



# The Catholic Virginian

Serving the People of the Diocese of Richmond for 90 years



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## Bishop announces \$5M 'Bicentennial Challenge'

### Annual Diocesan Appeal hopes to reach new heights

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI  
The Catholic Virginian

The official goal of the Annual Diocesan Appeal, i.e., the one set by the Pastors' Advisory Committee (PAC) and approved by Bishop Barry C. Knestout, is \$3.7 million — the highest published appeal goal ever.

But being the year of the Diocese of Richmond's bicentennial, it is an opportunity to raise a record amount of money in order to provide more support for ministries already funded by the appeal — education of youth, care for the elderly poor and support for mission parishes.

To make that possible, Bishop Knestout has announced the Bicentennial Challenge to raise \$5 million, which would be the highest amount ever raised by the appeal.

"Because it is the bicentennial, we're trying to figure out a special way to encourage more participation and get more funding for those ministries," said Alex Previtera, director of development and operations for the Catholic Community Foundation. "This is above and beyond the

funding allocated in the case statement."

#### Requests outweigh funding

He noted that requests for funding "way outweigh" what is allocated in the case statement.

"The requests are well above and beyond what you see articulated there, so it's always kind of a tough thing because there are so many ministries that need funding from the appeal," Previtera said. "We do the best we can, the PAC does the best they can, and the bishop does the best he can to make sure that everybody gets the funding they need, but also giving a nice portion back to the parishes."

Non-mission parishes get 20% up to their goal and 50% of the amount collected over the goal. Mission parishes — those that are home mission grant recipients — receive 50% of everything received. Since 2010, the appeal has returned well over \$11 million to parishes.

While parish sharing is the "most obvious" benefit for the parishes, according to Previtera, he said he encourages them to articulate that they benefit from many of the ministries that are supported by the appeal, e.g., seminarians, retired priests and the Fuel and Hunger Fund.

"That's where the challenge is — to show that it's not just the diocesan case or the parish case, it's that it all works together," he said.

#### Need for 'sustaining donors'

Response to the appeal is part of a nationwide trend in which the number of donors is down. However, in the Diocese of Richmond, the average amount of a gift has increased. Previtera said the appeal is introducing another option for support.

"We're looking to talk with people about becoming something called a 'sustaining donor,' which means that they will continue to give even beyond 12 months," he said. "They set a number — let's say, 'I want to make a \$25 a month gift' — and they keep doing it in perpetuity until they tell us to stop. That should be a big deal (in increasing the amount contributed)."

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## Pope: 'Old age is a privilege, not a disease'

CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Old age "is not a disease, it's a privilege," and Catholic dioceses and parishes miss a huge and growing resource if they ignore their senior members, Pope Francis said.

"We must change our pastoral routines to respond to the presence of so many older people in our families and communities," the pope told Catholic seniors and pastoral workers from around the world.

Pope Francis addressed

See Privilege, Page 7

## Benedictine cadets serving community



From left, Benedictine College Prep seniors Matthew Sylvia, Frankie Boehling and Brenan McCaffrey work a drill press as they help build beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace during the school's annual service day, Monday, Jan. 28. Right, senior Brian Losch reads to a pair of students at St. Benedict Catholic School. (Photos/Benedictine College Prep staff)

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The Catholic Virginian  
7800 Carousell Lane  
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# Depend upon love, mercy of God for healing



**CHRIST OUR HOPE**  
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

**T**his Tuesday, Feb. 11, is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and, since 1993, has been observed by the Catholic Church as the World Day of the Sick. Lourdes is where our Blessed Mother appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. It has been and remains a site of 70 miraculous recoveries recognized by the Church and a countless number of conversions to the faith.

In May 1995, I accompanied Cardinal James A. Hickey to Lourdes where, on an extremely hot day, he processed with the Blessed Sacrament among those in great need of healing, blessing them as he passed. While we experienced discomfort due to the heavy vestments we wore, it was minimal compared to what those who waited for hours to be blessed had endured.

As we processed, I had the image of Jesus walking among the ill and the lame, most of whom needed assistance from their caregivers and nurses. I saw in those who lined our way the manifestation of their faith, trust, confidence and hope in our Lord as they received the blessing.

What we must keep in mind is that healing is not limited to the physical being. While everyone who goes to Lourdes might not be healed physically, they will receive some form of spiritual and/or emotional healing. No one leaves that

experience without that grace.

Healing starts with the Holy Spirit and our willingness to allow it to work in our lives. When we open our hearts to the Spirit and accept its guidance to depend upon the love and mercy of God, we have the foundation for the healing we will need at various times in our life.

A growing number of doctors, acknowledging the spiritual dimension of a person, recognize the value of prayer and meditation in the healing process. When one who is suffering extreme illness relies heavily upon faith in our God, often with the support and assistance of a faith community, they can experience a beautiful passage in their life that is filled with joy, hope and peace.

As a priest, I have been at the bedside of many people who have faced serious, oftentimes terminal, illnesses. These are times when the patient sees the reality of a medical diagnosis through the eyes of total faith in the healing power of God. I have seen the beautiful witness of people who cast their fears, cares and concerns upon the Lord, believing and knowing, as the psalmist writes, that the Lord will sustain them (Ps 55:23).

St. John Paul II, commemorating the World Day of the Sick in 1999, emphasized that point: "To the sick of every age and condition, to the victims of every kind of infirmity, disaster and tragedy, I extend my invitation to throw themselves into God's fatherly arms. We know that life is a gift given to us by the Father as a sublime expression of his love, and that it continues to

be a gift from him in every circumstance. All our most responsible choices, whose objective, because of our limitations, can sometimes seem obscure and uncertain, must be guided by this conviction."

Let us pray that the sick take to heart that "invitation to throw themselves into God's fatherly arms" and that they and their families and caregivers experience his love and mercy during their times of trial.

## BISHOP'S SCHEDULE

### Thursday, Feb. 13

Mass: Virginia March for Life  
Greater Richmond Convention Center, 9:15 a.m.

### Wednesday, Feb. 19

Confirmation  
St. Andrew, Roanoke, 7 p.m.

### Saturday, Feb. 22

Confirmation  
St. Anne, Bristol, 11 a.m.

Mass: Pastor Installation  
St. Anne, Bristol, 5:30 p.m.

### Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26

Mass  
Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 6 p.m.

# SEPTEMBER 1926

## 1820 TIME CAPSULE 2020

## STATE AUTHORITIES DID NOTHING WHEN KLAN ABDUCTED PRIEST

*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.*

**T**he fifth bishop of Richmond, John J. Keane (1878-1888), blazed the trail for evangelizing freed slaves in the diocese by preaching to them in the basement of St. Peter's Cathedral in Richmond (1879).

He then recruited members of the Society of St. Joseph for Foreign Missions, better known as the Josephites (1883), and the Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary (1885) to expand his work. Men and women religious of these orders, founded at St. Joseph's Missionary College in Mill Hill (London, England), established churches and schools for black Catholics in the Diocese of Richmond.

The Josephites ministered to several generations of African Americans at St. Joseph Church and School in Norfolk (1894-1961). There and in other places throughout the diocese, education was instrumental in bringing African Americans into the Catholic Church



**This undated photo shows the interior of St. Joseph Church, Norfolk. The Josephite Fathers ministered to African Americans at St. Joseph Church and School from 1894 until 1961. (Photo/ Diocese of Richmond Archives)**

and helping them advance socially and professionally.

Ministry to black Catholics in Virginia aroused some opposition. In an incident that drew national attention, on Sept. 1, 1926, the Ku Klux Klan abducted the pastor of St. Joseph, Josephite Father Vincent Warren. The Klansmen warned the priest against "the mixing of the races" and threatened him, but released him unharmed. A black farmer found Father Warren and drove him home.

Two months later, The Virginia Knight, the predecessor publication to The Catholic Virginian, called for the arrest of the perpetrators who had still not been apprehended. Although a grand jury investigation was launched, state and local authorities eventually dropped the case.

Excerpts from the editorial in The Virginia Knight (November 1926) appear below:

"The entire State of Virginia and the entire country rose up in indignant protest when the news was spread broadcast a few weeks ago that Rev. Father Vincent B. Warren, pastor of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Norfolk, had been kidnapped by a mob of hooded men in Princess Anne County.

"The priest, who is loved by persons of all denominations, and [sic] committed no crime. His entire record during the ten years he has been in this city has been the best. He has devoted all the years he has been in Norfolk to educating little negro boys and girls and to teaching them and their parents how to live upright lives. He has built up the congregation of his little church from 125 to 1,000 in ten years. Eighty percent of his congregation is composed of converts to the Catholic faith, proving conclusively that his work here has brought many persons to live better lives than

*See Time Capsule, Page 13*



# Faith sustains refugee through multiple challenges

## St. Elizabeth parishioner honored by International Rescue Committee

KRISTEN L. BYRD

Special to The Catholic Virginian

For 21 years, Abedi Shishi waited. He survived a serious fall as a baby that left him permanently disabled. He survived a childhood in the Congo, a place of perpetual political unrest, wars, coups, poverty and corruption.

He survived a dangerous escape from his native country to an unknown land. And then, for more than two decades, he lived in a Tanzanian refugee camp, waiting, hoping and praying that one day he and his family would make it to safety in the United States.

At 6 months old, Shishi's babysitter dropped him, injuring his left arm and leg. The nearest hospital was a two-week walk away. By then the damage was permanent. He would remain partially paralyzed his whole life.

The local Catholic parish where his uncle worked gave him an education. He graduated from high school and was trained by the parish to be a teacher — no small feat in a country where only about one-quarter of children aged 12-17 attend school.

### Hope instead of despair

When the First Congo War with Rwanda broke out in 1996 and the government declared that all men must join the military, Shishi knew he had to leave. Physically unable to fight and spiritually unwilling to shed blood, he fled.

He escaped through a network of priests who provided him with money, transportation and shelter along the way before arriving in Tanzania at the age of 26.

Where many might see despair, Shishi found hope. He spent his time in the refugee camp helping others, making a family and building a life. He was recently recognized with the Gender Equality Champion Award by the Interna-



Neema and Abedi Shishi are pictured with their children on Dec. 17, 2018 — a few days after the family arrived in Richmond from a refugee camp in Tanzania. (Photo courtesy of St. Elizabeth Parish)

tional Rescue Committee (IRC) for his efforts while in the camp.

The IRC, an international humanitarian aid program that provides water, shelter, education, health care and other support to refugees, has offices throughout the world, including Richmond. Along with St. Elizabeth Parish, Richmond, the IRC was instrumental in helping the Shishi family start their life in the United States.

"I never lost faith in God or the future," Shishi said, speaking through an interpreter.

### Caring for others

A proponent of education equality, he used his training as a teacher to set up programs for boys and girls in the refugee camp. He taught them French, the official language of the Congo, and Swahili in an effort to preserve their cultural identity and heritage. He also organized soccer games and

art projects to keep the children — and adults — active and in high spirits.

Though aid was available at the camp, it often was not enough to feed its 7,000 occupants. He and other refugees pooled whatever food and money they could spare to make sure more of them had enough to eat.

Shishi helped establish a camp choir in which he and his wife Neema, whom he met and married at the camp, sang. His four sons and three daughters, ranging in age from 3 to 17, were born in the camp and followed in their parents' footsteps.

"We all sing because it makes us feel closer to God," Shishi said. "We spread the Word of God through songs."

In 2018, Shishi learned that he and his family would be granted refugee status and be allowed into the U.S. They arrived without shoes, without money and without speaking or understanding English.

The local IRC office helped the Shishi family find a house, register the children for school, obtain social security numbers and procure jobs. It also provided English language lessons and food stamps, and paid their bills for several months while the family got settled.

### Helped by parish

In the year since their arrival, the Shishi family has realized that while they thought the United States was "the ideal country," as he called it, in reality, it has problems too. The greatest shock to their children was the discovery

that homelessness exists here, something they never imagined.

Finding steady employment has been a challenge for Shishi, 49. He worked at TemperPack but is currently unemployed. Although he has a history of working hard, he is limited physically as well as by the language barrier. While his children have picked up English relatively easily, Shishi has not. His wife works as a maid at a local hotel, but her paycheck doesn't cover rent, let alone other expenses.

Nonetheless, he remains positive, buoyed by the support the family receives from their parish family at St. Elizabeth — a diverse parish with members of from many cultures. Every three months, they celebrate a Mass in Swahili and incorporate Swahili songs into some of their regular Masses.

"I feel at home because of St. Elizabeth's. They have helped me in everything," Shishi said.

### Faith remains strong

"When you are uprooted, you need someone to see you, to hear you, to say 'you belong, you are part of us,'" said Comboni Missionary Sister Tiberh Hagos, human concerns and communication coordinator at St. Elizabeth. She has been working with the Shishi family since they arrived in Richmond.

Sister Tiberh explained that the parish's refugee ministry avoids using the term "refugee family," instead preferring "Umoja family." Umoja means "unity" in Swahili. UMOJA is also the name of their refugee program, an acronym for United Members of Joy Acknowledged.

See See Faith, Page 13



When the Shishi family arrived in Richmond in 2018, they did not have proper footwear. Father Jim Arsenault, their pastor at St. Elizabeth, Richmond, traced each person's foot on a piece of paper and then purchased shoes for them.

(Photo courtesy of St. Elizabeth Parish)



## Appeal

Continued from Page 1

He said that, along with promoting electronic giving, "will be a boon to the appeal." But the key to success, no matter how people choose to give, is presenting the case.

"Being able to continue to articulate the various needs, providing encouragement to people to think

about doing something special, especially during this bicentennial year, will make a difference," he said. "With the bicentennial, hopefully people feel good about what's happening in the Church. That's also a part of it, too."

Previtera assures those who prefer the traditional method of supporting the appeal via the parish

collection basket that they will continue to have that option.

"The pew phase is the core of the appeal," he said. "A pastor getting up and talking with their parishioners about the importance of this effort trumps everything else that we do. He can encourage them to respond by mail or to complete the card there."

In-pew promotion of the appeal will take place the weekends of Feb. 29-March 1 and March 7-8.

*Editor's note: For further information about the Annual Diocesan Appeal, call Alex Previtera at 804-622-5127 or email [aprevitera@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:aprevitera@richmonddiocese.org).*

## For bishop, appeal is personal

One of the reasons the Annual Diocesan Appeal has exceeded its goal the last two years, according to Alex Previtera, director of development and operations for the Catholic Community Foundation, is Bishop Barry C. Knestout.

"Any time you do an appeal like this, you want to relate to people personally because it'll help them understand more about what it's all about," he said. "Not in a false way, but in a real way."

As he has the past two years, Previtera will attend the seven receptions at which the bishop will speak about the appeal. He knows what to expect.

"When the bishop meets people at receptions, he's very genuine. I've been talking to a donor and he'll come up, and he's so relaxed," Previtera said. "He doesn't put on airs, he's very real, he's very patient with peoples' questions.

He's authentic."

That authenticity is evident in the bishop's talk to the group, Previtera said.

"It's spiritual. He talks about the appeal in a very real way, not convoluted. It's a very real, authentic way of talking about — in his own words — why the appeal is important for the Church. It is very personal," he said.

Bishop Knestout, according to Previtera, has time for everyone.

"I've seen him at appeal receptions where he's spent 10 minutes with just one person because they have questions," Previtera said. "He won't actually start the (formal) presentation until he's talked to everyone individually, which is really cool, and then he'll stick around afterward. That's a big deal."

— Brian T. Olszewski

## Renovation continues in Roanoke



The back spire of St. Andrew Catholic Church, Roanoke, was removed temporarily on Tuesday, Jan. 21, as part of the church's renovation. Constructed in 1902, the historic church is undergoing repairs and improvements that should be completed prior to Sept. 26, when a Mass for the Western Vicariate will be celebrated as part of the Diocese of Richmond's bicentennial. (Photo/St. Andrew Parish)

## RETIREMENT PLANNING AND LEGACY BUILDING

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# Parish remembers victims on 10th anniversary of shooting

## Priest, minister conduct Appomattox prayer service

Nearly 10 years after eight people were killed in a mass shooting in Appomattox County, the community gathered for a memorial ceremony at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, Appomattox, the evening of Friday, Jan. 10.

Nearly 100 people packed the sanctuary to attend the memorial for Lauralee Sipe, 38; Dwayne S. Sipe, 38; Joshua Sipe, 4; Morgan L. Dobyns, 15; Emily A. Quarles, 15; Johnathan L. Quarles, 43; Karen Quarles, 43; and Ronald "Bo" I. Scruggs, 16.

The outside of the church was adorned with fairy lights, and plastic tea lights were handed out as mourners entered the sanctuary.

Father Jim Gallagher, pastor of Our Lady of Peace, and Rev. Dr. Adam Tyler of Grace Hills Baptist Church conducted the service. Family members of the deceased sat in the front pews.

During the memorial, Kim Scruggs, mother of Bo Scruggs, shared memories of her son that spoke to his character and kind heart.

Linda Smith, mother of Dwayne Sipe; mother-in-law to Lauralee Sipe; grandmother of Joshua Sipe and step-grandmother to Morgan Dobyns, also shared memories of

her loved ones and told those gathered that she believes that healing comes from the power of God.

Although none of the victims of the tragedy were parishioners of Our Lady of Peace, Father Gallagher has lit a candle on the piano at the front of the sanctuary each Sunday in honor of the lives lost.

The strength of the close-knit community was evident in those who came to pay their respects and highlighted by those who addressed the crowd.

Mary Anne Freshwater of Appomattox County Victim/Witness, who worked with the families of the victims after the shooting, said that other victim/witness organizations helped to support the families as they navigated the criminal justice system and court processes.

Retired Deputy Todd Craft spoke of the community's solidarity, recalling that in the wake of the tragedy, the counties of Amherst, Bedford and Campbell, the city of Lynchburg and the Virginia State Police all offered assistance.

Sheriff Donald Simpson was the lead investigator of the case, which garnered national news attention at the time. He told those at the memorial service that the case changed his outlook on his career and his life.



Father Jim Gallagher watches as Linda Smith lights a candle during the memorial service at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church marking the 10th anniversary of the mass shooting in Appomattox. Linda's son, Dwayne Sipe, was among those killed. To the right is Freddie Smith, Linda's husband. The service took place Friday, Jan. 10. (Photo/Ronnie Haney)

Simpson had been working 16-hour days to build a strong case. As part of that work, he interviewed dozens of people and learned everything he could about each victim. He said that when he finally slowed down to read news coverage of the shooting and saw the victims' faces, he was overcome by the realization of all that was lost.

After words were shared by family members and those involved

with the case, Scripture was read and a prayer for healing, comfort and peace was said.

Family members of the deceased walked to the piano and lit a candle in remembrance of each victim.

The crowd then processed to the church's memorial garden, where Father Gallagher rang a bell as each lost loved one's name was read aloud.

## Celebrating the infant Jesus



Parishioners watch a reenactment of Harah Amihan, queen of the Filipino natives, dancing the Sto. Niño (Infant Jesus) as a symbol of adapting the Christian faith during the 10th anniversary of the Sinulog-Santo Niño celebration at Church of the Redeemer, Mechanicsville, Saturday, Jan. 25. The Sinulog is a prayer dance of petition, contrition, thanksgiving and adoration. (Photo provided)

## Pope 'felt great harmony' with St. John Paul II

CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — St. John Paul II taught the world that truly great faith and holiness dwell in "the normality of a person who lives in profound communion with Christ," Pope Francis said in a new book.

Precisely because he allowed people to see he was a human being — whether skiing or praying, hiking or suffering — "every gesture of his, every word, every choice he made always had a much deeper value and left a mark," Pope Francis told Father Luigi Maria Epicoco, author of the Italian book "San Giovanni Paolo Magno" ("St. John Paul the Great").

The book, published by Edizioni San Paolo and set for release Feb. 11, was written to mark the 100th anniversary of St. John Paul's birth May 18, 1920.

Much of the book is biographical information about the late pope, but each chapter includes Pope Francis' response to questions from Father Epicoco about his relationship with the late pope and observations about St. John Paul's spirituality, personality, events in his life and his teaching.

The priest said he spoke to Pope Francis about St. John Paul

several times between June 2019 and January 2020. A theologian and popular retreat leader, Father Epicoco is president of the Fides et Ratio Institute for religious studies in Aquila, Italy.

### 'Celibacy a grace'

Pope Francis said there is "total harmony" between his thoughts about the meaning of ministerial priesthood and St. John Paul's teaching on priesthood.

Asked if he thought the abolition of mandatory celibacy for most Latin-rite Catholic priests would be a way to address the priest shortage, he responded: "I am convinced that celibacy is a gift, a grace, and following in the footsteps of Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, I strongly feel an obligation to think of celibacy as a decisive grace that characterizes the Latin Catholic Church. I repeat: It is a grace."

Father Epicoco also asked Pope Francis about St. John Paul's insistence that women cannot be priests because Jesus chose only men as his apostles.

"The question is no longer open for discussion because the pronouncement of John Paul II was definitive," Pope Francis said.

See Harmony Page 12



# March was sharing in ‘spirit of youthful hope’

GUEST COMMENTARY  
SETH BAUER

On Friday, Jan. 24, people from all walks of life gathered in Washington for the 47th annual March for Life. As a first-time participant, I was inspired by the enthusiasm, prayer and peacefulness which seemed to surround both the marchers and the march itself. Many have called this year's March for Life historic because for the first time in history the sitting president of the United States personally attended the event. The excitement produced by President Trump's presence was apparent in the faces of the marchers, and it seemed to reinforce the significance of our own public witness. Throughout the day, I was struck by the overwhelming number of high school students, homeschoolers, col-

lege students and young adults who appeared to make up the majority of the crowd. Being a young person myself, I felt right at home. As I observed the many young faces flow past me toward Constitution Avenue, it dawned on me that this generation — my generation — is the energy behind the pro-life movement. I then recalled the words spoken earlier by the president: “Young people are the heart of the March for Life. And it's your generation that is making America the pro-family, pro-life nation.” Prior to reaching Capitol Hill, I was unable to get an appreciation for how large the march was. However, when I finally reached the summit, I looked back in amazement. The crowds stretched farther than I could see in both directions and were packed so close together it appeared as one continuous mass of people. The sheer magnitude of those

assembled from across the country, people the president said numbered “in the tens of thousands” but perhaps more accurately numbering in the hundreds of thousands, is proof that abortion is the key moral issue of our time. This appeared to be a profound testimony to the immeasurable value of the human person from the moment of conception until natural death. The president eloquently captured the purpose of the pro-life movement when he said, “We are here for a very simple reason: to defend the right of every child, born and unborn, to fulfill their God-given potential.” While the march marks a somber remembrance of the legalization of abortion, those present were visibly joyful. Standing in the cold and walking together in such tight groups would in most cases kindle feelings of impatience or

frustration. Yet when the mass of people pushed me forward unexpectedly, the person I bumped often turned to apologize before I could even say a word. There was no sign of malice or animosity. Instead, an atmosphere of sincerity and goodwill filled the crowds. Whenever I looked at those around me, I was received with a smile. I observed no lawlessness that day. There were no angry protests. Instead, we marched peacefully to the Supreme Court with what might be called patient anticipation. We shared a spirit of youthful hope. *Seth Bauer, a member of St. Benedict, Chesapeake, is a homeschooled senior dual enrolled at Regent University in Virginia Beach.*

## Where's the friendliness?

Where is the friendliest place on earth? Who can say? I can say where it should be — the Catholic Church. I am not Catholic, but occasionally I attend Mass with a family member. It is a beautiful building with ample parking, well-manicured grounds, clean restrooms and an ambiance both inviting and reverent. The choir is not the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but, by God, they try. Their enthusiasm more than makes up for their lack of musical expertise. Their pastor (priest) gives an excellent homily week after week. Very instructive and helpful teaching. So, what's the problem? Not friendly!! For several months, I was going there nearly every week. I would say hello, but I cannot recall a single time when anyone ever made the first step to get to know me. Cold! Don't hand me a bulletin and look the other way! No eye contact! Continuing a conversation with other greeters gave me the impression that I was not important. I noted that people are friendly, but only within their circle. Come on, Catholics! Move out of your old patterns (ruts)! Look around, greet and then meet someone outside your circle of friends. Who knows? Maybe an undercover angel has slipped into the service unaware! How did it happen that McDonald's is more friendly than the Catholic Church? I'm

curious. What is the reason you cannot be hospitable to people who attend your church? I'd love to get some feedback on that question.

— Gary Brown  
Hampton

## Let light of Christ illuminate dark hearts, closed minds

I am saddened and dismayed by the circumstances surrounding the decision to relocate the consecration ceremony of Rev. Susan Haynes as the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia away from St. Bede, Williamsburg. In a wonderful ecumenical gesture, Bishop Barry C. Knestout had offered the use of St. Bede's facilities to the Episcopalians, who were in need of a large, centrally located venue to accommodate the numbers expected for this significant event. However, certain disgruntled elements within St. Bede circulated an online petition to have this ceremony removed from their church. This petition was supported by an ultra-radical Catholic group and subsequently garnered more than 3,200 signatures on its website, mostly from outside the Diocese of Richmond. Many of the comments were vile, angry and personally insulting to Bishop Knestout, St. Bede pastor Msgr. Joe Lehman, Rev. Haynes and even Pope Francis. To their credit, Bishop Knestout and Msgr. Joe Leh-

## Letters

man, the pastor, resisted this shameful pressure and fully intended to proceed with the ceremony. However, Bishop-elect Haynes, in order to ease the “dismay and distress” this was causing among her fellow Christians, graciously withdrew from the arrangement and relocated the ceremony. In so doing, she provided a lesson in Christian charity that I fear will be lost on her harshest Roman Catholic critics. That so many of our fellow Catholics could see fit to sign such a blatantly un-Christian document should be a reason for shame and concern for all of us. Where is the fundamental love that Christ commands we show to all our neighbors, especially our fellow Christians? My prayer for these petitioners is that the light of Christ's love may illuminate their dark hearts and closed minds. — Lee Startt  
Virginia Beach

**How to change attitudes, behaviors about racism**

February is Black History Month. It's a good opportunity to examine ourselves to learn what traces of racism are present in us. In the 1990s, I was at a conference on racism, and the keynote speaker stated that white people will always be racists. I reacted to the statement by disagreeing — in my

mind. The thought, though, has stayed with me, and over the succeeding years, various incidents along with a growth in my openness have helped me come to realize and admit its truth. Working on changing ourselves, as much as we might, we will not become whole on this issue. However, through our efforts, we can become more aware and more accepting of others, realizing that we are all one. A willingness to identify how racism is part of us, checking our attitudes and

our behaviors, are important steps. Also, we need to work on our memory of past influences from family and surrounding society. Attending conferences on racism and educating ourselves through readings can help. They can give us more understanding of the issue and material with which to change ourselves, our attitudes and behaviors. This is a slow process, but a valuable and doable one. — Ed Marroni  
Norfolk

## 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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## Pastor installed at Gloucester



**Father Gregory Kandt and Bishop Barry C. Knestout visit with members of St. Therese, Gloucester, Saturday, Jan 25, following the Mass during which the bishop installed the priest as the parish's pastor.** (Photo/Vy Barto)

## Privilege

*Continued from Page 1*

the group Jan. 31 near the end of a three-day conference on the pastoral care of the elderly sponsored by the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life.

The Catholic Church at every level, he said, must respond to the longer life expectancies and changing demographics evident around the world.

While some people see retirement as marking the time when productivity and strength decline, the 83-year-old pope said, for others it is a time when they are still physically fit and mentally sharp but have much more freedom than they had when they were working and raising a family.

In both situations, he said, the Church must be there to offer a helping hand if needed, benefit from the gifts of the elderly and work to counter social attitudes that see the old as useless burdens on a community.

When speaking with and about older Catholics, the Church cannot act as if their lives only had a past, "a musty archive," he said. "No. The Lord also can and wants to write new pages with them, pages of holiness, service and prayer."

"Today I want to tell you that the elderly are the present and tomorrow of the Church," he said. "Yes, they are also the future of a Church, which, together with young people, prophesies and dreams. That is why it is so important that the old and the young talk to each other. It is so important."

"In the Bible, longevity is a blessing," the pope noted. It is a time to face one's fragility and to recognize how reciprocal love and care within a family really are.

"Giving long life, God the father gives time to deepen one's awareness of him and to deepen intimacy with him, to draw closer to his heart and abandon oneself to him," the pope said. "It is a time to prepare to consign

our spirit into his hands, definitively, with the trust of children. But it also is a time of renewed fruitfulness."

In fact, the Vatican conference, "The Richness of Many Years of Life," spent almost as much time discussing the gifts older Catholics bring to the Church as it did talking about their special needs. The conference discussion, the pope said, cannot be an "isolated initiative" but must continue at the national, diocesan and parish levels.

The Church, he said, is supposed to be the place "where the different generations are called to share God's loving plan."

Just a few days before the feast of the Presentation of the Lord Feb. 2, Pope Francis pointed to the story of the elderly Simeon and Anna who are in the Temple, take the 40-day-old Jesus into their arms, recognize him as the Messiah and "proclaim the revolution of tenderness."

One message of that story is that the good news of salvation in Christ is meant for all people of all ages, he said. "So, I ask you, spare no effort in proclaiming the Gospel to grandparents and the elderly. Go out to meet them with a smile on your face and the Gospel in your hands. Leave your parishes and go seek out the elderly who live alone."

While aging is not a disease, "solitude can be an illness," he said. "But with charity, closeness and spiritual comfort, we can cure it."

Pope Francis also asked pastors to keep in mind that while many parents today do not have the religious formation, education or drive to teach their children the Catholic faith, many grandparents do. "They are an indispensable link in educating little ones and young people in the faith."

The elderly, he said, "are not only people we are called to assist and to protect in order to safeguard their lives, but they can be protagonists of evangelization, privileged witnesses of God's faithful love."

## Team says it didn't advise archdiocese on abuse cases

NEW ORLEANS (CNS) — The New Orleans Saints said in a Jan. 24 statement that the football team has "no interest in concealing information from the press or public" in any matter related to clergy sex abuse.

The Saints organization remains "steadfast in support" of sex abuse victims and prays "for their continued healing."

The statement was released in response to an AP story Jan. 24 that said the NFL team allegedly helped the New Orleans Archdiocese with public relations damage control on sex abuse claims.

"Attorneys for about two dozen men suing the Church say in court filings that the 276 documents they obtained through discovery show that the NFL team, whose owner is devoutly Catholic, aided the Archdiocese of New Orleans in its 'pattern and practice of concealing its crimes,'" AP reported.

Lawyers for the Saints called such claims "outrageous" in court papers. The NFL team is going to court to keep the public from seeing hundreds of emails on the issue that its lawyers said were meant to be private correspondence.

"While there is current litigation relative to the New Orleans Archdiocese and clergy sex abuse, our comments are limited only to the scope of our involvement," the New Orleans Saints said in its Jan. 24 statement.

"The New Orleans Saints organization has always had a very strong relationship with the archdiocese," it said. "The archdiocese reached out to a number of community and civic-minded leaders seeking counsel on handling the pending media attention that would come with the release of the clergy names in November of 2018."

In reaching out, the archdiocese contacted Greg Bensel, senior vice president of communications for the New Orleans Saints, who "offered input on how to work with the media."

"The advice was simple and never wavering: Be direct, open and fully transparent, while making sure that all law enforcement agencies were alerted," the Saints said.

"The New Orleans Saints, Greg Bensel and Mrs. Gayle Benson were and remain offended, disappointed

*See Team, Page 12*

## Marching for life



**Above: Old Dominion University students Ryan Baxley, Philip Ramos and Hyacinth Abad walk in the National March for Life, Friday, Jan. 24, in Washington.** (Photo/Marissa O'Neil). **Right: Bishop Barry C. Knestout, left, visits with participants from the Diocese of Richmond at the march.** (Photo/Office for Evangelization)





# Atrocious scourge



## Hermitage senior's human trafficking project 'a practice of faith'

**KRISTEN L. BYRD**  
Special to The Catholic Virginian

**S**eventeen-year-old Philip Kamper didn't know much about human trafficking before entering his senior year of high school, but what he would learn would change his life.

Kamper, a parishioner at St. Michael the Archangel, Glen Allen, attends Hermitage High School's Humanities Center, a four-year program for select students from across Henrico County. Each year's elective course is dedicated to a different topic, with senior year covering several issues, e.g., racism, genocide and human trafficking.

Representatives from The Prevention Project, an educational program created by nonprofit Richmond Justice Initiative, visited Kamper's class to highlight how prolific human trafficking has become.

Members of The Prevention Project travel to middle and high schools, church gatherings, businesses, and other groups to educate people about human trafficking in hopes it will help prevent it from happening. It was developed by human trafficking survivors, law enforcement personnel, advocates and educators. The pilot program started at Hermitage High School and has since been implemented in states across the country, reaching tens of thousands of students.

Kamper learned that human trafficking wasn't limited to the international kidnappings portrayed in action movies, but that it happens everywhere and can happen to anyone — from affluent teens to undocumented immigrants. It is widespread, being the second-largest criminal enterprise in the world, behind drug trafficking.

In dedicating his senior project to educating as many people as possible, Kamper also saw it as a way to practice his Catholic faith.

"We are all called to spread the Word of God, just as we need to take that ability and spread the word about issues like human trafficking. Education is prevention. Human trafficking is a preventable issue, and we can be the ones who bring an end to it by spreading the word," he said.

Over several months, he planned and coordinated an educational seminar that took place on Jan. 15 at St. Michael Parish. He invited Henrico County vice detective Joe Wechsler, forensic nurse Megan Pond and Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Michael Feinmel to share their experiences with human trafficking.

"I really wanted to highlight what we are doing in Henrico and the state of Virginia to prevent and combat trafficking. I felt this would bring a balance to awareness and an appreciation that we live in

a place where our legislators, police and health care professionals are fighting for the end of this prolific industry," he said.

The parishes of St. Michael and nearby St. Mary helped. The former provided space for the event and both parishes offered volunteers. The latter supports Safe Harbor through its endowment fund for human concerns. Safe Harbor is a shelter that houses survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual abuse. St. Mary recently gave Safe Harbor a grant for their counseling and Safe House programs.

### Luring the vulnerable

Wechsler has been investigating human trafficking since 2012. He explained how human traffickers lure their victims, noting that a lot of trafficking happens incrementally and depends upon psychological methods to manipulate victims.

He said a trafficker can look up someone's Facebook profile or scroll through their Instagram posts to learn more about them. They can then start a conversation online, ask them to meet somewhere and begin what the victim may believe is a relationship but in reality is a trap. They can look for a vulnerable student who is at odds with their parents, or doing poorly in school, or is a social outcast, and they can promise the student a better life.

"When you take a person who is at the lowest point in their life and pain, a manipulator who has a plan once they have their hands on that's when the proposal comes," Wechsler said.

Under federal law, a trafficker uses physical or psychological means to force someone into commercial sex activity. A human trafficker. While experience beatings, rape, or physical violence, many are controlled by traffickers using logical means, such as manipulation and lies. Traffickers use a combination of violence and mental abuse.

Traffickers can also use addictions, keeping them on drugs or alcohol and then taking control over them, a unit is dedicated to finding and turning victims in. Each year he visits hotels in the area to educate the workers about sex traffickers. His team uses the same websites traffickers use to catch them in the act.

Wechsler said that many of the victims were first bought for sex.





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"There's more to life, and they are redeemable, and there is something on the other side of this," he said. "That's why I've stuck with it as long as I have."

### Combating 'modern slavery'

Feinmel has prosecuted human trafficking cases for years and was instrumental in getting the Virginia General Assembly to adopt a landmark commercial sex trafficking law.

"The Richmond area has really become the foremost area in the country for fighting the battle against human trafficking. We think of ourselves as the gold standard," he said. "We were once the capital of slavery and now we are leading the charge to combat modern slavery."

Feinmel spoke about the problems that existed with previous laws and how they failed victims. For example, there was mandatory prison time for a second offense of selling drugs but not for selling a human being. He used this comparison to help convince General Assembly members that a new law was needed.

For months he met with them one-on-one, educating them about human trafficking and explaining how it is a form of slavery. He told them how traffickers prey on the impoverished and wealthy, on runaway children and middle-aged addicts, on immigrants and the marginalized.

He also pushed for the law to criminalize traffickers' use of force, intimidation or deception and for it to be a crime to even encourage someone to engage in prostitution. The legislation passed in 2015, making Virginia the last state in the country to enact a commercial sex trafficking law.

### No 'victimless crime'

Since 2013, Pond has treated hundreds of patients through Bon Secours' Human Trafficking Initiative.

"I thought prostitution was a victimless crime," she said. "Boy, was I wrong."

Her job entails not only caring for victims by mending their wounds, adminis-



tering medication and running tests, but also educating medical staff on how to recognize a victim of human trafficking.

Pond also works with Henrico County police officers who bring victims who consent to medical treatment. For adults, they provide a safe place in which to talk and help find shelter at places like Safe Harbor.

If the victim is a child, then they can call Child Protective Services. Most minors are runaways or homeless. They utilize a program called Language Line, which provides an interpreter for any language. There is also a Human Trafficking Hotline and Textline.

### Reaching out as Jesus would

"It doesn't take a lot to make a difference," said Kamper. "One conversation can make the difference."

He hopes to pursue a career in law enforcement. He wants to help people. In dedicating his senior project to battling the scourge of human trafficking, Kamper has already begun working toward that goal.

"For me, I really thought of the ways that Jesus spent his time reaching out to those victimized and marginalized," he said. "We are called to do the same and as a community be the support system they need to get the word out and help those who are already victims to get back on their feet and into their own lives."

## Trafficking in numbers

■ Human trafficking is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world and is in position to become the largest criminal industry in the world. Drug trafficking is the largest criminal activity.

■ Human traffickers profit approximately \$150 billion each year. That is more than Nike, Starbucks and Google combined.

■ Approximately 30 million people around the world are in slavery today.

■ Within the United States, experts estimate that over 100,000 children are trafficked per year.

■ The United States purchases more women and children for sex than any country in the world.

■ Approximately 800,000 victims are trafficked across international borders every year.

*Data from the Richmond Justice Initiative*

## Documentary a call to battle trafficking

SAN DIEGO (CNS) — "Blind Eyes Opened: The Truth About Sex Trafficking in America" begins with this scriptural passage from Isaiah: "to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."

Over the hour and a half that follows, viewers' eyes will indeed be opened, not only by the many disturbing facts related on-camera by law enforcement personnel, legislators and those dedicated to facilitating the healing of trafficking victims, but also through the haunting first-person accounts of six survivors of this modern-day form of slavery.

During the film, viewers hear from survivors who share Jesus' role in their recovery. The film also shows Christian ministries reaching out to those in the commercial sex trade, and it concludes with a direct challenge to its Christian viewers to do more to combat this societal scourge.

The film tackles such topics as the insidious ways in which children are lured by traffickers who often prey on vulnerabilities such as low self-esteem and an unstable family life; how law enforcement has shifted from viewing trafficked persons as criminals to recognizing them as crime victims; what additional steps that American society can take

against trafficking; and what resources are currently available to those fortunate enough to escape from such a hellish life.

Among the many heartbreaking stories recounted in the film is that of Edie B. Rhea, founder of Healing Root Ministry Inc., a nonprofit led by trafficking survivors.

Her father died when she was 4. A few months later, a man named Bill moved in with her and her mother. He molested her when she was 10 and, two years later, began selling her for sex to strangers.

A childhood photo of a smiling Edie is seen onscreen as the grown woman recounts her lost innocence and the multiple rapes she endured at the butcher shop that Bill and her mother owned. On one occasion, Bill prostituted her in exchange for a new meat grinder.

Rhea says in the film that she believes that there were "lots of opportunities for people to see (what was happening), but they didn't see."

"The signs were there," she added. "They just looked the other way."

In its unflinching look at sex trafficking, "Blind Eyes Opened" also takes aim at pornography and abortion.

One of the six featured survivors is Brook Parker-Bello, now the founder,

*See Battle, Page 13*



# No 'definitive response' on women deacons



**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**  
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE  
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

**Q.** A book on lives of the saints lists a St. Olympias in the fourth and fifth centuries and says that she was a deaconess of the church, "an office which existed at that time." When did the church stop ordaining women as deacons and why? (Dunnsville)

**A.** Clearly there were women in the early church who were called "deaconesses." What is not clear is what, exactly, their role was and whether their ordination was a sacramental one. St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans (16:1) refers to a certain Phoebe, whom he calls (in some translations) "a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae."

St. Olympias was, according to the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, "consecrated (a) deaconess" by the bishop of Constantinople in the fourth century. She had been widowed at an early age and chose to remain unmarried, dedicating her considerable fortune to helping the poor.

In the early centuries, deaconesses seem to have played a major role in the baptism of women. (Christians then were baptized naked, many of them as adult con-

verts; since the clergy were male, modesty demanded that deaconesses take women converts into the water.) Catholic scholars have divided opinions as to whether these ancient deaconesses were actually ordained to a degree of holy orders or were simply blessed for service, like today's lectors or acolytes.

In 2016, Pope Francis, with the encouragement of the International Union of Superiors General, created a study commission to examine the matter of women serving as deacons. Members of that commission have arrived at varying points of view.

Pope Francis spoke about this with journalists in May 2019. As to whether women in the early centuries of Christianity had been ordained sacramentally, the pope said that the Church has yet to give a "definitive response."

**Q.** At a recent Mass, I noticed a teenager chewing gum. I was appalled when I watched him come forward to receive holy Communion while still chewing his gum. Should the priest have refused to give him Communion? (West Linn, Oregon)

**A.** Canon law (Canon 919.1) tells Catholics that they are to abstain from all food and drink (with the exception of water or medicine) for at least one hour before receiving holy Communion. The reason, of course, is to remind us how special

the Eucharist is, nourishing us for life eternal. Nowhere does canon law define precisely what constitutes food and what does not.

Some might argue that since sugar-free gum has no nutritional value, it does not qualify. In my mind, gum of any kind profanes the mouth as a receptor for Communion and should be avoided.

However, I would not as a priest refuse to give the young man holy Communion. Why take the risk of embarrassing him and having him feel uncomfortable at that church or, perhaps, at any Eucharist?

Instead, why not seek him out after Mass and chat with him as to the appropriateness of chewing gum before receiving Communion? And if the problem is as common as you indicate, perhaps an occasional reminder in the parish bulletin might help.

**Q.** Why do Christians feel that the coming of Jesus freed them from the 613 precepts that Jews count in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and that they can adhere only to the Ten Commandments? Why those 10 and not the other 613? (Albany, New York)

**A.** The Christian belief is that Jesus came to fulfill the law and that the essential moral principles of the Mosaic code are contained in the Ten Commandments as revealed in Chapter 20 of the Book of Exodus.

Paul's Letter to the Colossians (2:16-17) notes that Christians are not bound by the precepts of the Hebrew law that were merely ceremonial — about "clean" and "unclean" things, about sacrifices and others temple practices.

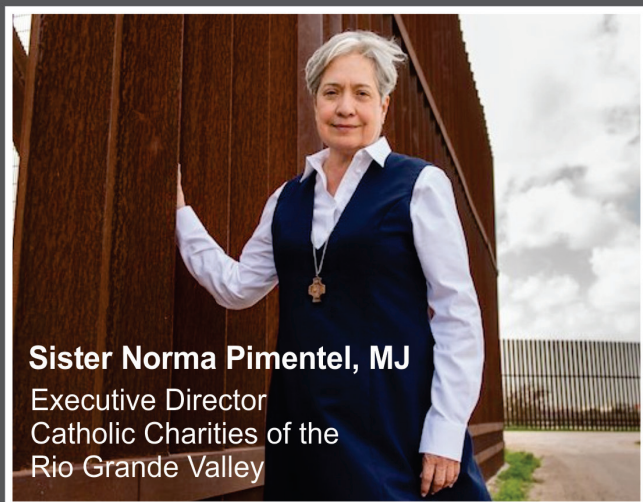
"Let no one, then," says Paul, "pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to the festival or new moon or Sabbath. These are shadows of things to come; the reality belongs to Christ."

The precepts of the Torah, as enumerated by the Torah scholar Maimonides in the 12th century, were specific. More than a dozen of the 613 had to do with idolatry ("not to make an idol for yourself," "not to make an idol for others," "not to turn a city to idolatry," "not to bow down before a smooth stone"); more than two dozen listed those with whom you were prohibited from having sex — your mother, your sister, your father, an animal.

Such prohibitions are covered, the Christian believes, in a generic way by the Ten Commandments. Interestingly, the rabbi Hillel, the Jewish sage who lived during the first century before Christ, was once challenged to recite the entire Hebrew code of law while standing on one foot; he said this, "Do not do to anyone else what you would not want done to yourself." With that, he put the other foot down and said, "All else is commentary."

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

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# View all life as sacred and good will triumph over evil



## IN LIGHT OF FAITH

BARBARA HUGHES

On Jan. 24, tens of thousands of people headed to Washington on behalf of the unborn. Although the March for Life, now in its 47th year, rarely garners the kind of media attention it deserves, this year, it might have been ignored altogether were it not for the appearance of President Trump.

It's fair to say that what constitutes news is certainly not the Good News of the Gospel. At times our world seems a bit like the world of Alice in Wonderland where everything has been turned upside down.

Case in point: The coronavirus that has come from China has turned airports into screening stations. Travelers don face masks, health professionals scan for symptoms of the virus and disinfectants are sprayed hither and yon amid travel bans and lockdowns.

Updates about the virus have become a priority for most media outlets, alerting people to symptoms along with warnings about which countries pose the greatest danger. I'm not suggesting that we take the virus and its deadly consequences lightly, but when compared with the 56 million babies who have died as a result of abortion, the moral equivalency regarding media attention is unreconcilable.

In legalizing abortion, the act of killing an infant has been reduced to a civil rights issue that is concerned only with the mother. It was as if the infant didn't exist even before it was aborted.

In our topsy-turvy world, the courts have championed the rights of adults who have the means to find alternatives to abortion over the rights of infants, whose lives are at the mercy of adults. How could it be that pregnancy has



been reduced to a medical condition that justifies elimination rather than assistance?

When infants in the womb remain invisible, abortion is faceless. No wonder abortion activists strongly object to laws that mandate sonograms prior to a woman consenting to an abortion. The visualization of a human being with a beating heart and 10 tiny fingers and toes can tug at the heart strings of a mother, thereby dispelling the notion that the fetus in her womb is just an anomaly.

The growing push for killing babies that survive an abortion is unconscionable, and yet here in Virginia and elsewhere, the only objection seems to be leveled at those who protest infanticide.

For people of faith, the words of Scripture — "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer 1:5) — remind us that the life of every human person is precious in God's sight.

Perhaps no one proclaimed the miracle of new life more eloquently than the mother who is quoted in the Book of Maccabees. As the youngest of her seven sons was about to be killed for refusing to deny the God of Israel, this brave mother, filled with the Spirit of the Lord, proclaimed:

*I do not know how you came into existence in my womb; it was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed. Therefore, since it is the Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning, as He brings out the origin of everything, he in his mercy will give you back both breath and life, because you now disregard yourselves for the sake of the law ... so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with them (2 Mc 7:22 – 23).*

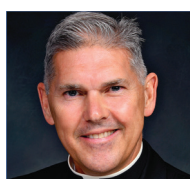
In our upside-down, topsy-turvy world, the abortion issue comes down to a matter of priorities. When we place God at the center of all we do, no difficulty or problem is too great. That doesn't mean that life will be easy, but when we place our trust in God, his grace is there for us. Having accompanied several young women through an unplanned pregnancy, I've witnessed tears of sorrow turn to tears of joy when the child is born.

The mandate to respect life is not optional. As people of faith, we have a responsibility to reach out to pregnant women who either lack the resources or emotional support to carry their baby to full term. No one is exempt. We all bear responsibility for the sins of the world.

The philosopher Edmund Burke said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." We can all do something. We begin by joining hearts, hands and prayer to support mothers in need. By adding our voice to the voice of the Virginia Catholic Conference, a solitary voice becomes many. Good will triumph over evil when all of life — from womb to tomb — is regarded as sacred.

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

## Learn to love like and to be loved by God



## BELIEVE AS YOU PRAY

MSGR. TIMOTHY KEENEY

Even though I have been a priest for nearly 25 years, I still remember what it was like to sit in the pews to listen to a homily. One of the approaches I would hear — an approach that kind of took the life out of any homily — was when the priest would reduce Jesus' words to merely teaching us how to act.

The Gospel is supposed to be how we encounter the person of Jesus, not merely to present him as a teacher of ethics. The danger is that if Jesus is presented in this way, he just becomes one more teacher among many.

The Sermon on the Mount is more than an ethical code, but today's Gospel has the danger of being communicated in that way.

Where then is the bite of this Gospel? If I were a first century listener of Jesus, what would be my first question?

That question would be: Who is this rabbi who makes his interpretation of the law, indeed a rewriting of the law, on the par with the law given by God to Moses?

To answer that question, we must go to the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Without going into a whole dissertation on the sermon, the Lord's Prayer is at its very heart.

Jesus is teaching us to pray as he prays. Jesus is revealing his very identity in the Our Father and inviting us into that identity. That is how we answer the question: Who is this that is teaching in this way?

We are encountering the God/man who is offering us his very life. So, this is how to deepen that encounter with Jesus, the son of God, and with the Father. We go to the heart of the law that God has planted into our hearts.

Jesus is telling us not just to look at the letter of that law, but if we want God to penetrate our hearts, fill our lives and enliven our

souls, then we must go deeper to the fuller meaning of his will for us — to understand the deep law of God the Father in the position of being in union with Jesus Christ, as son or daughter.

When I understand that the commandment not to kill or harm or denigrate another human being helps me to encounter God in all of his sons and daughters, I learn to love like God.

When I understand that I can never use another person in any way that treats them as an object, I am loving as God loves.

When I understand that my permanent covenant as priest with the people of God as a spouse, or your covenant with your spouse, is only a hint of the permanent, loving and unbreakable covenant that God has made with each one of us, we are learning to be loved by God.

When all this happens, we are no longer following a code of conduct, we are encountering a person. It is not about following the rules. It is about living in a way that I am conforming myself with the life of my beloved who gives me the necessary help to live that life of love.

*Msgr. Timothy Keeney is pastor of Incarnation, Charlottesville.*

### Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Sir 15:15-20

**Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34**

**I Cor 2:6-10**

**Mt 5:17-37 or 5: 20-22A, 27-28, 33-34, 37**





## Celebrating a new year

The Church of the Vietnamese Martyrs choir sings during Mass celebrated by Bishop Barry C. Knestout on Sunday, Jan. 26. The bishop blessed the Richmond parish's chapel and joined parishioners for the start of the Vietnamese New Year. (Photo provided)

## Harmony

Continued from Page 5

However, he said, usually the question betrays a misunderstanding of the role of ministerial priesthood and focuses only on people's function in the Church, not their importance.

Like Mary, he said, women are the ones who "teach the Church to pass through the night trusting the daylight will come, even when daylight is still far off. Only a woman is able to teach us a love that is hope."

### Evil of 'gender theory'

Father Epicoco also noted how often Pope Francis speaks of evil, and he asked Pope Francis where he sees evil at work today.

"One place is 'gender theory,'" the pope said. "Right away I want to clarify that I am not referring to people with a homosexual orientation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church invites us to accompany them and provide pastoral care to these brothers and sisters of ours."

Gender theory, he said, has a "dangerous" cultural aim of erasing all distinctions between men and women, male and female, which would "destroy at its roots" God's most basic plan for human beings: "diversity, distinction. It would make everything homogenous, neutral. It is an attack on difference, on the creativity of God and on men and women."

Pope Francis said he did not want "to discriminate against anyone," but was convinced that human peace and well-being had to be based on the reality that God created people with differences and that accepting — not ignoring — those differences is what brings people together.

### Good relationship

Speaking of his relationship with St.

John Paul II, Pope Francis said he was in the car in Argentina when he heard that then-Cardinal Karol Wojtyla had been elected pope in 1978. "I heard the name Wojtyla and thought, 'an African pope.' Then they told me he was Polish."

He said he liked the new pope right away, especially because of his reputation for spending time with university students, being a sports enthusiast, his devotion to Mary and, especially, because of his reputation as one who prayed often and deeply.

"In 2001, when I was made a cardinal, I felt a strong desire when I knelt to receive the cardinal's biretta not only to exchange the sign of peace with him, but to kiss his hand," Pope Francis said. "Some people criticized me for this gesture, but it was spontaneous."

"We cannot forget the suffering of this great pope," he said. "His refined and acute sensitivity to mercy certainly was influence by the spirituality of St. Faustina Kowalska, who died during his adolescence, but also — perhaps, especially — because of his having witnessed the communist and Nazi persecutions. He suffered so much!"

Pope Francis' homilies and pastoral letters as a bishop in Argentina in the 1990s were full of quotations from St. John Paul, Father Epicoco noted. "Yes," Pope Francis said, "I was perceived by many as a conservative. Some saw me that way, but I simply always felt great harmony with what the pope was saying."

"Somewhere I read an article by a man analyzing the Church today and, speaking about me, he said — and I quote — 'I don't know how this man emerged,'" Pope Francis said. "I wanted to respond, 'I don't either,' because the Holy Spirit always intervenes in certain choices. I think it's right that the Holy Spirit can continue to surprise us."

## Media must promote culture of respect

RYAN HARMS  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Communication is meant to be constructive, to connect people and promote understanding, but too often the media have degenerated into plat-forms to disseminate hatred, said Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication.

"Evil cannot be fought with evil. Truth cannot be served with misinformation," Ruffini said Feb. 3, speaking in Abu Dhabi at the Arab Media Convention for Human Fraternity, an event marking the first anniversary of the signing of the "Document on Human Fraternity." The text of his speech was released by the Vatican.

The human fraternity document was signed in Abu Dhabi a year earlier by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, the grand imam of al-Azhar and a leading religious authority for many Sunni Muslims around the world. The document included a commitment to promoting Christian-Muslim dialogue and working for religious freedom for all, denounced violence committed in the name of religion and discussed the role of the media in promoting respect and understanding.

Ruffini said the document calls upon journalists to, "work together, as people of goodwill, so that the digital era, the era of the mass media, the era of communication might lead us to the culture of mutual respect."

Journalists should strive to remove "the false necessity of controversy, the false imperative that one's identity depends on having an enemy," he said.

"The world is hungry for peace, truth and justice," he said, and it is up to journalists to satiate that hunger.

For the Vatican and for participants at the Abu Dhabi conference, Ruffini said marking the anniversary of the human fraternity document is a time to renew "the commitment to always be instruments of peace, even — or perhaps above all — in the way in which we communicate."

The media, he said, have the potential to build up "universal fraternity," but they also can be "the means to continue fomenting the misunderstandings, resentments and enmity, which have until now made an unfortunate tangled mess of our present and have threatened our future."

More Catholic video and news at  
[www.catholicvirginian.org](http://www.catholicvirginian.org)

## Team

Continued from Page 7

and repulsed by the actions of certain past clergy," the team's statement added, referring to the wife of New Orleans Saints owner Tom Benson. The Bensons are devout Catholics.

"The Saints have no interest in concealing information from the press or public," it said. "At the

current discovery stage in the case of Doe v. Archdiocese, the Saints, through their counsel, have merely requested the court to apply the normal rules of civil discovery to the documents that the Saints produced and delivered to Mr. Doe's counsel."

"We remain steadfast in support of the victims who have suffered and pray for their continued healing," the New Orleans Saints said.

"Until the documents are admitted into evi-

dence at a public trial or hearing in the context of relevant testimony by persons having knowledge of the documents and the events to which they pertain, the use of the documents should be limited to the parties to the case and their attorneys," the team's statement said. "If admitted into evidence of the case, the documents and the testimony pertaining to them will become part of the public record of the trial of the case."



## Battle

Continued from Page 9

CEO and executive director of More Too Life Inc., a nonprofit that provides mentoring and education to trafficking survivors. She shares that her trafficker forced her to undergo multiple abortions.

During her onscreen interview, she pauses, seemingly holding back tears. In a broken voice, she reveals that, as a lasting legacy of those abortions, she has experienced several miscarriages during her marriage and has been unable to carry a child to term.

"Blind Eyes Opened" concludes with a powerful call for Christians to enlist in the battle against sex trafficking.

"You've got to fight the fight," Kevin P. Malone, co-founder and board president of the U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking, tells viewers near the end of the film, "and I believe, when the Church accepts that responsibility and really engages, we can make a major difference."

*Editor's note: For more information about the film, visit [www.BlindEyesOpened.com](http://www.BlindEyesOpened.com). Parishes interested in learning how to host a screening can do so by visiting [www.faithcontentnetwork.com](http://www.faithcontentnetwork.com), clicking on "See the Current Film Line-Up," and selecting "Blind Eyes Opened: The Truth About Sex Trafficking in America."*

## Resources

**Human Trafficking Hotline:**  
888-373-7888

**BeFree Textline:**  
Text "BeFree" to 233733

**Prevention Project:**  
visit <http://www.prevention-project.org/home>

**Richmond Justice Initiative:**  
<https://richmondjusticeinitiative.com>

**Safe Harbor:**  
<https://safeharborshelter.com>



Continued from Page 2

they had been living before he came to this city. ...

"Father Warren organized a brass band of 65 pieces. The members were all young boys — students of St. Joseph's school. It was at a concert given by this band in Princess Anne that Father Warren was kidnapped by the hooded mob and taken away in an automobile. He was put down

in the road some miles from where the kidnapping took place and left in the dark to find his way back home as best he could.

"Although the kidnapping occurred on September 1, not a single person has been arrested. There were 30 hooded men in the mob who actually took part in the kidnapping and the roads through which the mob passed were guarded by other hooded men. Father Warren said he was satisfied that approximately 70 men were implicated in one way or another in his kidnapping.

"The most encouraging indica-

tion that the courts of Princess Anne intend to do something in the case of the kidnapping of Father Warren is found in a charge to the grand jury named to make an investigation by Judge B.D. White, the presiding jurist of the county.

"Judge White told the jury that the kidnapping of Father Warren was a disgrace to the State and the county and a crime against the Government.

"There can be but one Government in this country," he said. "There is no place in Virginia for the law of the mob. If the courts are to function then the mob must be put down."

## Faith

Continued from Page 3

The UMOJA program offers the same kind of assistance as the IRC, providing financial and community support. They are currently helping about 10 families, most of whose roots are in the Congo but ended up in refugee camps scattered across Africa. It is funded by donations to their human concerns ministry, a grant from the Diocese of Richmond and collections taken at local parishes throughout the year.

Volunteers from St. Elizabeth help UMOJA families. They give faith formation classes in both English and Swahili, and they help with job searches and driving refugees to and from work. They help families translate and understand their bills and letters, and they take them to educational and cultural sites so

they can learn about their new home.

Though Shishi family members no longer fear for their lives, they still face an uncertain future. Shishi relies on the one constant in his life — the faith that guided him during his childhood in the Congo and into adulthood in Tanzania and now in the United States.

"There is always the space to live and grow in harmony," said Sister Tiberh. "Our needs are the same. Our cries are the same. The need for freedom, for justice, to be connected to God and your faith. Deep down, we are all the same."

*Editor's note: To help the Shishi family and other UMOJA families, visit <http://www.stelizcc.org/human-concerns-ministries/#umojaministry> or contact Sister Tiberh at [tiberhcms@gmail.com](mailto:tiberhcms@gmail.com).*

## WHAT WE'VE HEARD

**Good people doing good things:** Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 26-Feb. 1, was another opportunity for Catholic schools to showcase what they do best: Practice what they teach. Some examples:

**Schools from throughout the diocese:** They gave those working in the Pastoral Center a gift about which one doesn't hear much these days — spiritual bouquets. Wonderful to know that all these students, teachers and staff were praying for everyone in the building.

**Blessed Sacrament Huguenot School, Powhatan:** Kelin Flowers and her fifth graders collected snacks, fruit, food with protein and drinks to fill 215 "Backpacks for Love" to be distributed in Powhatan. The school's students and their families also donated over 100 sets of pajamas to the Home for Boys and Girls.

**Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Newport News:** After learning about Amazon Relief from Karen Rutherford-Coulson, a staff member at the school, students held a series of fundraisers. The school presented a check for Amazon Relief to the Our Lady of the Rosary Secular Franciscans. Amazon Relief helps at-risk children living near the Equator.

**St. Benedict and Our Lady of Lourdes, Richmond:** Each brought a choir to the Pastoral Center for brief performances filled with talent and enthusiasm.

**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 [acarneal@catholicvirginian.org](mailto:acarneal@catholicvirginian.org). Include your name and phone number in case we need to follow up. Information cannot be taken over the phone.

## House of Delegates invocation



**Bishop Barry C. Knestout gives the invocation at the start of the Virginia House of Delegates session on Wednesday, Jan. 29. The bishop based his prayer on the Book of Ecclesiastes 3:1. In the background is Eileen Filler-Corn, Speaker of the House. See a video of the bishop delivering the prayer at [www.richmonddiocese.org](http://www.richmonddiocese.org). (Photo/Office of Communications)**

## Correction

At the end of "\$1M gift gives school Future Full of Hope" (Catholic Virginian, Jan. 27), the contact number for Anne Leigh Bisese should have been 804-740-1048. Students wishing to apply for a scholarship through the Future Full of Hope program at St. Mary's Catholic School in Richmond can contact Bisese at that number or by emailing [albisee@saintmary.org](mailto:albisee@saintmary.org).



## OPPORTUNITIES

**Church of St. Therese, Chesapeake,** is seeking a full-time Custodian, approximately 30-35 hours per week. The Custodian assures that the church complex — worship space, commons, social center, meeting rooms, kitchen, bathrooms, chapels, offices and all entrances to the facility are maintained in a clean and orderly manner. This position requires heavy lifting, experience in cleaning and simple maintenance knowledge. Works closely with the office. VIRTUS and background check required. Compensation according to diocesan guidelines. Application deadline Tuesday, Feb. 18. Submit a diocesan application to Rev. Mr. Bubba Allen at [Bal-len@sttheresechesva.org](mailto:Bal-len@sttheresechesva.org). For additional information, call 757-488-2553.

**Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School** is looking for a part-time After Care Teacher in the After School Program. The position is Monday-Friday from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. This position is ideal for active retirees or any adult 18 and over that is looking for consistent part-time work and likes working with children. If interested, please send a résumé and completed diocesan application to [Kelly\\_Taylor@lourdesva.org](mailto:Kelly_Taylor@lourdesva.org).

**Program Assistant:** Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Richmond, seeks a full-time Program Assistant responsible overseeing youth programming, baptismal preparation and general clerical work in the parish office. The Program Assistant will provide primary leadership for the design and implementation of a parish ministry to its youth. The Program Assistant will oversee the parish's baptismal preparation program, including coordinating the baptismal preparation teams. The Program Assistant will implement a schedule of activities for the parish youth, including diocesan retreats and conferences, service opportunities, parish worship events and social events. The Program Assistant is a member of the parish staff who is supervised by the pastor. The Program Assistant must be an active member of the Roman Catholic Church. A grounding in sound Catholic faith and the teaching authority of the Church for a moral life is required. The Program Assistant must successfully complete the Parish Safe Environment process and maintain current catechist and youth ministry diocesan certification. Experience in parish youth ministry is desirable. The Program Assistant must be able to maintain flexible hours including evenings and weekends, especially Sunday. The Program Assistant must have the ability to design and implement a variety of youth programs, to evaluate and manage baptismal programming and have some skills in time management, planning and budgeting. The Program Assistant must speak, read and write Spanish fluently, and be culturally competent working among both English speakers and Spanish speakers. Strong organizational and communication skills required. Applicants should send a cover letter, résumé and references to Alfredo Arreola at [aarreola@sacredheartva.org](mailto:aarreola@sacredheartva.org).

## SHORTTAKES

**Church of the Redeemer,** 8275 Meadowbridge Road, Mechanicsville, is hosting Redeemer Royale Casino Night on Saturday, Feb. 15. Please join us as we raise money for rectory renovations for our new pastor, Father Jim Cowles. The Redeemer Royale will have professional game tables, stage prizes, door prizes, photo booth and silent auctions. We will host a cocktail hour at 6 p.m. and gaming will be from 7:30-10 p.m. Please visit [www.churchredeemer.org](http://www.churchredeemer.org).

**Tidewater Intergenerational Orchestra:** Sunday, Feb. 16, 1 p.m. 16th season of the Tidewater Intergenerational Orchestra at St. Bede's Kaplan Parish Hall, 3686 Ironbound Road, Williamsburg. The orchestra will perform works by Dvorak, Brahms and others. Viola virtuoso Adelya Lindsay, principal violist with the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, will be the featured artist. For more information about this free concert, call 757-229-3631 or visit [www.bedeva.org/concerts](http://www.bedeva.org/concerts). Concert artists, adult players and accomplished students interested in playing with the orchestra should contact the coordinator, Dr. Alice Lindsay, at [tio@cox.net](mailto:tio@cox.net).

**One in Spirit Ecumenical Retreat,** join Msgr. Joe Lehman, pastor of St. Bede Catholic Church, Williamsburg, and the Ecumenical and Inter-religious Officer for the Diocese of Richmond, Saturday, Feb. 22, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., Church of the Holy Apostles, 1593 Lynnhaven Parkway, Virginia Beach, for a special day to celebrate Christian community unity and to discover ecumenism in a new decade. Explore how we can find common ground among our Christian brothers and sisters and honor the oneness of our foundation in following the teachings of Jesus. Visitors \$25, including lunch. To register, call the church at 757-427-0963 or email [admin@holyapostlesvb.org](mailto:admin@holyapostlesvb.org).

**The Catholic Women's Organization of St. John Neumann Catholic Church,** 2480 Batterson Road, Powhatan, invites men and women to join us Saturday, Feb. 22, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for "Liturgy, Prayer and Spirituality in the Example and Writing of Pope Francis," a pre-Lenten retreat led by Msgr. Kevin Irwin, former dean, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, and author of just published "Pope Francis and the Liturgy." Registration: \$20, includes refreshments and box lunch. For more information or to register, contact [mmharrison45@icloud.com](mailto:mmharrison45@icloud.com). Registration ends Sunday, Feb. 16.

**Annual Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper,** St. John Catholic Church,

813 W. Nine Mile Road, Highland Springs, Tuesday, Feb. 25, 5-7 p.m. Menu: pancakes, sausage or bacon, baked apples, drink and dessert. Costs: \$6 for adults; \$4 children 3-10; 2 and under eat free. Chef Father Rossi will be flipping his "special" pancakes again this year, so come on down. There will be fun activities for the kids including face painting and mask decorating. Also, beginning Friday, Feb. 28 — our Famous Weekly Lenten Fish Fries, 5-7 p.m.

**Annual Lenten Fish Fry** sponsored by St. Edward Knights of Columbus #6546. Fridays during Lent — Feb 28; March 6, 13, 20, 27; April 3 — from 5-7 p.m. St. Edward Community Center, 2700 Dolfield Drive, North Chesterfield. Choice of catfish or salmon with hush puppies, baked potato or fries, salad or coleslaw, and a drink. \$12/adult, \$5/children 5-12, Free for children 4 and under. Questions? Please email [sted.knights@gmail.com](mailto:sted.knights@gmail.com).

**Marian Manor's Annual Sweet-heart Dance** Sunday, March 1, 2-4 p.m., St. Gregory the Great School Gymnasium, 5343 Virginia Beach Blvd., Virginia Beach, featuring a very special vow renewal ceremony for couples. We will have food, fun, dancing, Big Band music and door prizes. Tickets are on sale now for \$4 each at Marian Manor, 5345 Marian Lane, Virginia Beach. No ticket sales at the door the day of the event. Purchase tickets by Wednesday, Feb. 26. Call 757-456-5018 for more information.

**Book Lovers Book Sale:** The Haiti Ministry at Our Lady of Nazareth Church, 2505 Electric Road, Roanoke, will sponsor a book sale to help support our Haitian twin, Ecole Normale, Saturday, March 7, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and after the 5:30 Mass and on Sunday, March 8, after all Masses. A "bag sale" will be held after 11:30 a.m. Mass until 2 p.m. Please note that the sale will be closed during Masses.

**Church of the Epiphany's Parish Lenten Retreat:** 11000 Smoketree Drive, Monday and Tuesday, March 9-10, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Topic: "When you seek me, you WILL find me!" Facilitated by Comboni Missionary Sister Dolores Smith. All are welcome! For more information about this free event, visit [www.epiphanychurch.org](http://www.epiphanychurch.org) or call 804-794-0222.

**"The Holy Crown of Thorns,"** a free presentation of a votive Mass (Low Latin Mass) with lecture to follow, Friday, Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m., St. Joseph Church, 151 W. Washington St., Petersburg. For more information contact [amdonlon@stjcpetersburg.com](mailto:amdonlon@stjcpetersburg.com).

**Benedictine Heritage Journey to Italy:** Pilgrimage to Italy, Oct. 15-25. Includes visits to the Benedictine sites at Nurcia, Subiaco and Montecassino; the Franciscan sites at Assisi; and the major religious and historic sites in Rome. Only \$4,799 from Dulles (IAD) and \$195 in tips. Under the spiritual direction of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia. To download a color brochure and registration form, visit [www.GoCatholicTravel.com/20080](http://www.GoCatholicTravel.com/20080). For more information, contact Rita Zimmermann at [rzimmermann.obl.sb@gmail.com](mailto:rzimmermann.obl.sb@gmail.com) or John Kowalski at [jk6872@gmail.com](mailto:jk6872@gmail.com).

**Star of the Sea's Pilgrimage to Ireland** Join Father Steve DeLeon on a pilgrimage to Ireland, May 11-19. This is not only a pilgrimage to the holy sites and places of Ireland, but a bit of an historical insight for the Richmond Diocese and Star of the Sea. In honor of our diocesan bicentennial, we will visit the seminary of our first bishop, Bishop Patrick Kelly. We will also visit the hometown of our first pastor, Father Phillip Brennan. Deadline to sign up is Wednesday, March 11. Please contact Grace Jones at [grace@staroftheseaparissh.com](mailto:grace@staroftheseaparissh.com) for more information.

## Game time



Ray Honeycutt, continuous improvement coordinator for the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools, watches Star of the Sea School second graders Emma Fender, Collier Womble and Maki Smigel play a game during a Catholic Schools Week activity on Tuesday, Jan. 28, in Virginia Beach. Eighth graders, including Will Escalera, right, ran the games for all of the students. (Photo/Jackie Ankley)



## Testimony of faith

MINDY PRATS

Ministerio Kerigma y Facilitadora de la Formación en la Fe del Adulto  
Parroquia de la Encarnación | Charlottesville

**M**y husband and I came from Cuba in 1976 to the United States. Coming from a communist country, we did not know about the changes that had been made during the Second Vatican Council, so we were surprised to receive a Bible as a gift from a priest. We also noticed that the structure of the Mass was different. The priest was facing us, the Mass was in Spanish, there were no bells during the Mass, and there was not a single image of a saint in the church.

The priest was very kind and informed us of the many changes the Church had gone through during that time. Then, he invited us to attend Bible study classes.

It took us a lot of work to be able start these classes. We didn't know which book was where or that there even were two testaments in the Bible. Then we took the initiative to really study the Bible as part of the calling we felt to deepen our faith.

After a while, we received, through the program of theological studies at Laurel University, a diploma on September 10, 2000. This was the moment we knew that our journey in instructing others in the faith was just beginning.

In 2005, we moved to Charlottesville, Virginia, and joined Kerigma through an invitation to a retreat they were having at Incarnation. This ecclesial movement served as a door for us, inspiring us to join different ministries, answering the call from God to provide faith formation to others.

I strongly believe that Bible study should be a priority for all Catholics. It is important that every parishioner constantly grow in the faith. In this way, we can be true disciples of Jesus.

Helping our brothers and sisters feel part of God's call given to those first 12 disciples is an unimaginable satisfaction, a joy that only God can give us.

The diocese has been a good resource for study, formation and practice. On June 3, 2015, we finished a 3-year course at Dayton University where 13 parishioners from various parishes graduated with certificates. This was all in part due to the different opportunities that we were provided through the sponsorship of the Office of Hispanic Ministry.

Let's put into practice the teachings of St. Paul in the II Letter to Timothy 3, 15-17 that says, *"...and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Let's put into practice the teachings of St. Paul in the II Letter to Timothy 3, 15-17 that says, *"...and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*



## Testimonio de fe

**M**i esposo y yo venimos de Cuba en 1976 a los Estados Unidos. Como veníamos de un país comunista, no sabíamos de los cambios que se habían hecho durante el Concilio Vaticano II, entonces un sacerdote nos dio la sorpresa y nos regaló una biblia. También, la estructura de la misa era diferente. El padre estaba de frente a la feligresía, la misa era en español, no había campanas en la misa, y no había ni una sola imagen de santo en la iglesia.

El padre fue muy amable y nos informó de los muchos cambios que había tenido la iglesia durante ese tiempo que estuvimos estancados en Cuba sin religión. Entonces, él nos invitó a asistir a los estudios bíblicos.

Nos costó mucho trabajo el poder ubicarnos en las clases que buscáramos un libro en la biblia. Ni siquiera sabíamos que había dos testamentos. Entonces tomamos la iniciativa de familiarizarnos con la biblia y decidimos profundizar más en nuestra fe.

Después de un tiempo, decidimos formarnos por medio de la Universidad de Laurel en estudios teológicos, recibiendo después de 5 años de instrucción, un diploma el 10 de septiembre del 2000. Esto nos ayudó mucho a empezar a formar a otras personas en la fe. Había muchos que conocían muy poco sobre nuestra fe católica y esto nos ayudó a seguir formándonos en la Palabra de Dios.

En el 2005, nos mudamos para Charlottesville, Virginia y nos integramos al ministerio Kerigma por medio de un retiro. Por medio de este movimiento, nos hemos incorporado a los diferentes ministerios en la parroquia de la Encarnación, con la intención de ayudar a formar a las personas en la fe.

Creo firmemente que los estudios bíblicos deben ser una prioridad para todos aquellos que somos católicos. Es importante que todo feligrés crezca en la fe de nuestro ser católico y nuestra Iglesia. Aparte de

comprenderla y adentrarnos mejor en ella para que podamos ser verdaderos discípulos de Jesús.

El ayudar a nuestros hermanos a sentirse parte del llamado que Dios les dio a aquellos primeros 12 discípulos una satisfacción inimaginable; un regocijo y ese gozo que solo Dios nos puede dar como verdadero discípulos Suyos.

La diócesis ha sido un buen recurso donde hemos podemos estudiar y capacitarnos con el fin de ayudar a los demás, además de ponerlo en práctica. El 3 de junio de 2015 tuvimos la suerte de poder terminar un curso de casi 3 años en Dayton University, auspiciado por la diócesis donde nos graduamos 13 feligreses de varias parroquias.

Por diferentes razones, sabemos que es difícil incorporarse a cursos de esta magnitud; pero tanto las parroquias como la diócesis, ellos nos ofrecen enseñanzas claves para todo aquel que se siente con deseos de servir a Dios y seguir sus pasos, ayudando a los demás a salir de la oscuridad hacia la luz.

Pongamos en práctica las enseñanzas de San Pablo en la II Carta a Timoteo 3, 15-17 que dice, *"... y que desde niño conoces las Sagradas Letras, que pueden darte la sabiduría que lleva a la salvación mediante la fe en Cristo Jesús. Toda Escritura es inspirada por Dios y útil para enseñar, para argüir, para corregir y para educar en la justicia; así el hombre de Dios se encuentra perfecto y preparado para toda obra buena."*

### CONFERENCIA FORMACIÓN DE LA FE DEL ADULTO

**SABADO**  
**14 de**  
**MARZO**  
**2020**

**9:00 AM**  
**3:30PM**

## EUCARISTIA y RECONCILIACION

*La Unidad íntima con Dios*

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# Catholic faith carried Kobe through tough times

CALABASAS, Calif. (CNS) — As the world mourned the loss of basketball great Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others killed in a tragic helicopter crash Jan. 26, many recalled how Bryant gave much credit to his Catholic faith for seeing him through the bad times and strengthening his marriage and family.

A shooting guard, Bryant was drafted into the NBA at age 17 and played his entire 20-season career with the Los Angeles Lakers. He entered the NBA directly from high school and won five NBA championships. He retired at the end of the 2015-2016 season.

News of Bryant's death quickly prompted tributes on social media. On Twitter, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles said "he was sad to hear the news" and offered prayers for him and his family.

In Rome for his region's "ad limina" visit with Pope Francis, Archbishop Gomez told Catholic News Service Jan. 27 that Bryant "was a very good Catholic, a faithful Catholic" and recalled meeting the famed basketball player on several occasions.

"I remember one time going to the Lakers' practice, and I had a good conversation with him," Archbishop Gomez told CNS. "We are praying for the eternal repose of his soul, his daughter who also died and for the family. It must be a very challenging time for his family. So, let's pray for him and pray for his family."

Born in Philadelphia Aug. 23, 1978, Bryant was raised a Catholic and as a youth lived for a while in Italy. He and his wife, Vanessa, married at St. Edward Catholic Church in Dana Point, California, and raised their children Catholic. Bryant is survived by his wife and three other daughters. Gianna, also known as "GiGi," was the couple's second oldest daughter.

One of the darkest periods in his personal life happened in 2003 — when he was accused of raping a young woman while he was staying at a mountain resort hotel in Colorado; he was in the



**Retired NBA legend Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna, 13, were among nine people killed Jan. 26, 2020, in a helicopter crash in Calabasas, Calif. The two Catholics are pictured during a game in Las Vegas July 27, 2019.** (CNS photo/Stephen R. Sylvania-USA TODAY Sports via Reuters)

state for knee surgery and was staying near Vail in Eagle, Colorado. He was arrested on a rape charge.

He denied he had raped her but admitted that the two had consensual sex. The charges were eventually dropped. In 2004, his accuser filed a civil suit against him and in 2005 Bryant settled with her out of court for an undisclosed sum.

His marriage almost ended over it. In a GQ interview in 2015, he said he relied on his Catholic faith to get him through — and talking to a priest was "the turning point."

"The one thing that really helped me during that process — I'm Catholic, I grew up Catholic, my kids are Catholic — was talking to a priest. It was actually kind of funny: He looks at me and says, 'Did you do it?' And I say, 'Of course not.' Then he asks, 'Do you have a good lawyer?' And I'm like, 'Uh, yeah, he's phenomenal.' So then he just said, 'Let it go. Move on. God's not going to give you anything you can't handle, and it's in his hands now. This is something you can't control. So let it go.' And that was the turning point."

Law enforcement officials identified the other passengers on the helicopter, who also

perished: the pilot, Ara Zobayan; John Altobelli, head baseball coach at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, his wife, Keri, and their daughter Alyssa; Christina Mauser, a basketball coach at Harbor Day School in Newport Beach, California, where Gianna Bryant attended school; Sarah Chester and her daughter Payton, who was of middle school age.

Among tributes to Bryant flooding the internet was a remembrance by Instagram user Cristina Ballesterio, who described seeing Bryant at a weekday Mass at Holy Family Cathedral in Orange, California.

She recalled looking up to see the basketball star sitting in her pew, but she managed to "stay focused on Jesus, not this insanely talented basketball player my whole family has looked up to and watched our whole lives."

"As we went up to Communion, he waited for me to go," she recalled, adding that he complimented her on having a "beautiful voice" in singing the Mass hymns.

"His most inspiring trait was his decision to turn to his faith in God and receive God's mercy and to be a better man after a regretful decision," Ballesterio wrote, referring to the GQ article. "I am heartbroken at the news of his death alongside his daughter Gianna. My prayers go out to his family, friends and loved ones."

She also noted all the good works Kobe and his wife have done through their foundation and several other charities they are involved in and to which they donated money.

Bishop Timothy E. Freyer, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Orange, wrote, "Kobe was an icon who inspired us through his words and actions to set our goals, work hard and achieve our dreams. He was a committed Catholic who loved his family and loved his faith. A longtime Orange County resident and parishioner in our diocese, Kobe would frequently attend Mass and sit in the back of the church so that his presence would not distract people from focusing on Christ's Presence."

## Author's Catholicism was integral part of her books

TORONTO (CNS) — Mary Higgins Clark, known as the "queen of suspense" to her millions of readers throughout the world, died of natural causes in Naples, Florida, Jan. 31. She was 92.

The author of more than 50 novels, the popular New York-born author is also remembered for her strong Catholic upbringing and the way she portrayed courageous Catholic heroines in the bulk of her fiction.

Higgins Clark's latest book, "Kiss the Girls and Make Them Die," was released by Simon & Schuster Nov. 5, 2019.

Higgins Clark was raised at St. Francis Xavier School and Parish in the Bronx, a borough of New York

City, and attended high school at Villa Maria Academy, where one-time principal Mother St. Margaret of the Angels encouraged her first efforts at storytelling.

Coinciding with the release of her latest book, "Kiss the Girls and Make Them Die," Catholic News Service profiled Higgins Clark last November as one of most widely read authors in its Catholic writer series. In that profile, Higgins Clark outlined her use of strong Catholic protagonists who persevere against danger and

intrigue to carry on in life's daily struggles.

She explained her rationale for character-building in her

November profile.

"As far as my use of Catholic protagonists and heroines, I attribute that to the best piece of advice I ever received as a young writer in a workshop. The professor said, 'Write what you know,'" Higgins Clark said at the time. "I'd grown up observing examples of Catholic women who were strong figures and persevered against difficult odds. It was natural to model my characters after the people I knew."

Prior to finding her niche as a suspense writer, Higgins Clark struggled to raise five children as a single parent in New York City. Widowed in her mid-30s, Higgins Clark wrote radio scripts and later found work as an airline flight attendant before striking success in 1975 with her first big-selling book, "Where Are the Children?" Buoyed by that success, Higgins Clark turned to full-time writing and enjoyed astonishing success.

Msgr. Frank Del Prete, pastor of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in

Saddle River, New Jersey, remembers Higgins Clark not only as a talented writer, but also as a lively, committed parishioner.

"Mary was a faith-filled, active parishioner at St. Gabriel's. When she came to Mass, she sat in the front row," he told CNS Feb. 1. "Mary's faith sustained her during the difficult moments of her life. In recent months, when her illness prevented her from coming to Mass, it really bothered her that she was not able to attend."

Father Del Prete, who was himself portrayed as "Father Fred" in the late author's "I've Got My Eyes on You," published in 2018, also described Higgins Clark as a great storyteller with a sophisticated sense of humor.

"I always enjoyed the way Mary was able to weave the local area and people in her books," Father Del Prete said. "Since her faith was so important to her, she wanted people to know this through her books. She was very proud to be a Catholic."



**Mary Higgins Clark, author of 40 suspense novels, four short story collections, two children's books, a historical novel and a memoir, is pictured in an undated photo.** (CNS photo/courtesy Mary Higgins Clark)