same behavior. They are going to do what they can to demonstrate they’ve made a turn for the better.

All the things we have done during the past 18 months regarding the sexual abuse crisis are evidence of that contrition. We have increased the staff in our Office of Safe Environment and published the first report about its work, named the credibly accused clergy, published names of Diocesan Review Board members, reestablished the Diocesan Pastoral Council to provide greater lay involvement to me on priorities of the diocese and instituted EthicsPoint — a third-party entity where employees, volunteers, clergy and parishioners of our diocese can submit concerns about financial, administrative or human re-

source matters. We are also revising our diocesan ethical conduct policy. These are all an expression of our contrition and sorrow as we have a meta-noia — a change of heart, or a change of direction.

Reparation can be made through any number of actions. Prayer, seeking reconciliation with those we’ve injured, giving generously to the poor — it can be any action that shows a genuine attempt to repair the damage we have done.

Those three components of the sacrament of reconciliation are a model for how to address the injury caused by clergy sexual abuse. We have confessed it, shown that we are changing our ways, e.g., through our insistence on protecting

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BISHOP’S SCHEDULE

Wednesday, March 11

Confirmation
St. Thomas More, Lynchburg, 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 12

Confirmation
Blessed Sacrament, Harrisonburg, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 18

Confirmation
St. Bede, Williamsburg, 7 p.m.

Saturday, March 21

Diocesan Men’s Conference
St. Bede, Williamsburg, 10 a.m.

Sunday, March 22

Mass: Pastor Installation
St. Joseph, Richmond, 11 a.m.

Tuesday, March 24

Confirmation
Blessed Sacrament, Norfolk, 7 p.m.

ST. KATHARINE DREXEL

1820 TIME CAPSULE 2020

Throughout the 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 Diocese of Richmond’s Bicentennial Task Force.

In 1900, while at a train stop in Columbia, Virginia, located halfway between Richmond and Charlottesville, Mother Katharine Drexel glimpsed a cross through the trees. She asked her traveling companion, a religious sister of her order, if it was a Catholic church. Later, that sister, Mother Mercedes, learned that the Wakeham Chapel was indeed a Catholic church and was under the care of a black Catholic layman.

Father Richard Wakeham, a priest of the Society of St. Sulpice (Sulpicians), had built the chapel so that he could celebrate Mass there when he visited his parents (1884). St. Peter Cathedral in Richmond administered the chapel at least until the death of the priest’s mother, Catherine Wakeham (1891). Mass had not been regularly celebrated in the chapel for several years when the religious sisters found it.

With the support of Katharine Drexel, Mother Mercedes promptly began a Sunday school

for African American adults and children. The chapel also became a mission for black Catholics: St. Joseph’s.

It was placed under the care of the Society of St. Joseph for Foreign Missions, better known as the Josephites, in Richmond and became a parish in 1967. Today the church is called the St. Joseph’s Shrine of St. Katharine Drexel. The name was changed to honor Katharine Drexel, the second native-born American to be canonized (2000).

Katharine Drexel (1858–1955) had come to Virginia in 1900 to visit the two schools that she, together with her half-sister, Louise Morrell (1863–1945), had opened in Rock Castle (Powhatan County) for black youth: St. Emma’s Industrial and Agricultural College for boys (1895) and St. Francis de Sales School for girls (1899).

The Drexels used the fortune they inherited to fund charitable causes. In Katharine’s case, this included the work of the religious order she founded — Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament — to care for African Americans and Indians.

Located on an estate called Belmead, St. Francis and St. Emma’s provided vocational training, secondary education and religious instruction to generations of African Americans. These institutions closed in 1970 and 1972,

respectively, due to declining enrollment, increasing costs and the accessibility of integrated public schools. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament sold the Belmead estate in 2019.

In 1923, Mother Drexel attended a graduation at St. Emma’s. The accompanying picture taken at that event is the only photograph of St. Katharine Drexel in Virginia. Her feast day is March 3.



In 1923, Mother Drexel attended a graduation at St. Emma’s. The accompanying picture taken at that event is the only photograph of St. Katharine Drexel in Virginia. Her feast day is March 3. (Photo/Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia)

Deacon John Kren named director of permanent diaconate office

1997 CV article factor in answering call to ordained ministry

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI
The Catholic Virginian

The Catholic Virginian can't take credit for Deacon John Kren discerning the call to the permanent diaconate in late 1997 and early 1998, but an article in the Dec. 15, 1997 issue might have encouraged him to answer that call.

Deacon Kren, whom Bishop Barry C. Knestout named as part-time director of the Diocese of Richmond's Office of Permanent Diaconate on Monday, Jan. 21, saw an article about Bishop Walter F. Sullivan having ordained David Nemetz a permanent deacon at St. Michael Parish, Glen Allen.

As he read the article, Deacon Kren, who was active in his parish, St. Mark, Virginia Beach, as a lector, parish council member and extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, thought, "Gee, I could do that."

After attending diaconate information nights, he thought, "You know, this really interests me."

Although there was no formal deacon program at the time but wanting to "get a leap on this deacon thing," as he described it, Deacon Kren started seeing signs that he should pursue it.

He was getting on I-64, heading from Virginia Beach to Hampton, for a pastoral leadership presentation.

"And as I pulled onto 64, coming down the acceleration ramp and pulling out into the traffic, on the car in front of me, the license was 'Follow me,'" he said.

Bishop Sullivan ordained Deacon Kren in March 2003.

From classroom to ship

A native of Bethlehem, Pa., and raised in Fort Ewen, New York, Deacon Kren's first 16 years of formal education were in Catholic schools, including an undergraduate degree from Marist College, where he majored in physics and minored in math.

Wanting to practice his interview skills during his senior year, Deacon Kren was sent by his adviser to a nearby Catholic school where they needed a math teacher.

"I had no background in education whatsoever. I went down to the interview, the principal interviewed me, and she kept saying, 'I can't offer you the job now. I have to talk to the monsignor,'" he said about the job he did not want.

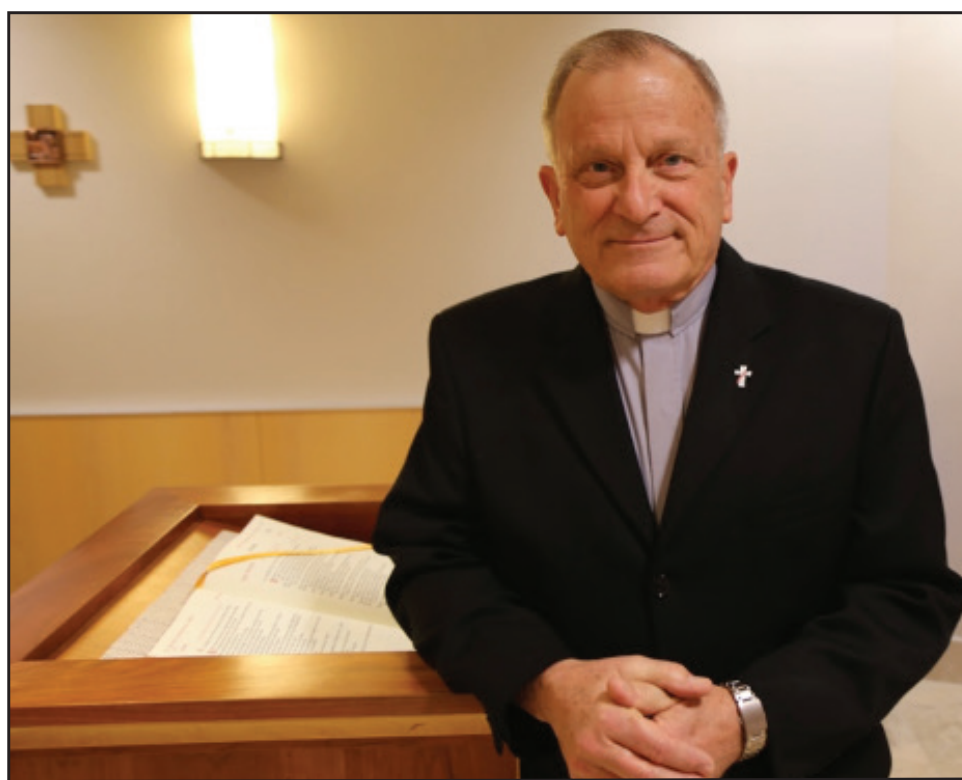
Nonetheless, they offered it, and he taught math to seventh and eighth graders for a year and a half, in addition to coaching the sailing team at Marist.

The self-described "science/math guy" had to deal with another number — 19. It was his draft lottery number. He opted to enlist in the Navy in 1972.

"They commissioned me. I went in as an ensign and did nothing but cruisers and destroyers for the first 12 years. They put me on an amphibious ship. Then they went back to frigates," Deacon Kren said. "Finally, I retired as the operational test director for Arleigh Burke."

He explained that the operational test and evaluation is the Navy's way of making sure that the combat system fits the operator.

"If you take a look at the original draft of the drawings of a computer mouse, it was actually like three buttons and a box. Well, the oper-



Bishop Barry C. Knestout has named Deacon John Kren, who serves at St. Mark Parish, Virginia Beach, as part-time director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate. He has been a deacon since 2003. (Photo/Stephen Previtera)

ational test director would say, 'Yes, it meets functionality, but you can't use it for extended periods of time,' so you do the modifications," Deacon Kren explained. "So not only does the weapons developer have to develop a sophisticated and lethal weapon, but the operator has to be able to operate that system. Without those two working congruently, you end up with a system that does not work."

Back to school

When he finished his Navy career in 1994 with the rank of commander, Deacon Kren and his wife, Chris, who will be married 42 years next month, had to decide where to live.

"My wife was just getting into real estate, and we didn't know where we were going to live, where we wanted to move, because we had lived up and down the east coast from Maine to Florida," he said. "The joke we always say is that we got married and moved to Boston. Our first son was born in Boston. We went to Newport, Rhode Island. Newport to Brunswick, Maine. Brunswick, Maine, to Mayport, Florida. Mayport, Florida, to Norfolk, Virginia, in time for his third birthday."

The Krens have three sons and three grandchildren.

Deacon Kren resumed his career in education, earning a master's degree from Old Dominion and completing doctoral studies in educational leadership at the same school. He is certified as a principal, and to teach math and science, students with learning disabilities and those who are emotionally disturbed and mentally challenged. After a couple of years at Great Bridge High School, he was invited to teach at the Chesapeake Juvenile Services (when it was known as Tidewater Detention School) where has been for the last 17 years.

He immersed himself in the challenges that this educational environment presented.

"When I first started in the detention home, the average stay of any child was 15 days — calendar days, not school days. So, as a teacher, you pick up a kid who walks in. You have to assess where they are very quickly. And then you start providing them an education service in that subject area," Deacon Kren said. "And

then two weeks later, they're gone. And it's not just one kid, it's the entire class is doing this, and not necessarily on the same schedule. What I loved about it was every day was different. Every day you had a different kid in front of you."

In the midst of educating students in academics and life skills, and seeking ways to enhance the program, Deacon Kren opted to forgo the dissertation needed to earn his doctorate and pursued diaconal formation through classes held at St. Michael Parish, Glen Allen, which were provided by St. Meinrad School of Theology.

Evaluating the program

As a deacon, Deacon Kren developed the marriage preparation program at St. Mark Parish, and was part of the team that developed UnVeiled, the Diocese of Richmond's marriage preparation program. He and his wife are also facilitators for another marriage preparation program, Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study (FOCCUS). For the past 13 years, he has served as vicariate deacon for the Eastern Vicariate.

As director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate, Deacon Kren, who reports to the vicar for clergy, is helping evaluate the program.

"We don't anticipate a very large change in how we do business now. We want to be able to bring as many men and their wives into the Church for service," he said of the five-year program. "That will require not only formation classes, but also continuing formation of the existing deacons."

He praised the commitment of deacons and the gifts they bring to their ministry.

"Each have their own way of addressing ministry, and I think that shows that God comes in so many different ways and mannerisms and words and cultures, and it just truly enriches the entire area," Deacon Kren said. "The whole Church becomes better off because of being able to have a wide variety of cultures, languages, etc."

He added, "There are many signs and symbols."

Even a license plate that reads: "Follow me."

'Back to Basics' provides faith formation for all ages

Program at St. Therese, Chesapeake, a commitment to New Evangelization

WENDY KLESCH

Special to The Catholic Virginian

The family who prays together, stays together, as the old saying goes.

Parishioners at St. Therese, Chesapeake, have discovered a corollary to that adage: that the parish who attends religious education together, stays together, finding a renewed sense of community along the way.

Once a month, parishioners at St. Therese gather after Mass to share a meal and to attend classes as part of the parish's "Back to Basics" program — a sort of Catholicism 101 for all ages.

Those who attend are divided into five groups according to age. Each group rotates through two sessions that explore similar themes, leading, at the end of the day, to a unique, shared experience for all.

"It's a nice way for all of our families to all come together," said Jean Hawley, coordinator for Christian formation at St. Therese. "Since everyone hears talks on the same topic, hopefully it gives them something to talk about when they leave and encourages discussion at home."

As Lent approached, February's session — held on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday — concentrated on Catholic Social Teaching. The tenets, laid out by Pope Leo XIII in his 1891 encyclical "Rerum Novarum," were written in response to changes in society wrought by the Industrial Revolution and include such principles as upholding the sanctity of human life, solidarity and stewardship.

"It's all about delving into the teachings and looking into the ways that we all can put our faith into action," Hawley explained.

Father Kevin O'Brien, pastor of St. Therese, said that intergenerational sessions have been a staple of St. Therese's religious education program for more than 10 years, but that the focus on revisiting the basics began two years ago as part of the parish's efforts to embrace the call of the New Evangelization.

"How can you evangelize if you yourself don't know the basics of your faith?" Father O'Brien said. "So, we try to go through the broader topics — the real presence of Christ

in the Eucharist, the sacraments — to try to touch on topics that people might have missed or forgotten."

The goal, he said, is to make the sessions as interactive as possible, allowing discussion time for the adults and teens, and games and activities for the younger participants.

Parishioners Jeff and Ashley Sherbinsky said that they enjoy the program and have found it helpful to have the chance to brush up on the tenets of their faith as their children grow. Their older child, who is receiving first Communion this year, is beginning to ask more questions, they explained.

"Whereas our kindergartener is still simply here for the fun," Ashley Sherbinsky said.

"The program seems to be well-received," said Dick Campbell, a Back to Basics volunteer and presenter. "It's a good opportunity for people to broaden their knowledge of Church teachings."

"Plus," he added, "there's pizza."

All God's children

After Mass, the groups divided for lunch and for a session exploring the concept of stewardship.

Twenty-five first- and second-graders gathered in one of the classrooms, where they were made "kings and queens for the day," fashioning brightly-colored crowns to decorate and to wear.

But with great privilege comes great responsibility, and in keeping with the theme of Catholic Social Teachings, the children also were asked to make rules for their kingdom — ones that would embody the values of caring for God's creation and of respecting the dignity of others.

"Everyone has to love one another!" one child called out.

"No one goes hungry!" said another.

er.

"Everyone can have a pet dinosaur or other pet by their side," a third child said, as volunteers Jessie Bailey, a 10th grader, and Allison Starkey, a ninth grader, helped the children put finishing touches on their crowns.

"No ducks!" chimed in one little boy.

"What? No ducks?" the others at his table immediately protested, before the group dissolved into giggles.



Volunteers Allison Starkey and Jessie Bailey help a group of first- and second-graders assemble crowns during a session of the "Back to Basics" faith formation program at St. Therese, Chesapeake, on Sunday, Feb. 23.

(Photo/Wendy Klesch)

Later it was ruled that, of course, the ducks can stay.

'Jesus' mission statement is our mission statement'

As the children worked to make fair and just rules to safeguard their imaginary kingdom, Father O'Brien spoke with more than 20 teens about how they might help to make the real world a better place through following the call of the Gospel.

In his discussion of the Catholic Social Teaching regarding the preferential option for the poor, Father O'Brien cited a passage from the Gospel of Luke in which Christ goes to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue.

"Of all the scrolls, he chose Chapter 61 of Isaiah," Father O'Brien said. "'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.'"

"Jesus came to bring freedom to the captive," he said. "It's almost like Jesus is giving us his mission statement. And Jesus' mission statement is also ours."

Father O'Brien encouraged the teens to think of ways in which the parish has served the poor and needy over the past year.

In response, the teens assembled a list that included collecting food for Oasis, the food pantry in nearby Portsmouth; housing the homeless at the church for the first week of February; and buying Christmas gifts for children with a parent in prison.

In working together as a community, the parish is following the call laid out by Christ in Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, Father O'Brien said. "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers, you do for me."

'Never stop asking the question'

Campbell, who has taught in diocesan schools for 43 years, led a group of about 50 adults in a talk overviewing the basics of Catholic Social Teaching. All of the teachings, he said — whether it be caring for God's creation or upholding the dignity of work and the rights of the worker — can be summed up in the first teaching: recognizing the sanctity of all human life.

"When we remember that central point, all the rest flows from it. We are all children of God," he said.

This holds true, he added, even for those who don't seem to recognize our own human dignity in return.

"I don't have to like them, or agree with them, but I have to recognize that," he said. "That's hard."

Respect for life encompasses all life, he explained, from womb to tomb.

"Every stage of human life is worthy of respect: the unborn, the poor, the people who are left on the outside, the people who don't have the same advantages that we do," Campbell said.

He noted that Catholics are called to conversion and that Lent was a good time to assess what they could do to grow in faith and answer the call of the Gospel.

"There is always something new we can do," Campbell said. "Never stop asking yourself the question, 'What it is that you can do next?'"

As the sessions concluded, the parishioners reconvened in the parish commons, the kids galloping to their parents to show them their new crowns.

"It was interesting," parishioner Joe Caragliano said. "It gives you something new to think about. And that's always a good thing."

"How can you evangelize if you yourself don't know the basics of your faith? So, we try to go through the broader topics — the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacraments — to try to touch on topics that people might have missed or forgotten."

- FATHER KEVIN O'BRIEN

400 celebrate Rite of Election in vicariates



Upper left: Catechumens from the Western Vicariate celebrate the Rite of Election at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, on Saturday, Feb. 29. A total of 400 catechumens – 150 adults and 250 children – representing 74 parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond became “the elect” during the Rite of Election during the weekend of Feb. 29 – March 1.

Above: Bishop Barry C. Knestout shakes hands with a young member of the elect following the Rite of Election in the Eastern Vicariate at Sacred Heart, Norfolk, on Sunday, March 1.

Left: RCIA leaders from the Central Vicariate show the Book of the Elect from their respective parishes as the elect declare their intent to become Catholic during the Rite of Election at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, on Saturday, Feb. 29. (Photos/Vy Barto)

Videos are new component to bishops’ ‘Faithful Citizenship’ guide

DENNIS SADOWSKI
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A series of long-planned videos that supplement the U.S. bishops’ quadrennial “Faithful Citizenship” document that provides guidance to voters during a presidential election year have been finalized.

Posted on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website at faithfulcitizenship.org and the USCCB’s YouTube channel at bit.ly/31DH-DGN, five videos in four languages explore various aspects of Catholic social teaching while reflecting the teaching of Pope Francis.

The videos are part of the bishops’ effort to broaden their outreach through the document, titled “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility,” Jill Rauh, director of education and outreach in the USCCB’s Department of Justice, Peace and Human

Development, said.

“The videos intend to help Catholics engage in participation in political life, first and foremost, guided by their faith as opposed to any affiliation with any political party that they have,” Rauh explained to Catholic News Service Feb. 5.

“In addition, the videos invite Catholics to engage with civility and to learn about and advocate on behalf of all of who are vulnerable, from the unborn to immigrants to people who are in poverty, to our common home, to families,” she said.

Four English-language videos of about two minutes in length examine participation in public life, protecting human life and dignity, promoting the common good and loving others.

Videos in Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese are slightly longer.

“The (bishops) had a particular interest in

creating videos for sharing on social media and engaging with young people,” Rauh said.

Scenes showing people feeding the hungry, protecting God’s creation, comforting the elderly, caring for children, migrant people and families, and engaging in civil discussions are prominent in the productions.

Rauh also is coordinating her department’s outreach for upcoming elections through the Civilize It campaign. Introduced by the USCCB Nov. 3, one year before the 2020 vote, the campaign stresses that respectful dialogue — rather than name-calling and nasty barbs — can occur among people with differing political views.

Editor’s note: Information about the Civilize It campaign is available online at www.wearesaltandlight.org/civilize-it.

Norfolk Birthright is open!

I want to share some good news with my fellow Catholics in Virginia who are concerned about whether enough is being done to help pregnant women who are facing pressure to abort: Birthright of Norfolk stands ready to help women who are in crisis so that they may choose life.

Founded by Louise Summerhill, a Catholic mother of seven, Birthright provides free, practical, confidential and loving support to women, guided by Catholic Social Teaching and available to all.

If you have been told recently that Birthright of Norfolk is closing its doors, let me assure you — nothing could be further from the truth! If you are seeking a way to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world, volunteering with Birthright is an excellent way to continue your mission.

– Jennifer Miele
Norfolk

‘Don’t give up on the Church’

In response to “Where is the friendliness?” (Catholic Virginian, Feb. 10): I was saddened and dismayed to read Gary Brown’s comments about his experiences visiting a Catholic church.

When we travel in the U.S. and abroad, we try to arrive early enough at Catholic churches to introduce ourselves and speak with some of the parishioners seated nearby. Our experiences have mostly been very positive.

Mr. Brown’s letter is a good reminder to strive to see the image of Christ in others. Matthew 25:35 says, “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me...”

Our parish is known for its diversity and welcoming attitude, which is evident when we greet people arriving, at the end of Mass when our priest welcomes visitors, and after Mass when we greet visitors. Our welcome also extends to more than a hundred folks each week who come to share a Sunday supper and take home a bag of fresh and canned goods.

We come together as a faith community to worship and to be nourished by the Eucharist, but we also come together in various ministries where we find ourselves being welcomed into new “circles” of friends while serving others.

Mr. Brown might consider visiting some other parishes to see if he feels more comfortable elsewhere. There is so

much more to the Catholic Church than an hour at Mass once a week.

Mr. Brown, I urge you not to give up on the entire Catholic Church based on your experience at one church. Continue to “...seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Mt 7:7).

– Jenny W. Crawford
Yorktown

Lack of friendliness not just a Catholic concern

The letter “Where’s the friendliness?” (Catholic Virginian, Feb. 10) about hospitality in Catholic parishes reminded me of similar experiences I have had. Like Gary Brown, I have asked that same question. I am pretty sure this is not just a Catholic concern.

Raised Baptist, I have belonged to a Lutheran church and am now Presbyterian. I have also attended Catholic Church on occasion. I have experienced church as friendly and welcoming but also as aloof and cold. I prefer the former but have long ceased being surprised when I encounter the latter.

Ushers who don’t look you in the eye; not being greeted; even having a hymnal snatched from the pew in front of me (that was in a Protestant church) — I’ve gotten that and more.

To be fair, I could probably improve how I greet/treat other people in church and out, but regardless, no matter how I am treated, I always have the freedom to choose how I respond.

One cultural norm I have witnessed in central Virginia is the closeness of family ties in rural churches, best illustrated in the phrase, “If you’re kin, you’re in.”

Given the size of most Catholic parishes, I wouldn’t think this would be a part of their dynamic, but are there not other risks here, too, such as people being taken for granted or, worse, treated with anonymity?

How visitors perceive churches is important to how well we are witnessing God’s love. People need community, and for many, they haven’t found it at church. It may just be that the local gym, sports bar or dog park will do as well.

– Steven Moore
Milford

Know difference between charity and social justice

As a Catholic, I continue to be reminded of the difference between charity and social justice. The work of

charity is helping those less fortunate. This is certainly Jesus’ call, and it feels good!

The work of social justice is the work of righting injustices in our community even if we did not commit the injustices.

One area of injustice is toward the African American community whereby purposeful structural racist policies such as redlining have left many in poverty with the message “you and your children don’t count.”

Evidence includes deteriorating schools in low income areas with fewer resources than affluent areas, food deserts with a lack of good grocery store and an inability to obtain a mortgage resulting in cyclical poverty which has left many unable to develop intergenerational wealth.

Evidence also lies in the criminal justice system: In 2017, African Americans represented 12% of the U.S. adult population but 33% of the sentenced prison population. Whites accounted for 64% of adults but 30% of prisoners. African American children are often labeled as troublemakers and become victims of the “school to prison pipeline.”

These challenges have led to mental health issues, lack of hope and deep distrust. I challenge each Catholic to be anti-racist and not just have an awareness of racism. Join your parish’s social justice committee. Contact your legislators, help community gardens in the inner city, join the reading program in an inner-city school, support inclusive and truthful African American history being taught in all of our schools.

This is our faith! You won’t regret it.

– Margaret Rittenhouse
North Chesterfield

How Trump is defined

When scrutinizing President Trump, it’s good to recall some champions of Israel whom God anointed.

Israel’s greatest king was David. God said, “I’ve found David, son of Jesse, a Man after my own heart.” David unified the Israelis and conquered her enemies. But David became proud, cocky. He committed adultery and murder, which brought Israel close to ruin.

Yet David still loved God, was repenting of his sins, and God forgave him. It was David’s love of God and following his will which defined him. Not his sins.

Samson was a great Hebrew champion, single handedly besting thousands of Philistines. Yet Samson also had promiscuous relationships with pagan women that brought him tragedy. He was blinded and put in chains.

However, in the end, Samson remembered God and begged his forgiveness, which God granted, and afterward, Samson gained his greatest victory. It was Samson’s love of God and his heroic defense of Israel which defined him. Not his sins.

In Trump, we’re witnessing a seeming evolution of spirit. From crass playboy billionaire to presidential champion for religious liberty and an ardent promoter of pro-life. Trump’s taken extraordinary political risk bucking abortion and being openly for Christianity, as well as a stalwart defender of Israel.

Yet Trump’s actions are wholesome signs of an interior orientation towards God — “despite” Trump’s previous vulgar lifestyle. Today, it’s his support of the Church, the unborn, Israel and American rights which define Trump. Not his sins.

– Fran Rodgers
Virginia Beach

Review Catholic Social Teaching, catechism

Several recent comments highlighted readers’ political biases and unfamiliarity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and Catholic Social Teaching.

One commented, “What about the ‘seamless garment?’”

The “seamless garment”

was used by the late Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin to address Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human person and having a consistent attitude toward life at all stages.

In March 1984, Cardinal Bernardin said, “A consistent life ethic does not equate the problem of taking life, e.g., through abortion and in war, with the problem of promoting human dignity (through humane programs of nutrition, health care and housing).”

Archbishop Gerhard Muller noted, “Unfortunately, however, it is also true that the image of the ‘seamless garment’ has been used by some theologians and Catholic politicians in an intellectually dishonest manner to allow or at least justify turning a blind eye to instances of abortion, contraception or public funding for embryonic stem cell research, as long as these were simultaneously accompanied by opposition to the death penalty or promotion of economic development for the poor.”

President Trump was attacked although he hasn’t been accused of immoral activity since becoming president. Perhaps he is undergoing conversion. Under his tenure, poverty and unemployment have been reduced, the middle class has grown and our country is experiencing increased productivity. Besides being a strong voice for life, he has also been a strong advocate on the international stage supporting religious freedom.

A review of the CCC and Catholic Social Teaching is warranted for all of us before deciding who to vote for in the next election.

– Tom Klocek
Chesapeake

CV letters policy

The Catholic Virginian welcomes signed letters to the editor that can be considered for publication *and/or* posting on The Catholic Virginian website. Submissions should be no more than 270 words and include the writer’s name, address or email, and phone number as all submissions are acknowledged. At the editor’s discretion, submitter’s name may be withheld from publication/posting. Letters should address topics reported in the CV or other topics relevant to Catholics. Personal attacks are not published. Letters may be edited for style, length or content. Opinions expressed by letter writers do not necessarily reflect those of The Catholic Virginian or the Diocese of Richmond.

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Support needed for Middle East Christians

'Severe trials' plague the Church, cardinal says

CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN — The Middle East, which continues to face many hardships and challenges, needs the ongoing support of Catholics around the world, a Vatican official said.

"Long and exhausting wars continue to produce millions of refugees and strongly influence the future of entire generations," said Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

"They see themselves deprived of the most basic goods, such as the right to a peaceful childhood, to a harmonious school education, to dedicating one's youth to looking for a job and forming a family, to discovering one's vocation, to an industrious and dignified adult life, and to a peaceful old age," he wrote.

In a letter sent to bishops around the world, Cardinal Sandri asked for continued support for the traditional Good Friday collection for the Holy Land. The Vatican released the letter March 4.

"The funds traditionally collected on Good Friday are the main source of material support for Christian life in the Holy Land," the cardinal wrote. "The territories that benefit in various forms of support from the collection are Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Turkey, Iran and Iraq."

The Church in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East has endured "severe trials" over the centuries, Cardinal Sandri wrote.

"Those trials are not yet finished: The tragedy of the progressive reduction of the number of local faithful continues, with the consequent risk of seeing the various Christian traditions that date back to the early centuries disappear," he wrote.

"The Holy Land, and especially the Christian community that lives there, has always occupied an important place in the heart of the universal Church," the cardinal wrote.

"The whole Church has received

from Jerusalem the gift and joy of the Gospel and of salvation in Christ Jesus," and the awareness of that gift "motivates us to give with joy and generosity," he wrote.

The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, an administratively autonomous province of the Franciscan order, uses the collection to carry out its mission of preserving most of the shrines connected with the life of Jesus as well as for providing pastoral care to the region's Catholics, running schools, operating charitable institutions and training future priests and religious.

The collection, taken up at the request of the pope, is administered by the Franciscan Custody and the Congregation for Eastern Churches, which uses it for the formation of candidates for the priesthood, the support of the clergy, educational activities, cultural formation and subsidies.

The Vatican press office released, along with Cardinal Sandri's letter, some details of how the money was used from the 2019 collection, which totaled more than \$8.2 million.

The congregation spent more than \$3.2 million on academic, spiritual and human formation of seminarians and priests of Churches under their jurisdiction as well as men and women religious; more than \$3 million went for subsidizing schooling and educational activities for young people, including at Bethlehem University; nearly \$2 million was used provide emergency assistance and support to people in 10 countries.

The Vatican also released a list of the projects supported through the funds given to the Franciscan Custody to assist the Christian minority in the region, preserve and provide pilgrim access to the archaeological sites and Christian shrines and support education.

Humanitarian support was provided to Christians needing medicine, medical assistance, social support, education, job training and legal assistance to families facing eviction from living in East Jerusalem.

IN MEMORIAM

Deacon Michael V. Moro, M.D.



A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated Monday, March 2, at the Church of the Ascension, Virginia Beach, for Deacon Michael V. Moro. Deacon Moro, 76, died Sunday, Feb. 23.

A native of Columbus, Ga., he attended St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Md., and studied medicine at Universita di Padova in

Padua, Italy. In addition to being a family practitioner for more than 45 years, Deacon Moro was a professor at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Bishop Walter F. Sullivan ordained Deacon Moro on March 22, 2003, at St. Gregory the Great. Virginia Beach. He did diaconal ministry at Prince of Peace, Chesapeake; St. Nicholas, Virginia Beach; and Church of the Ascension, Virginia Beach.

Deacon Moro is survived by Fran, his wife of 44 years, and their children: Loreen Clayton; Lisa (husband Danny) Poole; Michael (wife Claudia Muratori) Moro; Amy Moro; Geoffrey (fiancé Molly Fanney) Moro.

He is further survived by sisters, Cookie Burnett and Eileen (husband Dr. Aswini) Lenora; and brother Robert "Bobby" (wife Toni) Moro, as well as six grandchildren, a great-grandchild and many relatives and friends.

Pope asks Catholics to reflect on ecological crisis, May 16-24

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Saying he wanted to renew his "urgent call to respond to the ecological crisis," Pope Francis asked Catholics around the globe to participate in the international observance of "Laudato Si' Week" May 16-24.

Sponsored by the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and facilitated by the Global Catholic Climate Movement and Renova, the week is designed as an occasion for Catholics to look at steps they have taken to protect the environment and assist the world's poor people and to come up with next steps.

The sponsoring groups launched a website — laudatosiweek.org — that contains information, resources and a

"toolkit" that includes several ideas that include lobbying elected officials, conducting an "energy audit," planting a "pollinator garden" and reviewing one's investment portfolio in favor of companies that protect the environment.

In a video message released by the Vatican March 3 and posted on the website, Pope Francis said the week was meant to mark the fifth anniversary of his encyclical, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home."

"The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" cannot continue to go unheeded, the pope said. "Let's take care of creation, a gift of God, our good creator."

Lourdes closes healing pools as coronavirus precaution

CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

ROME — As the number of people testing positive for the coronavirus in Europe continued to grow, the French Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes announced that pilgrims were still welcome, but the pools the sick bathe in hoping for healing would be closed temporarily.

"Our first concern will always be the safety and health of the pilgrims and the shrine's working community," said a note posted Feb. 28 on the shrine's website. "As a precaution, the pools have been closed until further notice."

In the center of Rome, the French Church

of St. Louis, home of three famous Caravaggio paintings, closed March 1 because a priest who had been resident at the church tested positive for the coronavirus upon returning to France Feb. 28 and was hospitalized. The 42-year-old priest was in satisfactory condition, the Archdiocese of Paris said.

The other two dozen members of the community of French priests at St. Louis were placed under a precautionary quarantine. The members included a priest who worked for Vatican Media in the former Vatican Radio building.

Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Dicastery for

Communication, wrote to Vatican media employees March 2, saying the quarantine was expected to be brief, since the priest who tested positive for the virus left Rome in mid-February; he had traveled to several cities in northern Italy, where the outbreak has been much worse. In addition, the Vatican media employee had no symptoms.

"As a prudential measure," Ruffini said, the Vatican City health and hygiene service "sanitized and cleaned the office of our colleague and common areas" of the building.

Dioceses and religious communities across

See Lourdes, Page 13

A Knights of Columbus Event



IRISH NIGHT

March 14, 2020

A FAMILY EVENT



Great Irish Food, Music & Dance

St Mary's Parish Hall – Doors open at 6:30 PM



Prepared by our KofC Culinary Team, except where noted:

Irish Food: *Shepherd's Pie (by Morrissey's);*
Corned Beef and Cabbage, Lamb Stew, Beef Stew.
Dessert: *Irish Bread Pudding by Rare Olde Times.*
Drink: *Irish Beer & wine - cash bar and other beverages.*
Kid's food: *Beefaroni and buttered corn.*

Irish Music and the Muggivan School of Dance

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For more information contact
Daniel Caffrey at
kkcaffrey@hotmail.com or 804-512-6288

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- Ashlee Giles
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Big Catholic Broth

CatholicVote is tracking

DENNIS SADOWSKI
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Regular Massgoers in some parts of the country have been tracked using cellphone location data by at least one organization looking to turn out voters to support specific political candidates.

Brian Burch, president of CatholicVote, a political action group with no ties to the Catholic Church, has written repeatedly about how his organization has used “the latest technology to find Catholics, connect with them, register them to vote and then get them to the polls.”

The technology Burch is utilizing involves a digital marketing practice known as geofencing.

Using smartphone apps to identify where people are or the places they frequent, geofencing allows marketers to use that information to send messages advertising goods or services in a particular locale in the hope of turning smartphone users into customers.

Identifying where any one smartphone is located is possible because the devices, when turned on, are constantly in touch with cellphone towers. Cell service operators collect that data and then sell it to parties seeking to advertise goods or services.

Geofencing is widely acknowledged as an inexpensive and efficient way to collect data and market to a select audience. It is not prohibited by law, although privacy advocates have called for federal legislation to protect individual rights.

‘Just happen to focus on Catholics’

CatholicVote has used geofences centered on parishes in several states, allowing for the identification of smartphones that entered Church property. Burch has explained in posts on his organization’s website how that phone data is then used to identify registered — or unregistered — voters and also to target people with political ads for or against a particular candidate.

In a Feb. 25 email to Catholic News Service, Burch said his organization uses “many different technologies and data sources to gather information and better serve our audience.” Beyond geofencing, Burch identified sources of information from which the organization collects data on Catholic voters including widely held consumer information, magazine or newspaper subscription accounts, social networks “and much more.”

“We are no different than any other organization seeking to reach a specific audience. We just happen to focus on Catholics,” he wrote.

That information has been used to identify Catholics who are not registered to vote and to send them political ads supporting or opposing certain candidates for public office.

Digital privacy advocates have raised concern that Massgoers may be unaware that information about their whereabouts is being collected and sold to advertisers and marketers. Current law does not require that such information be disclosed by app makers or cellular phone service providers.

“I don’t think the technology or the ability (to track people) are inherently bad,” said Greg Hoplamazian, associate professor of

communication at Loyola University Maryland. “But there are ways to use it that suddenly make people uncomfortable.”

What can the bishops do

The questions geofencing and tracking technologies raise are being debated by the Committee on Communication of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, a committee, chaired by Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, has been hearing from experts on and advocates for digital privacy, including Chris Lewis, executive director of the Washington-based advocacy organization Public Knowledge. The committee will hear from Laura Moy, associate professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center, at its meeting on March 12.

James Rogers, USCCB chief communications officer, said committee members are interested in learning about digital privacy after a series of media reports on the issue, including CatholicVote’s efforts, in the first half of 2019.

“The committee tracks that new technology, and it became very obvious that as we enter this new territory, that raises a significant number of questions. The committee wanted to get up on the current state of things, to make sure they have a good understanding of the landscape,” Rogers told CNS Feb. 27.

As the committee considers questions related to digital privacy, Rogers said members are keeping in mind a fundamental question: “Is there a way for the bishops to be helpful?”

More importantly, he added, the bishops are concerned that the Church be viewed as partisan when it comes to political candidates.

“There are times when our faith manifests itself in the public square,” he said. “But that, of course, should never be in support or opposition to a particular candidate. Partisan activities are not what the Church is about. ... It’s always something you want to guard against.”

CatholicVote, which began building its digital voter efforts in 2018, has been running campaigns operating in six states “and likely will expand to as many as 10 more states” as the November election nears, Burch said in his email to CNS.

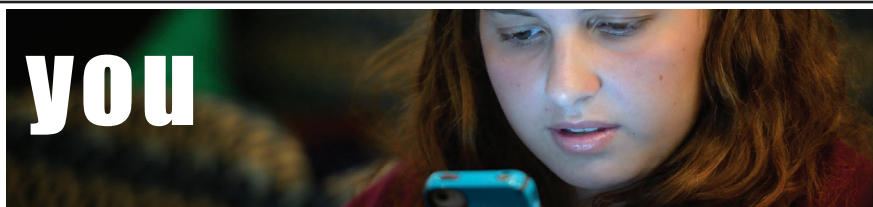
How CatholicVote gets its information

The Wall Street Journal reported that CatholicVote operated in five Senate races in 2018 as about 6 million people received ads via their smartphones.

In Missouri, CatholicVote threw its support behind Republican Josh Hawley, an evangelical Christian, in his bid to unseat incumbent Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Democrat and a Catholic. The organization sent ads that called McCaskill “anti-Catholic” for her support of abortion. It also expressed its unwillingness to support the Little Sisters of the Poor in their lawsuit challenging the contraceptive mandate of the Affordable Care Act.

er could be watching you

Massgoers for political purposes



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fordable Care Act, and opposition to Catholic judicial nominees because of their religious beliefs.

Hawley, who opposes abortion, won the election. Burch has claimed that CatholicVote was instrumental in the victory.

Burch said in the email to CNS that his organization is "merely focused on those people most likely to be interested in our advertising or educational information." He denied that the organization is violating the privacy of Massgoers.

Nevertheless, CatholicVote has been able to learn the identity of regular Massgoers through information that initially was obtained via smartphone apps. Surveys over the years have shown that people who regularly attend Mass tend to hold views that more closely align with Church teachings, especially on abortion, religious liberty and same-sex marriage. Those are the voters that CatholicVote is attempting to reach.

In posts on his organization's website, Burch has made no secret that he wants to turn out "faithful" Catholic voters to support the reelection of President Donald Trump,

citing his pro-life, pro-family and religious liberty stances.

Burch said the organization is especially active in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, all of which Trump carried by narrow margins in 2016. Election observers have said those three states are key to Trump staying in the White House. Other CatholicVote operations are underway in Arizona and Florida, Burch said.

In a Nov. 11 post, Burch indicated the organization had identified nearly 200,000 Catholics in Wisconsin who had been to church at least three times within the previous 90 days. Calling them "active" Catholics, Burch said he learned that by checking voter registration rolls, more than 91,000 churchgoers in the targeted group were not registered.

"Our goal is very simple: we want every practicing Catholic in America to register to vote, and to vote in November," Burch said in his email to CNS.

Ethical questions

Burch also defended CatholicVote's efforts, saying that its use of geofencing involves accessing anonymous mobile device identification data. He described the use of geolocation data as "quite common" and "only accessible from devices where users authorize the sharing of this data."

"We do not have direct access to individuals to 'get permission up front' since geo-data is sourced from third-party apps where users have opted to share their location data with that app owner or service," Burch wrote. "We are merely a customer accessing the ad exchange along with thousands of other marketers of products and services."

Despite Burch's claims, digital privacy experts said using geofences to identify churchgoers raises ethical questions about how private data is being used.

"There is a sense among some that church attendance is a private matter and this (geofencing) shouldn't be used in this way," said Richard Garnett, director of the program on Church, state and society at the University of Notre Dame Law School.

"I don't want any organization to know where I spend time with friends or where I go. It's almost like they're getting in the car with me and following me around," he said.

For Moy, the concern is that people no longer are getting information offering different points of view.

"In many different cases, we're just seeing the viewpoints of parties or entities that determine that we're a particular target for their particular message," she said.

Moy expressed concern that the everyday practices of data gathering and targeting individuals with messages with which they only agree fosters misinformation and further entrenches polarization to the detriment of the country.

"If we know we are being tracked or watched when we convene with other like-minded individuals, that chills our ability to offer opposing viewpoints," she said.

What people don't know

D. Gregory Sapp, professor of religious studies at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida, questioned the use of geofencing to identify the political leanings of Catholics, who, he told CNS, "are anything but homogenous when it comes to the political divide."

Sapp suggested that some Catholics may be prone to act in opposition to a political ad received through their smartphone. Further, he added, "If political groups are using information that other advertisers might gather, to me that's creepy. It's unethical to use a service I paid for to inundate me with advertisements."

John Bergmayer, legal director at Public Knowledge, welcomed the interest by the USCCB on the issue.

"Tracing which people are churchgoers, which parish they go to, when they go, that's like a showstopper," Bergmayer said. "I guarantee that almost no one knows that they have this information for political purposes."

He called for broad federal legislation so that consumers can bring claims themselves, rather than formally through the courts, to challenge the collection and selling of personal data. He said any law should require that companies that profit from collecting and selling such data advise consumers upfront how they can opt out of the collection of private information.

"It's an issue that is inherently tinged by ethical considerations," he added. "The information collected is quite sensitive. It really reveals information about people's lives. ... It is a moral issue."

Public Knowledge maintains that limits on how personal data is collected and used can best be governed by federal law, but Bergmayer said there's no such talk in Congress.

Turn off your phone at church

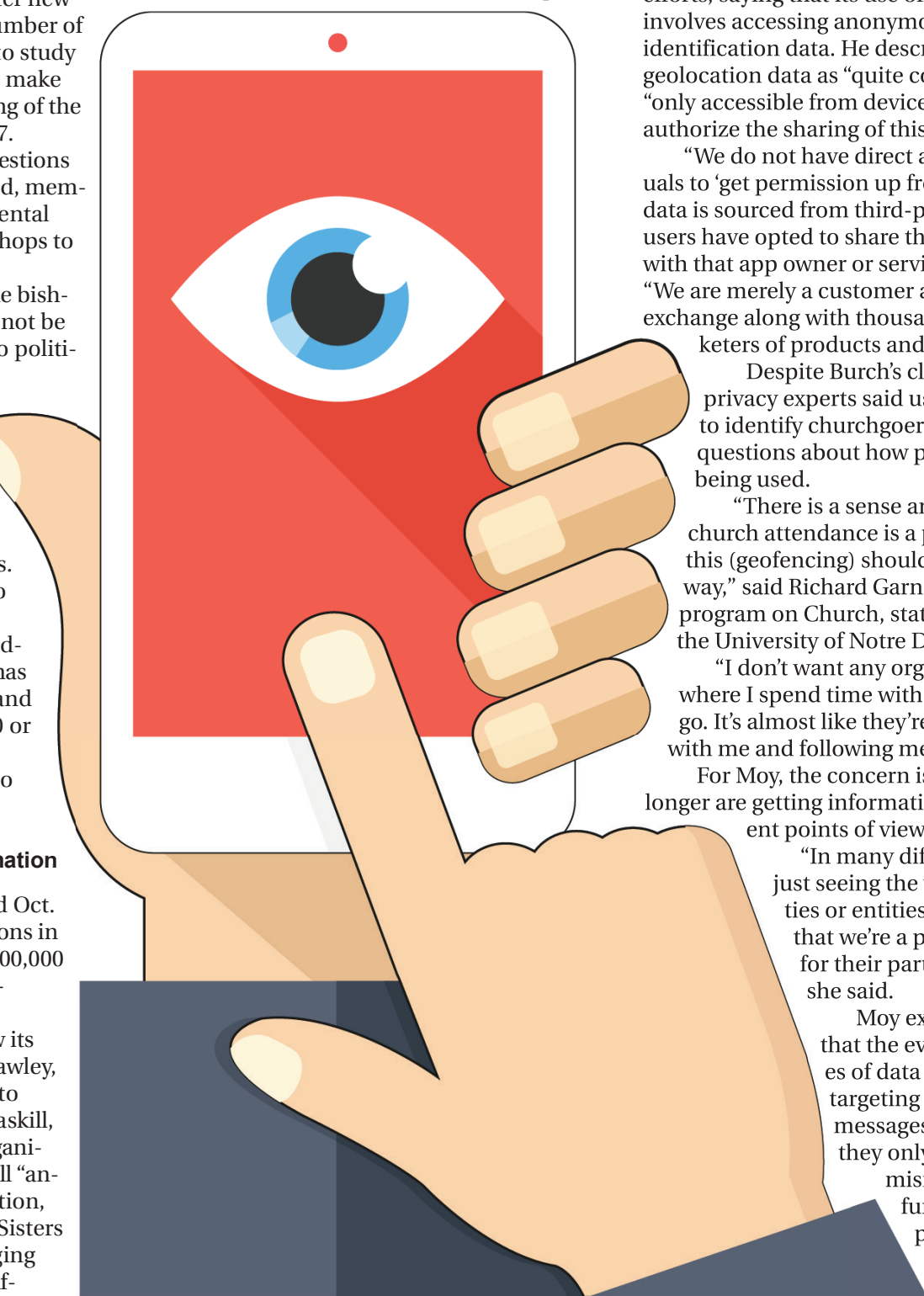
Bergmayer cited the California Consumer Privacy Protection Act that took effect Jan. 1 as a good first step, however.

That law establishes several rights of consumers: to know what personal information is collected, used, shared or sold; to delete personal information held by businesses and, by extension, a business's service provider; to opt out of sale of personal information; and to nondiscrimination in terms of price or service when someone exercises a right under the law.

The law pertains to large businesses – those with gross annual revenues of more than \$25 million that buy, receive or sell the personal information of 50,000 or more consumers, households or devices and derive 50% or more of annual revenues from selling consumers' personal information.

Short of a legislative solution, Notre Dame's Garnett offered a surefire suggestion for Massgoers concerned about being tracked: Don't take your phone to church, and if you do, turn it off.

Follow Sadowski on Twitter: @DennisSadowski



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In the eyes of the Church, divorce is not always sinful



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Q. What would you say to a married woman who has endured verbal abuse in every way possible for more than a dozen years? It is affecting me mentally, spiritually and physically, and I cannot take it any longer. It is also affecting my young daughter, who receives the same sort of treatment from her father.

I was married by a priest in the Catholic Church and have sought to live up to the Church's teachings. Would it be wrong in the eyes of the Church to seek a divorce for the sake of my own health and that of my daughter? (City of origin withheld)

A. The Catholic Church believes that marriage is meant to be a permanent union and that Jesus intended it to be so (Mt 19:3-6). But it is also true that divorce may not always be sinful. In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense" (No. 2383).

So it could be that the ongoing emotional violence that you and your daughter have been forced to undergo might justify a separation and divorce. But the wounds from a divorce are wide, and you would want to take

every prudent step before it comes to that.

Have you sought out a marriage counselor and encouraged your husband to do the same? My bias is for counseling offered by church agencies, since they would share my views of the sanctity of marriage. And have you sought to bring God into the equation by frequent prayer? Please know that you have the promise of my own prayers as well.

Q. I am a Catholic and single father of two. I was not married Catholic originally and was divorced 20 years ago. I am looking to marry a woman who was married in a Catholic ceremony and divorced 20 years ago because of abuse. The paperwork required for her to obtain an annulment in her home country of Venezuela is almost impossible.

If I marry her without an annulment, would that ruin my chances to be an extraordinary minister of holy Communion and to receive holy Communion? (Tampa, Florida)

A. In order for you to marry in a Catholic ceremony, two things would have to happen. You yourself would have to meet with a priest and complete some very simple paperwork regarding your first marriage. That paperwork would then be submitted to the diocesan marriage tribunal, which would then declare that this marriage "did not count" in the Church since you were not married in a Catholic ceremony or with Catholic permission.

As for the woman you seek to marry, her situation is more complicated. Since she was married in a Catholic ceremony, she would have to go through the Church's annulment process to have that first marriage declared invalid. (That she suffered spousal abuse would be an important factor because it might show that her first husband, from the start, was ill-equipped to marry.)

She need not seek this Church annulment in Venezuela; canonically, a petitioner may file for a Church annulment either in the place where the marriage took place (Venezuela, in this case) or where the petitioner now lives.

Were you to marry her without these permissions, that marriage would not be recognized by the Catholic Church. Thus, you would not be eligible to serve as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion or even to receive holy Communion, as noted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 1650).

Q. I have been an extraordinary minister of holy Communion for about 20 years. During that time, I have dropped the host twice while distributing Communion. I was embarrassed and mortified — to the point where I have even considered no longer giving Communion. What is the proper thing to do if the host is dropped? (Northern Missouri)

A. There is no need to be mortified — or even embarrassed. As much as we try to treat the Eucharist

with the utmost reverence, accidents do occur. I have distributed holy Communion for more than 50 years, but just last week I dropped a host on the floor when two hosts stuck together.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which is the Church's guidebook on liturgy, says: "If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently; and if any of the precious blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the sacrarium in the sacristy" (No. 280). The sacrarium is a special sink that drains directly to the ground.

If you happen to drop a host, pick it up carefully and either consume it or dissolve it later on in water (so that it no longer has the properties of bread) and wash it down the sacrarium. Treating the eucharistic species with reverence reflects the belief of the Church that Jesus meant it when he said at the Last Supper, "This is my body ... this is my blood."

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains: "By the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood" (No. 1376).

(Accidents can be minimized if people receive the host the way they are instructed — in the outstretched and open palm — rather than grabbing for it, as they would for a brass ring on a merry-go-round.)

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

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Catholic Community Foundation of the Diocese of Richmond

Fuel & Hunger Fund

The Annual Appeal funding of the Fuel & Hunger Fund has been essential in helping our parishes and Catholic organizations provide additional support for those in need. In 2019 grants totaling \$254,500 were distributed to 104 parishes and Catholic organizations.

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond truly appreciates generosity in this appeal. To give securely now, visit richmondcatholicfoundation.org/giving/annual-appeal

FISH DINNER FRIDAYS

March 13, 20 27, and April 3

ST. JUDE CATHOLIC CHURCH, Mineral, VA
4:30-7:00 PM



MENU:

Fried Fish, Baked Fish, or Shrimp
Hush Puppies
French Fries / Mac & Cheese
Cole Slaw / Applesauce
Homemade Dessert

DINE-IN or CARRY-OUT

ADULT-\$10 Child--\$5

Questions? Brenda Roetry 540-894-4982

No better time than Lent for reconciliation



IN LIGHT OF FAITH
BARBARA HUGHES

I've heard several people say they gave up watching the news for Lent. That's like students saying they plan to give up homework. No one takes them seriously. After all, what's the point in giving up something that you dislike? It contradicts the purpose of Lent, which is to take a serious look at ourselves and resolve to improve areas that keep us from becoming the person God is calling us to be.

In this regard, Lent offers much food for thought, especially when it comes to changing behavior patterns that impede spiritual growth.

In a recent homily, Pope Francis explained that our interior disposition regarding sorrow for our sins and for the sins of others is a lesson in self-discovery. He noted that if reflecting on our sins and the sins of others causes us to feel sorrow, it brings us closer to God, who is saddened by sin.

If, on the other hand, we become angry when we reflect on our sins and the sins of others, it distances us from God because anger is rooted in pride. It's that simple.

In a recent conversation, a friend noted that watching the news brings out the worst in him. The attacks and counterattacks that are part of the daily news cycle only fuel his anger, so ignoring it seems the best approach. But is it?

I admit that I experience similar sentiments, reminding me of the words of Pope Francis and Jesus' teaching about anger.

Our Lord said we are to love our enemies, but who exactly are our enemies? Are they people who look different, believe differently or have different political views? Most of us can't point to people in our immediate circle that want to kill us or do us bodily harm. But we all have detractors, people who judge us without really understanding us or draw a line that separates us from them.

If we are honest with ourselves, we do the same. Why else would we get angry when we watch the news or see injustice in the world? We become outraged because we think we could never be part of such evil, but not according to Jesus.

In teaching about the commandment "You shall not commit murder," Jesus said, "What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with this brother shall be liable to judgment; any man who uses abusive language shall be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and if he holds him in contempt he risks the fires of Gehenna" (Mt 5:22).

If that doesn't cause us to hang our collective Christian heads in shame, I don't know what would. This is the reason we need Lent.

Honest self-confrontation is a distinct feature of the season. It reminds us that God desires contrite hearts more than sin offerings, which is the reason parishes offer communal penance services.

While many Catholics take advantage of the sacrament of reconciliation, when compared with the number of people who receive Eucharist on any given Sunday, the number is small. The reason for the disconnect is rooted in the sin of pride.

The tendency to deny our sinfulness, rationalize or blame others is as old as Adam and Eve. Ashamed of their sin, our first parents hid, trying

to conceal their nakedness. When they were discovered, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent.

We do the same when we deny, excuse or minimize the sins we commit and the good we fail to do. When we exonerate ourselves for ignoring the plight of the poor, contributing to injustice and abusing the earth's resources, we echo the words of Cain, who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The voices of victims cry out to heaven, and one day we will be held accountable. This should give us pause, causing us to run, not walk, to the sacrament of reconciliation. We all need forgiveness, and the good news is that it's ours for the asking.

Jesus said we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Instead of getting angry, let's resolve to pray for those who make our blood boil. It's hard to stay angry with someone when we are praying for them. Loving our enemies requires supernatural strength, which means we also need to pray for ourselves.

Jesuit Father Chuck Gallagher often told couples on Marriage Encounter weekends that if you're more than 15 minutes away from prayer, you're in trouble. I used to think he was exaggerating, but that was when I was young and foolish.

Over the years, however, I've learned that prayer is not optional; it's a matter of survival, and there's no better reminder to pray than the season of Lent.

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

Witnessing signs of the reign of God



BELIEVE AS YOU PRAY
MELANIE CODDINGTON

Sunday's first reading takes us back to the desert journey of Israel. Ex 17:1-2 sets the stage for the story that we hear. The "whole Israelite community" is moving from place to place, directed by the Lord. Reaching Rephidim, the people find no water. Naturally, they bring this serious issue to Moses: "Give us water to drink."

His less-than-sympathetic reply, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?" does little to diffuse the situation.

They walk away grumbling: "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?"

Similar arguments ensue whenever circumstances threaten the Israelite sojourners. We hear it at the edge of the sea (Ex 14:11) when the people look back and see the dust kicked up by the Pharaoh's pursuing army. Clearly preferring slavery over death, they lament, "Far better for us to be the slaves of the Egyptians than to die in the desert" (Ex 14:12b). The Lord responds, providing an escape route through the sea and a watery grave for the chariots and charioteers.

We hear another version when hunger be-

comes the issue (Ex 16: 3): "Would that we had died at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our flesh pots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!"

Translation: Swift death with a full stomach beats slow starvation. Again, the Lord responds, this time with manna and quail for the people to eat.

The story in today's reading unfolds in a similar way: The people face a life or death situation (thirst) and complain to Moses, prompting his cry to the Lord on their behalf.

The Lord responds, this time with witnesses at hand and clear reference to past deeds: "Go over there in front of the people, along with some of the elders, holding in

your hand, as you go, the staff with which you stuck the river."

Moses' staff, the instrument of God's power and providence in Egypt and at the edge of the sea, goes into action once again. Even if all the people cannot see the water gush forth from the rock, respected eyewitnesses stand by to tell the tale.

Psalm 95 references this episode, repeating verbatim the two place names, Massah and Meribah. St. Paul's words from Romans 5 provide a fitting transition to today's Gospel story, so full of surprising faith, grace, hope and glory.

My favorite aspect of biblical interpretation involves the cultural context of stories and symbols. The Samaritan woman at the well easily gains a 21st century American label with

her checkered marital history. Yet in her culture, unfaithful wives did not live to marry again.

Since only men were permitted to divorce, we realize that this woman was five times abandoned — be she widowed or simply cast aside. Likely enough, she bore not children but the stigma of barrenness, a terrible curse in her culture.

It makes sense that she chose the heat of the day for her journey to the well, avoiding the neighbors who otherwise turned aside to avoid her.

Consideration of cultural context reveals a cascade of miracles as the story unfolds. In hospitable, truthful dialogue with Jesus, the woman finds her bitter heart changed and runs to tell her neighbors: "This man told me everything ... could he be the Christ?"

Against all odds, they rise up from their mid-day nap, follow the former outcast to the well and hear Jesus for themselves. Then, in the most extraordinary twist of all, long-despised Samaritans welcome Jews to stay over, and they accept!

Here we witness signs of the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus: the person experiences conversion, the community is activated, and the social world turns upside down.

Melanie serves as regional minister for Christian formation, providing catechetical and pastoral support to parishes in southwest Virginia, and contributing to Office of Christian Formation initiatives across the diocese. She holds a master's in pastoral studies from Loyola University, New Orleans.

Pope warns clergy on pitfalls of bitterness

JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Confronting and not giving in to bitterness helps priests realize that they are not all-powerful beings but sinners who have been forgiven and called by God, Pope Francis said.

Bitterness is “a subtle enemy” that hides and “robs us of the joy of the vocation we were called to,” the pope said Feb. 27 in an address to clergy of the Diocese of Rome read by Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, papal vicar of the diocese.

Pope Francis was unable to attend the traditional Lenten penitential service with priests of the Diocese of Rome due to a mild cold, the Vatican said.

In his talk, titled “Bitterness in the life of a priest,” the pope said his reflection was based on listening to the experiences of seminarians and priests of various Italian dioceses and did not refer “to any specific situation.”

“The majority of priests that I know are happy about their lives and consider these types of bitterness as part of a normal life, without drama,” he said. The first cause of bitterness, he said, can be traced to problems with one’s faith, for example, when a priest feels “deceived” by God, possibly because he “replaced hope” with his own expectations about priestly life.

More importantly, a priest’s relationship with God, which helps him to “distinguish between expectations

and hopes,” plays an important role.

“Expectation is born when we spend our lives trying to save our lives: we get angry looking for secu-

“The bride of Christ is and remains the field in which the wheat and chaff grow together until the end of time. Those who have not made this evangelical vision of reality their own expose themselves to unspeakable and useless bitterness.”

- POPE FRANCIS

rity, rewards or promotions. When we receive what we want, we almost feel that we will never die, that it will always be so! Because we are the point of reference,” the pope explained.

“Hope, instead, is something that is born in the heart when we decide not to defend ourselves anymore,” he said. “When I recognize my limits and that not everything begins and ends with me, then I recognize the importance of trust.”

Another source of bitterness for priests could be problems with their bishops, he said. While blaming one’s superiors is a “cliché that no longer holds water,” bishops, too, have “limitations and shortcomings” and there will always be problems with “management or pastoral styles.”

Nevertheless, the pope added, priests can be embittered when they see a form of “soft authoritarianism” when priests or laity who disagree with a bishop are excluded or when “real competence is supplanted by a certain presumed loyalty.”

“Certainly, in this time of widespread precariousness and fragility, the solution can seem to be authoritarianism — in the political sphere this is evident,” he said. “But the real cure — as St. Benedict advises — lies in equity, not uniformity.”

Finally, a third source of bitterness can be seen in problems among priests themselves, especially in recent years where priests have “suffered the blows of financial and sexual scandals” in the Church.

“Suspicion has made relation-

ships drastically colder and more formal; one no longer enjoys the gifts of others,” he said. “On the contrary, it seems to be a mission to destroy, minimize, make people suspicious.”

Not only have recent scandals led to suspicions, they also have increased the temptation of believing a false concept of “the church militant in a sort of ecclesiological puritanism” that views what is inside the Church as “impeccable and outside are those who make mistakes.”

“The bride of Christ is and remains the field in which the wheat and chaff grow together until the end of time,” the pope said. “Those who have not made this evangelical vision of reality their own expose themselves to unspeakable and useless bitterness.”

The mistrust sown by the “public and publicized sins of the clergy” has also made it difficult to share the faith with others and can cause priests to retreat in isolation rather than being in communion with others or share their difficulties and struggles.

Pope Francis warned priests that isolation from “grace and history” is one of the reasons that many are unable to establish meaningful relationships of trust.

One of the “favorite thoughts of the father of lies,” the devil, he said, is to convince priests that their problems are “unique and insurmountable.”

“The devil doesn’t want you to talk, to tell, to share,” Pope Francis said. “Look for a good spiritual father, a ‘shrewd’ old man who can accompany you. Never isolate yourself. Never!”

The ROARING TWENTIES



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\$40/person \$75/couple

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Msgr. David Brockman
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Jesse Romero,
“Divine Mercy and Redemption”



Dr. John Bergsma,
“Confession as Spiritual Warfare”



Jesus, I trust in You

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Stephanie Gray,
“Building a Culture of Life”



Helen Alvare,
“State of Religious Freedom”



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* I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My mercy (Diary, 1109). Whoever approaches the Fountain of Life on this day will be granted complete forgiveness of sins and punishment (Diary, 300). — Words of Jesus to St. Faustina

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Roanoke

Continued from Page 1

Although clients come only once a month, she and her staff know many of them, and they feel like a family.

"We don't judge anyone," she said. "Any of us can fall on hard times. We are all God's children."

'They simply don't have enough'

Some clients come monthly; some only once. The office keeps records of who visits, their family sizes and ages, and where they live — if they have an address. If they don't, Owen asks where they stay, even if it's under a bridge.

"That way we can try to help them," she said.

She also tells clients about CCC, which has services that include assistance for employment, housing, education, health care and financial counseling.

Some clients are unemployed, but many are simply underemployed, said Paige Peak, marketing manager for CCC in Richmond.

"It's a myth that these families aren't working. They simply don't have enough," she said, noting that their needs increase during summer when children are out of school.

"There is a sense of community between our clients and staff members," said CCC's Sid Alvarado, director of income and asset-building services in Richmond. "It takes away the embarrassment when people know each other and feel like friends."

A few clients are new refugees or immigrants, many of whom do not speak English. CCC staff members, such as education specialist Betsy Hale, bring them to the pantry to help them get food and other goods until they are established.

"We're serving a vulnerable population," she said. "I'm happy that this can make such a difference in their lives."

How growing needs are met

Since January, the pantry has been located at 836 Campbell Ave., which has more space for donations and offices. The pantry occupies the main floor; CCC offices are on the upper floors. The former location, 820 Campbell Ave., also houses the CCC office. With the pantry's growing needs, it made sense to use the nearby diocesan property, a large Victorian-style house, to expand.

Owens noted that the pantry served 1,670 individuals (548 families) in January. Since the



Maria Jacobs, a St. Andrew, Roanoke, parishioner and longtime volunteer at St. Francis House food pantry, checks the supply of dry goods. In January, the pantry served 1,670 individuals from 548 families in January. (Photo/Karen Adams)

closure of several other church-run food pantries, the need for food downtown has grown.

According to CCC, St. Francis House is the largest food pantry for those in need in the Roanoke Valley. It was founded in 1973 as an outreach ministry of Our Lady of Nazareth Parish, which was downtown at the time, to serve the needs of the inner-city poor. In 2010, CCC took over the operation of the food pantry after the managers retired.

On the first Tuesday of the month, the pantry receives a shipment of USDA food from Feeding Southwest Virginia (formerly Feeding America), averaging around eight tons per month. In January it received 10,000 tons from Feeding Southwest Virginia; in February it received 9,000 tons. The amount depends on the number of people served the previous month.

That is supplemented by donations from the four nearest Catholic parishes — Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Gerard, St. Andrew and Our Lady of Nazareth, which also donates fresh produce from its garden — and Windsor Hills United Methodist Church. BJ's, 7-11, Big Lots and Kroger, as well as individuals, also donate groceries.

The pantry receives household and personal supplies such as paper towels and laundry detergent; toiletries; pet food from the local SPCA; and diapers, clothing and shoes for adults and children.

Opportunity for all to help

Barbara Hairfield, coordinator for religious education at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem, helps coordinate her parish's donations. Each month, parishioners can take home bags with a list of needs to be returned the next week. Catechism classes also donate, with each child bringing a single can of food or tube of toothpaste.

"This is a simple act of charity that gets right to the people who need it," Hairfield said. "And it allows all of us to participate."

"We get reports on the number of bags donated, and the parishes are very responsive," said Peak. "It's such an outpouring of love from the community."

Owen said the pantry accepts just about anything, as the need is so great.

"But we always need spaghetti sauce and noodles, meats (fresh, canned or frozen) and small bags of rice, as well as reusable shopping bags," she said, adding that volunteers are always welcome, "especially strong people who can lift heavy boxes."

Volunteers include Hawa Idriss, a former CCC client from Sudan who helps run the clothing closet, and Erlene Elliott, who does whatever is needed.

"I meet a lot of nice people here, and they're all different," Elliott said. "I love helping people."

For eight years, volunteer Maria Jacobs, a member of St. Andrew Parish, has picked up food donations from 7-11 stores every weekday and organized them on shelves.

"It's just something simple I can do to help," she said.

Often the clients themselves help, as one man did on this Monday. He caught frozen chickens that Owen tossed from a freezer and stacked them in a box on the floor.

"Lots of people just naturally help us and each other," Owen said. "And some people come back to help even after they don't need our services anymore."

Wallace Perry, a regular client with a heart condition, helped Owen fill boxes that day.

"They've always been so good to us here," he said. "God's been good to us."

Owen opened the door for him as he left.

"See you in 30 days," she said. "Have a blessed day."

For more information, visit cccofva.org.

Nashville parishes affected by tornado

NASHVILLE (CNS) — The historic Church of the Assumption in Nashville's Germantown neighborhood was one of a number of churches and other buildings that suffered significant damage early March 3 when a tornado cut a swath of destruction through the city that stretched for miles.

Two tornadoes swept through Middle Tennessee, and the National Weather Service confirmed the one that touched down in east Nashville was an EF-3.

"We are fortunate in so much as we have been able to determine thus far, the employees of the diocese, our parishes and schools have escaped harm and for this we are grateful," said a statement from the Nashville Diocese. "We are assessing building damage at the Church of the Assumption, Holy Name, St. Vincent de Paul and Holy Rosary as well as other parishes that are in the path of the storm."

The Church of the Assumption is

one of the oldest Catholic churches in the diocese. It was built in 1858 with, in part, reclaimed bricks from Nashville's first Catholic church, Holy Rosary Cathedral. Assumption served the German immigrants of Nashville and was occupied by Union troops during the Civil War.

"Loving God, be with all those who are suffering in the aftermath of this violent storm," Bishop J. Mark Spalding said in a prayer he offered after the violent storm. "Grant peace to those who have died and comfort and strength to those who grieve them."

"May those who have suffered damages or lost homes and possessions find support in our brothers and sisters in Christ and consolation in the knowledge of your presence," he continued. "Guard and guide first responders and aid workers, protect those who are most vulnerable, and keep us all safe in your unending love."

Lourdes

Continued from Page 7

Europe adopted precautionary measures starting with advising people at Mass not to shake hands during the sign of peace. Many churches emptied holy water fonts and several dioceses recommended Catholics received Communion only in the hand.

Large indoor meetings, conferences and Lenten reflections scheduled for March also were canceled or postponed, including a meeting in Assisi, Italy, March 26-28 called "The Economy of Francis."

Bishop

Continued from Page 2

our young people in all Church environments, to make sure we are doing all we can so that they are never abused, and we are offering ways to repair the harm done by abuse.

The Independent Reconciliation Program is part of the commitment I made in 2018 that there be some tangible sign, some practical expression of our desire to repair the damage that has been done. The Program is one form of reparation, but not the only one.

For victim survivors who feel that their voluntary participation in this Program is appropriate, it is my hope and prayer that the monetary payment, which we offer out of justice and charity, might help them in their healing.

For our bicentennial to truly be a jubilee year, reconciliation must be a defining aspect of it. Our willingness to do all we that can to reconcile with those who were sexually abused by our clergy is our witness to what Scripture teaches, what we believe and what we practice.

OPPORTUNITIES

Saint Gertrude High School is seeking a long-term, full-time substitute French language teacher. This will also be available as a full-time position for the 2020-21 school year. For more information or to apply for either position, please go to <https://www.saint-gertrude.org/about-us/careers> and follow the instructions on the page to submit your application and supporting documents.

SHORTTAKES

Knights of Columbus Assembly #1505 Lenten fish dinner every Friday during Lent, through April 3. Doors open at 5 p.m., dinner will be served until 7:30 p.m. at the Columbian Club, 1236 Prosperity Road, Virginia Beach. Dinner includes: Fried fish filet, French fries, homemade coleslaw and hush-puppies; or baked fillet of fish, rice pilaf, homemade coleslaw and hush-puppies; or chicken nuggets and fries for children if desired. Cost is a donation of \$9 for those 13 and over, \$5 for youth 7-12, and free for those 6 and under. This is our annual fundraiser to support the U.S. Military Archdiocese, the USO, Ride to Recovery, the VFW and several other patriotic events and charities. Coffee, iced tea and hot tea provided. Beer and soda, as well as some delicious desserts, are available for a minimal extra donation. Carryout is also available for those who cannot eat in. Call Steve Schlossberg at 757-927-5317 or email him (preferred) at steven.schlossberg@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Encountering Christ in Harmony with Creation and Ecology — a retreat, Saturday, March 14, 8 a.m. — 3 p.m., Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond. Among the topics we'll explore are how Scripture teaches care of the earth and how we can protect it. To register, go to <https://contacc/2Z0OWa1>. For more information, contact the Office of Ethnic Ministry, 804-622-5274.

Lenten Mission: "Journey to JOY," St. Gregory the Great, 5345 Virginia Beach Blvd, Virginia Beach, Monday-Wednesday, March 16-18, 7 p.m. This family friendly mission will be presented by Frank Runyeon, who brings Scripture to life with drama and humor. Childcare is available.

Savor the flavor on Stuart Avenue! On March 25, Saint Gertrude High School will hold its 10th Annual Gator Gourmet, an event that showcases 30 of the best restaurants and caterers in Richmond. Each restaurant serves its signature dish. Advance tickets are \$25 or four for \$90. Tickets at the door are \$35. Cash bar. Must be 21+ to attend. All money raised supports Saint Gertrude High. For tickets, visit saintgertrude.org/gatorgourmet.

Celebrate spring in Washington, D.C.! The Catholic Woman's Club of Richmond invites everyone to a fun and faith-filled day trip to Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, April 7. See the cherry blossoms, Roosevelt Memorial, enjoy a luncheon cruise on the Odyssey and tour the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America. Roundtrip transportation, lunch, cruise and all gratuities are included. Cost is \$145. Leave the Columbian Center at 8 a.m.; return at 7:30 p.m. Contact Theresa Carroll 804-346-9858 with questions. Make check payable to CWC and mail to Joan Walton, 300 Burnwick, Richmond, VA 23227. cwcva.org.

Are you a couple who has been married seven years or less? If so, join us April 24-25 for an amazing retreat at Wintergreen Resort featuring Ennie and Cana Hickman, missionaries from Houston who led Adore Ministries for 10 years and now operate Del Ray Collective. Through their lived experience, engaging story-telling and practical wisdom, Ennie and Cana share their success to their marriage as they raise their seven children. This 24-hour retreat is a chance for you and your spouse to get away together and spend some time re-focusing and celebrating your marriage with couples who have been married for a relatively short time. Cost is \$200 per couple (\$150 for first-time couples on this retreat) which includes overnight accommodations, all meals on Saturday, and snacks. To learn more, visit www.CDRCMFL.org and to register visit bit.ly/2020YoungCouplesRetreat.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Matching milestones: Two members of the Blessed Sacrament Hugenot School boys' basketball team hit milestones in the same game. Seniors Robbie Kurtz and Raymond Avery each scored his 1,000th point in a 65-60 win over Brunswick Academy on Jan. 31.

Tops in science: The St. Matthew School, Virginia Beach, team placed first in the 10-team competition of the South Hampton Roads Catholic Middle School Science Bowl at Catholic High School, Saturday, Jan. 18. Sarah Rorick was advisor for the group that included Noah Avis, Nate Keys, Caley Byles, Hannah Schaar, Ethan Legaspi, Cole Rorick, Sebastian Rodriguez, Shael Amin, Elijah Roman, Jaden Camba, Jack Givey and Axelle Ackebo.

What have you heard? The CV would like to know what you've heard — or read — regarding Catholics in your community receiving honors and awards, as well as achievements, accomplishments and other good stuff. We'll try to publish a selection of submissions in each issue of the CV. Put "What we've heard" in the subject line and email your item to akrebs@catholicvirginian.org. Include your name and phone number in case we need to follow up. Information cannot be taken over the phone.



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John
Leyendecker



Deacon Charles
Williams

REGISTRATION

\$50 UNTIL MARCH 15th

\$55 AT THE DOOR

VISIT CDRCMFL.ORG TO REGISTER.

Lent

Touch our vulnerability

Sr. CECILIA SIERRA, CMS

What is vulnerability? As a society, we understand that we are completely vulnerable to the devastating consequences of climate change, the abuse and bullying experienced through social media, socio-political divisiveness and other factors that serve only to keep us separated from ourselves and others. Wars and social instability also reveal the vulnerability of Humankind. All these things form part of the reality humans' experience daily throughout the world.

The other side of vulnerability is what is known as kenosis. St. Paul said, "Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:6-7). Discipleship takes this form. It requires humility, the emptying of self, to really live the true meaning of serving God and others, imitating and following the one who reveals himself in the Trinity. In Jesus, we begin on the path of service and surrender. Instead of exalting, subduing, dominating and controlling, Jesus chose to shed himself, lower himself, take the lowest place, identifying with those who are last in society. In the eyes of God, this is vulnerability.

Faced with the dominant Western culture that proposes self-sufficiency, power and autonomy as values that are measured by success, it is the intention and the act of reciprocity with others that calls us to a path of holiness, using vulnerability as a thread that connects. Connection is what gives meaning and purpose to life. Without these virtues and values, great vices are generated in humanity. That is why it is important to return to faith "its character of vulnerability, of novelty and of daily surprise." That is, let's try not to control or dominate things so much and return to the wonderful things with which God blesses us every day.

What is behind our fear of being vulnerable? What price are we paying when we are closed and disconnected from others? If we pass our personal struggles under the filter of vulnerability, we may be able to see shame, fear, guilt and lies, fear of showing who we really are. Putting on different faces for different people disintegrates, fragments and disconnects us from ourselves and, in turn, disconnects us from others. It takes courage to recognize ourselves as imperfect people. It takes a lifetime for many to recognize that what makes us vulnerable also makes us valuable. We can return to source when we recognize that we are loved and worthy of love, naturally created to connect so we can experience happiness and joy in our daily lives.

Cuaresma

Tocar nuestra vulnerabilidad

¿Qué es la vulnerabilidad? Entendemos que somos completamente vulnerables ante las diferentes y devastadoras manifestaciones del cambio climático, las redes sociales y las nuevas tecnologías. Las guerras y la inestabilidad social también nos revelan la vulnerabilidad del género humano. Es inevitable este aspecto de la vida y forma una parte muy importante en la realidad humana.

La otra cara de la vulnerabilidad es lo que en el lenguaje cristiano se conoce como kenosis. San Pablo dijo, "Su estado era divino, pero no se aferró a su igualdad con Dios, sino que se despojó de sí mismo, naciendo en semejanza humana" (Filipenses 2,6). El abajarse, despojarse, o anonadarse son palabras claves para entender el discipulado. Uno que se revela en la Trinidad que es parte de la naturaleza de Dios. En Jesús, nos iniciamos en el camino del servicio, la humildad y la entrega. En lugar de ensalzarse, someter, dominar y controlar, Jesús escogió despojarse de sí mismo, abajarse, tomar el lugar más bajo, identificándose con los pequeños, con los últimos. En los ojos de Dios, esto es vulnerabilidad.

Ante la cultura occidental dominante que propone como valores y medidores de éxito la autosuficiencia, el poder y la autonomía, es la intención y el acto de la reciprocidad que nos llama a un camino de santidad, teniendo como hilo conductor la vulnerabilidad. Amor e integración son necesidades en todo ser humano. La conexión es lo que da sentido y propósito a la vida. Sin estas virtudes y valores, se generan grandes vicios en la humanidad. Por eso es importante devolver a la fe "su carácter de vulnerabilidad, de novedad y de sorpresa cotidiana."

Es decir, tratemos de no controlar o dominar tanto y regresemos a las cosas maravillosas con las que Dios nos bendice cada día.

¿Qué hay detrás de nuestro miedo a ser vulnerable? ¿Qué precio estamos pagando cuando nos encerramos y nos desconectamos? Si pasamos nuestras luchas personales bajo el filtro de la vulnerabilidad, quizá podemos ver vergüenzas, miedos, culpa y mentira. El aparentar, el miedo a mostrar quienes somos, el ponernos máscaras nos desintegra, fragmenta y desconecta. Se requiere un gran valor para reconocernos como personas imperfectas. Para muchos toma toda una vida reconocer que lo que nos hace vulnerables, nos hace valiosos. Al fin de todo, la clave es reconocer que somos amados y dignos de amor, de comunión y felicidad.



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Despite obstacles, dad fulfills commitment to God

Pharmacist solves son's murder, exposes opioid mill

PETER FINNEY JR.

Catholic News Service

NEW ORLEANS — For more than 20 years, Dan Schneider bargained with God.

The negotiations began in 1999, when Schneider's son Danny was killed at midnight on the streets of New Orleans Lower Ninth Ward, triggering the devastated pharmacist to ignore the advice and even incite the anger of the New Orleans Police Department by launching his own gum-shoe investigation that ultimately resulted in identifying and convicting his son's killer.

Then, as if beating those enormous odds and dealing with his family's searing heartache were not enough, Schneider channeled his pain into a second crusade every bit as heroic if not quixotic — shutting down the state's largest opioid mill in New Orleans East, paying homage to the son who was stolen from him by the drug underworld.

"I went at warp speed to do my best," Schneider said, "but there were so many things along the way, both in solving Danny's murder and in the (opioid) case, where I said to God, 'OK, God, you did this for me and I'm going to do this for you, but why are you making it so hard? Why, after telling me to go do this, do police get in my way and goons chase me?'"

Schneider's 20-year mission to secure a resolution to his 22-year-old son's death and to protect young people like him has been transformed into a riveting Netflix documentary series titled simply, "The Pharmacist."

The documentary already has garnered global acclaim for its exposure of the prescription drug crisis that claimed a half-million lives in the U.S. between 2000 and 2015; 60% of those deaths were attributed to opioid overdoses.

'God was helping me'

Schneider's first child, Danny, was born in 1976. Schneider said he and his wife were Catholic by birth and heritage, but he admits they



Dan Schneider, a member of Most Holy Trinity Parish in Covington, La., pictured Feb. 14, 2020, was a pharmacist in the civil jurisdiction of St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana in 1999 when his son Danny was killed in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. His first crusade to find his son's killer and, then, a second crusade to close down a "pill mill" in New Orleans East took fortitude and perseverance and reliance on his Catholic faith. (CNS photo/Frank J. Methe, Clarion Herald)

probably would have considered themselves "occasional" Catholics in those days.

"That was until my son's death — and I hate to say that," Schneider said. "For a very brief moment — maybe a week or less — I was angry at God, but I came around real quick. At first, it was not just love of God — it was desperation. Then it became love, and then it became an agreement. I actually started sensing that God was helping me."

There were many heroes along the way — the woman, Shane Madding, who endangered her own life by identifying and then agreeing to testify against the killer despite persistent death threats; the pastor, Terence Reed of Lighthouse Ministries in the Ninth Ward, who agreed to walk the streets, along with a cadre of African American men recovering from drug and alcohol addictions, introducing the white pharmacist from Chalmette, Louisiana, to residents while he posted flyers on telephone

poles and knocked on doors.

"There's a bunch of what I call mini-miracles," Schneider said. "If you're not a believer, some people would explain them away as coincidence. All my friends were on my case. My wife was on my case. The police were fighting me almost (to stop). I was very close to quitting."

Just as he was prepared to give up his investigation, Schneider used an address-based telephone directory to call every house within a half-mile radius of Danny's shooting. Almost everyone said they knew nothing or hung up. He finally got Shane Madding to tell him what happened, and her testimony led to Jeffrey Hall pleading guilty to manslaughter.

Another investigation

Schneider thought it was the end of an exhausting family saga, but as he continued to work at Bradley's Pharmacy in Poydras, he noticed a disturbing flow of young people — about the age of his late son — bringing in prescriptions for OxyContin, Xanax and the muscle-relaxant Soma.

That three-drug package was known on the streets as the "Holy Trinity."

About 90% of the prescriptions were written by Dr. Jacqueline Cleggett, a doctor of internal medicine and pediatrics who had opened a "pain management" clinic in New Orleans East, just a few miles from the St. Bernard Parish line.

The young kids triggered an alarm in Schneider.

"This wasn't a middle-aged guy walking in who was working on an oyster boat who had hurt himself and had some legitimate pain," Schneider said. "My son had died at 22, and these were 20-year-olds walking in, looking perfectly healthy."

Because of what happened to his son, Schneider felt compelled not to look the other way. On a car trip to watch the New Orleans Saints play a road playoff game in January 2001, Schneider was wrestling with embarking on another major inves-

tigation when he looked through his windshield and saw a clearly defined cloud formation in the shape of a cross.

That convinced him to move forward. The Schneiders got back to the New Orleans area around midnight, and the pharmacist remembered that many people coming into his store to have their prescriptions filled told him Cleggett worked late hours — well past midnight — at her clinic.

"So, now it's about 2 o'clock in the morning and we pull up to the clinic and park across the street to videotape," Schneider said. "My wife sees this, and she goes, 'Oh, my God. It's 2 o'clock in the morning, and there's a hundred people there!'"

"There were actually cabs pulling up, parking and then the people would run inside and then come back into the cab and leave. When I went out there, I didn't think it was going to be as bad as my patients had been telling me. It was way worse."

'God is all over this thing'

Schneider's evidence against Cleggett eventually led to her pleading guilty to one of 37 counts of conspiring to dispense and distribute a controlled substance.

Now that his crusade to protect others has raised awareness of the dangers of opioids and other controlled substances being used and sold on the black market, Schneider hopes his efforts will save other lives.

His story has been a major impetus for an umbrella federal lawsuit, centered in Cleveland, in which dozens of states and municipalities are seeking compensation from various pharmaceutical companies for failing to properly warn consumers about the addictive properties of OxyContin and other prescription medications.

"The whole reason I did this, in addition to my commitment to God, is to save lives," Schneider said. "One life is worth it, but I'm not trying to save just one life. I want to save hundreds of lives, and I'll lay it on the line for as long as I can. God is all over this thing."

Task Force

Continued from Page 1

affairs," which is the third-ranking official in the Vatican Secretariat of State, and will be supervised by the four members of the organizing committee of last year's summit: U.S. Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago; Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay; Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna of Malta, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Vatican's chief abuse investigator; and Jesuit Father Hans Zollner, president of the Centre for the Protection of Minors of the Pontifical Gregorian University and member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

The task force was operative as of Feb. 24 and will have a two-year term.

Meanwhile, Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, told reporters that the doctrinal congregation is preparing the handbook suggested at last year's summit.

Because there have been so many new laws and revisions over the years, the doctrinal congregation will clearly spell out what each bishop or religious superior is expected to do upon receiving an allegation of suspected abuse, he said.

It will also make clear how the new norms emphasize there are penalties involved when a leader neglects, ignores or covers up suspected or known abuse, he said.

Bishop Arrieta also explained that a new juridical "roundtable" or commission also has been set up for monitoring and reviewing how all the different dicasteries responsible for handling abuse

cases are handling the workload and procedures.

Archbishop Filippo Iannone, president of the pontifical council, heads the commission, which is made up of representatives from the Secretariat of State and congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, Eastern Churches, Bishops, the Evangelization of Peoples, Clergy, and Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Bishop Arrieta said there have been so many new norms and procedures, some "ad experimentum," for the Vatican offices to follow, the commission was set up "to see the results," such as how the protocols are working or where there may be problems.

It is very likely, he said, that all the norms will have to be "put together" in some more accessible way "because, for people who are not canon lawyers, they can be difficult sometimes to interpret."