



The Catholic Virginian

Serving the People of the Diocese of Richmond for 90 years

Vol. 96, No. 11

www.catholicvirginian.org

March 22, 2021

Diocese opening St. Vincent de Paul Virtual Academy Will serve students in communities without a Catholic high school

JENNIFER NEVILLE

Special to The Catholic Virginian

Catholic education in the Diocese of Richmond will erase borders with a new virtual school that will provide secondary education to students in the diocese and beyond. It will be the first virtual Catholic high school in the state.

Although the Richmond Diocese encompasses 33,244 square miles, there are only eight brick-and-mortar Catholic schools which provide high-school education. The four diocesan Catholic schools are Roanoke Catholic School; Peninsula Catholic High School (PCHS), Newport News; Catholic High School, Virginia Beach; and Blessed Sacrament Huguenot School, Powhatan. Four private Catholic high schools are also located in the diocese: Walsingham Academy Upper School, Williamsburg, and St. Gertrude School, Benedictine College Preparatory and Cristo Rey Richmond High School, all in Richmond.

This fall, the diocese will roll out St. Vincent de Paul Virtual Academy (SVVA), which will educate students in grades eight through 12. Its primary focus is to

serve students within the diocese who don't live near a Catholic school, but students from elsewhere can also enroll, said Kelly Lazzara, superintendent of Richmond Diocese Catholic Schools.

SVVA is a diocesan effort that

PCHS will administer. It will provide an opportunity for at-home and in-person students to learn together in a live classroom with "passionate teachers and rigorous coursework," said Kelly Smith, PCHS Theology Department chair.

Students don't just sit and stare at a computer screen all day, said PCHS principal Janine Franklin. Using Zoom, special webcams and Chromebooks, at-home and in-person students participate together in class discussions, engage in activities, play educational games and collaborate with students in group and partner work.

Faith at the core

Like all Catholic schools, faith will be at the center of the virtual academy. Lazzara said Catholic education is "deeply rooted in the faith," and Smith said the school teaches "through the lens of Scripture." Heather Whitchurch, Social Studies Department chair, explained that teachers incorporate religious education across the curriculum. Virtual students attend live-streamed weekly Masses and annual retreats.

Besides living in outlying areas of the diocese, there are multiple reasons parents might choose virtual Catholic education for their children, according to Franklin and the PCHS website. For example, it can be a good fit for a student with a chronic illness,

See *Academy*, Page 3



The opening of St. Vincent de Paul Virtual Academy this coming fall and a permanent virtual learning option at Peninsula Catholic High School (PCHS) are making Catholic education more accessible. In both programs, online students will learn in a live classroom with in-person peers at PCHS. Above, PCHS sophomore Jaden Moore learns from her home. (Photo/Kimberly Moore)

Church could undergo transformation in post-COVID era

CHAZ MUTH

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The churchgoing experience may be different once the threat of COVID-19 is minimized, and Church experts are forecasting fewer Catholics overall in the pews.

Fewer people attending church will require a radical restructuring of parish life in many parts of the U.S. in the post-pandemic era, said Matthew F. Manion, faculty director of the Center for Church Management at Villanova University near Philadelphia.

"From what I'm seeing, the pandemic speeds along processes that were already happening," said Timothy P. O'Malley, a theology professor at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. "The crisis that we're going to experience in parishes is the rise of the nones (people who don't identify with any religious affiliation). There is a sense of sort of a lost generation."

The people who were going through the motions of attending church basically out of obligation — but not out of a real love for the religion — dropped off during lockdowns

when the churches were closed to Mass, and many of them didn't return once the churches reopened, O'Malley told Catholic News Service.

"I think the pandemic has clearly been an accelerant of changes and trends that were happening in the Church already," Manion said.

Difficult decisions ahead

By studying data from several dioceses and archdioceses throughout the U.S., the Center for Church Management had projected — before the onset of the pandemic — that Church attendance

See *Transformation*, Page 12

Inside This Edition

If fully informed,
vaccine can be
ethical choice
Page 6

God needs us
to be hopeful
disciples of Jesus
Page 10

Why Church
terms blessing of
gay unions 'illicit'
Page 11

The Catholic Virginian
7800 Carousell Lane
Richmond, VA 23294

Sacraments, Paschal Mystery are spiritual vaccine



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

Over this past year, there are several things about which the pandemic has made us aware — the most important of which were the preciousness of human life, the beauty and treasure of relationships and the imperative to live each day as though it were our last.

For many of us, the pandemic has been an extended Lent. It was as though that penitential season of 2020 never ended. The effects of COVID-19, as well as the violence in our cities and the incivility that permeated politics and culture, were painful, often rendering us uncertain and filled with doubt about the present and the future.

The pandemic made us aware in a vivid and challenging way of our human frailty and of the vulnerability we often experience in this life. This weakened, broken condition makes us susceptible to suffering.

We took the measures necessary to respond to the pandemic, e.g., wearing masks, social distancing, frequent hand washing, and we prayed for a vaccine that would stem the impact of COVID and put an end to the death toll.

If the pandemic was synonymous with the

experience of Lent, then the vaccine can be seen as analogous with our experience of the Paschal Mystery and Easter — the season of new life.

As human beings, we are born into a state of alienation from God. The root of this alienation is original sin — the original fracture that exists between humans and God because of the pride of our first parents. That is where the brokenness of the human condition began, and all that affects us when it comes to the suffering and death that resulted from it.

God does not want to keep us in that situation of isolation; he wants to free us from it. The foundation of his remedy for the brokenness of original sin is the Paschal Mystery. This remedy is our Lord God's embrace of humanity, taking on human flesh, the fullness of humanity, except for sin. He embraces suffering and death. By embracing suffering and death, he is obedient to the Father, atones for our sins and is victorious over them by making the passage through death into resurrected life.

How do we enter into and experience that new life? God provides for us with another part of his remedy. We don't have to endure the same scourging, agony, rejection, crucifixion and death that he did. Rather, he gives us the sacraments of initiation. Baptism, confirmation and Eucharist give us full and effective participation in the Paschal Mystery. In them we join with Christ in his death and resurrection. We die and rise to new life in those sac-

raments. They are God's remedy; they are our spiritual vaccine over sin and death.

That remedy, including frequent, devout reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist, allows us to build up our resistance to the effects of sin. Through the grace we receive in those sacraments, we are united with our Lord in overcoming sin and death.

We are also asked, in tangible and effective ways, to share in the Paschal Mystery by carrying our own crosses. Rather than a horrific crucifixion, it often takes the form in us of sacrifice, putting the needs of others ahead of ours, sharing our time, talent and goods with those who need them, being a compassionate listener for those who have no one to hear them.

Holy Week is our immersion in the Paschal Mystery. As we begin with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Passion Sunday, our whole Church reflects on the Passion. The Sacred Triduum is our passage with the Lord in his suffering, death and resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Our entire Church is invited and encouraged to receive the grace to conquer sin and death through reception of the sacraments. These are an integral part of God's remedy; they open us up to optimism, joy and a future that is not burdened by the effects of sin and death. Instead of being beaten by sin and death, we pass through them, are lifted from them and, with Christ, triumph over them!

Jesuits pledge \$100M to benefit descendants of enslaved people

CAROL ZIMMERMANN
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The Jesuit order is pledging to raise \$100 million for descendants of enslaved people once owned and sold by their order as a way to make reparations and also help the nation move toward racial healing.

The funds will be placed in a new partnership called Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation formed by the Jesuit order and the GU272 Descendants Association — named after the 272 enslaved men, women and children who were sold by the Jesuit owners of Georgetown University to plantation owners in Louisiana in 1838.

The New York Times first announced this foundation March 15. A news release about the partnership said it was the “first of its kind” between the descendants of enslaved persons and the descendants of their enslavers.

“Our shameful history of Jesuit slaveholding in the United States has been taken off the dusty shelf, and it can never be put back,” said Jesuit Father Tim Kesicki, president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

“Racism will endure in America if we continue to turn our heads away from the truth of the

past and how it affects us all today. The lasting effects of slavery call each of us to do the work of truth and reconciliation,” he added in a release announcing the new partnership.

The priest told The New York Times the Jesuits have already put \$15 million into a trust established to support the foundation, whose governing board will include representatives from other institutions with roots in slavery. He also said the order has hired a national fundraising firm to help raise the rest of the funds within the next three to five years.

Joe Stewart, acting president of the foundation, is a retired corporate executive and one of more than 1,000 descendants of Isaac Hawkins, an enslaved man sold by Georgetown University.

In the announcement of the new partnership, he said the group would “set an example and lead America through dismantling the remnants of slavery and mitigating the presence of racism.”

He also said it would “support the educational aspirations of descendants for future generations and play a prominent role in engaging, promoting and supporting programs and activities that highlight truth, accelerate racial healing and reconciliation, and advance racial justice and equality in America.”

Cherylyn Branche, president

of the GU272 Descendants Association, said that from its start, this group has worked on identifying and rebuilding ancestors' families impacted by slavery and to create investments to help them move forward, an effort the new partnership can continue for future generations.

In the past several years, Georgetown University and the Jesuit order which sponsors the school has been looking closely at what it can do to make reparations for the sale of enslaved people, which helped finance the school's operations.

In 2017, Georgetown and the Jesuits' Maryland Province apologized for their roles in the sale of enslaved individuals for the university's benefit at an event with over 100 descendants of the enslaved.

That same year, the university renamed a building as Isaac Hawkins Hall, named after the one of the enslaved people sold by the university. Another building, once named for Jesuit Father William McSherry, who helped with the 1838 sale, has been renamed Anne Marie Becraft Hall in honor of a free woman of color and pioneer educator who founded a school near the campus for Black girls in 1820.

In 2019, undergraduate students at the university voted

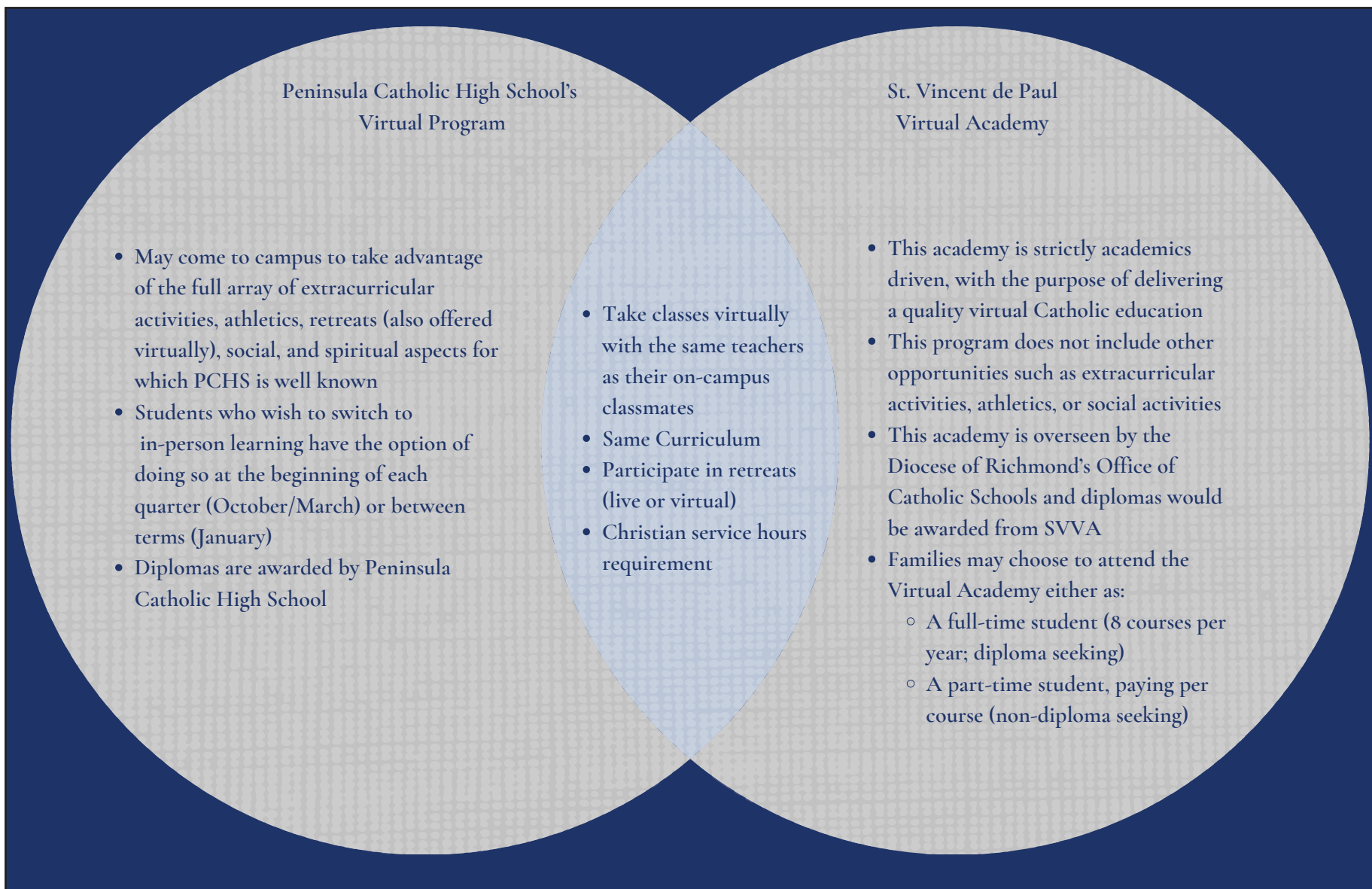
overwhelmingly to pay a new student fee that would be for paying reparations to the descendants of the enslaved who were sold by the school.

A few years before that, the university announced that descendants' families will receive the same admissions benefits as other members of the Georgetown community, including faculty, staff and alumni.

“We have honored a commitment that we made years ago in meeting the descendant community — that, as we proceed, we would find ways to proceed together, in collaboration and partnership,” John DeGioia, Georgetown's president, said in a March 16 letter to the Georgetown community.

“It is with hope and gratitude that we begin this next phase of our work in partnership with the descendant community and the Society of Jesus, as we continue to grapple with and respond to the enduring legacies of the enslavement of people of African descent,” he added.

The sale of the enslaved people by Jesuits at Georgetown brought in the equivalent of \$3.3 million today. At the time, Citizens Bank of New Orleans, later acquired by JPMorgan Chase, used some of the enslaved people as collateral.



This Venn diagram shows areas that will be unique to Peninsula Catholic High School and St. Vincent de Paul Virtual Academy and those they will share when the latter opens this fall. (Diagram courtesy of Peninsula Catholic High School)

Academy

Continued from Page 1

someone living with a person who is immunocompromised or an international student. It will also serve families that relocate out of the area for military or business transfers, as well as families with members located in two different households.

The ability to take just a few classes may attract homeschooling families, students who want to take a course not offered at their current school or pupils who need to catch up on lost credits due to transfer to stay on track with graduation. SVVA can provide continuity for families who relocate often or whose family members live in two different locations.

Successful model

This academic year, PCHS teachers have been instructing virtual and in-person students concurrently. Its success prompted the school in February to adopt a permanent virtual learning program as an educational option, Franklin said. Of the 271 students enrolled at the school, 67 have been learning online this school year.

The difference between the PCHS permanent virtual learning program and the virtual academy is that students in the PCHS program, whether part-time or full-time, live in the school's area and can take part in extracurricular activities and social events. Full-time online learners can also partici-

pate in athletics along with their in-person peers. SVVA is strictly academic and can draw students from anywhere. Full-time online and in-person students can earn a diploma in either venue.

When the virtual academy opens in the fall, PCHS teachers will continue to teach concurrently, but that could change in the future if virtual student enrollment increases enough to have separate classes. Regardless, both online and in-person students would continue receiving the same "high-quality college prep program," Franklin said. SVVA might add elementary and middle-school grades later.

"The interest will drive how the school evolves," Lazzara said.

COVID 'expedited the process'

To keep classes small, the maximum number of in-person students will be 18 to 20 per class next school year. The goal is to add five virtual learners for eighth grade and 15 per grade level for ninth through 12th grades.

Lazzara said the idea for a virtual school in the diocese has been under discussion for a while, and although it wasn't created as a reaction to COVID, the pandemic "expedited the process" because it illustrated teachers' ability to educate virtually.

Likewise, Mike Pilola, chair of PCHS English Department, said, "I think before COVID, fear would have held us back from working and learning from home, but the pandemic really forced us to rip that Band Aid off."

Nevertheless, learning virtually can be more challenging, and it teaches self-reliance, time management and the ability to focus, Smith said.

Because of its forward thinking, PCHS is poised to administer SVVA. Beginning in 2016, PCHS had digital learning days six times a year during which teachers taught students remotely as practice for inclement weather.

As a result, when schools transitioned from in-person learning to virtual due to COVID last spring, PCHS already had the technology, resources and infrastructure, and teachers and students were familiar with online learning, Franklin said.

She added that the transition last year went "smoothly" with much effort behind the scenes. Working together, teachers overcame technical glitches, learned online educational platforms and shared teaching strategies. Franklin said frequent professional development for teachers has been vital to the program's success and will continue over the summer.

Smith said last spring "was unsettling to have to move into a completely new environment not knowing how long we were going to be there," but teachers, "rallying together," have "risen to the challenge."

Students can apply to St. Vincent de Paul Virtual Academy through PCHS. Additional information can be found on the school website at peninsulacatholic.org.

Read additional Catholic news and information
daily at www.catholicvirginian.org.

In rescue plan, relief for many but not for the unborn

Bishops praise support for poor; decry taxpayer-funded abortions

JULIE ASHER
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law March 11 by President Joe Biden, will provide relief to Americans in need amid the pandemic, but it lacks “protections for the unborn,” the U.S. bishops said.

Their March 10 statement quickly followed U.S. House passage of the measure in a 220-211 vote. After the Senate passed its version of the bill March 6, it was sent back to the House where members reconciled its changes with the version they approved Feb. 27. It then went to Biden for his signature.

In a joint statement, Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the chairmen of six USCCB committees praised “positive provisions” that “will save people from extremely desperate situations and will likely save lives.”

But they called it “unconscionable” that Congress passed the bill “without critical protections needed to ensure that billions of taxpayer dollars are used for life-affirming health care and not for abortion.”

Unlike all of the previous pandemic relief bills, Hyde Amendment language was not included in

this measure. Hyde outlaws federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

“As the American Rescue Plan Act was being written, Catholic bishops reached out to every House and Senate office to express our support for providing additional relief to help poor and vulnerable people who are most at risk of harm from this pandemic, and our strong conviction that this relief should also protect the unborn and their right to life,” the bishops said.

“We are grateful this legislation addresses many positive provisions, including unemployment assistance, child and earned income tax credit enhancements, nutrition funding, vaccine distribution funding, health care funding, housing assistance, international assistance to regions stricken by COVID, conflict and hunger,” they said.

But “unlike previous COVID relief bills,” the bishops said, “sponsors of the American Rescue Plan Act refused to include the long-standing, bipartisan consensus policy to prohibit taxpayer dollars from funding abortions domestically and internationally.”

Hyde Amendment language “was needed because this bill includes many general references to

health care that, absent the express exclusion of abortion, have consistently been interpreted by federal courts not only to allow, but to compel, the provision of abortion without meaningful limit,” the bishops said.

“The many important, life-saving provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act have been undermined because it facilitates and funds the destruction of life, which is antithetical to its aim of protecting the most vulnerable Americans in a time of crisis,” they added.

In remarks after its passage, Biden said the American Rescue Plan Act “represents a historic, historic victory for the American people. I look forward to signing it later this week.”

“Everything in the American Rescue Plan addresses a real need — including investments to fund our entire vaccination effort. More vaccines, more vaccinators and more vaccination sites,” he said.

No Republican in the House or Senate voted for the bill. Two House Democrats joined their Republican counterparts to vote against it Feb. 27; in the final House vote, one Democrat rejected it.

The measure includes \$17 billion for vaccine-related activities and programs and \$110 billion for other efforts to contain the pandemic; \$130 billion for public schools; and \$143 billion to expand

child tax credit, child care tax credit and earned income tax credit mostly for one year.

Other provisions include \$45 billion to temporarily expand Affordable Care Act subsidies for two years and subsidize 2020 and 2021 coverage; \$25 billion for grants to restaurants and bars; \$7 billion to allow more loans under the Paycheck Protection Program; \$6 billion to increase nutrition assistance; and \$350 billion for states and localities.

The bill also provides for checks of \$1,400 to go to individuals who earn up to \$75,000 a year and heads of households earning \$112,500; married couples earning \$150,000 will get \$2,800. Eligible dependents, including adult dependents, also would each get \$1,400.

It expressly provides \$50 million for family planning, but as the bishops noted in their statement, and other national pro-life leaders have said, funding allocated in other provisions can be used for abortion.

It directs billions to state and local governments, \$219 billion and \$130 billion, respectively, “to mitigate the fiscal effects stemming from” COVID-19.

Follow Asher on Twitter: @jlasher

Assisted Living, Nursing Care, Memory Care, and Rehabilitation in Richmond

Choose Hope

YOUR FAMILY'S
FIRST CHOICE FOR
REHABILITATION

If you need help recovering from a medical event such as a stroke or heart attack, or from a joint replacement or other pre-planned surgery, **Hope is here.**

Why select Genesis Rehab Services at Our Lady of Hope?

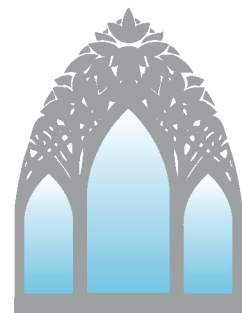
- Individualized care plans developed by a team with 70+ years of combined experience
- Skilled interventions and wellness programs to help you reach your goals for rehabilitation success
- Clinicians who can extend your rehab after discharge or at-home plans leading up to surgery to maximize results
- Private rooms with all the comforts of home



Cardiopulmonary,
physical, occupational
and speech therapies
available.



Our Lady of Hope is sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. We are open to people of all faiths.



Our Lady of Hope
HEALTH CENTER

HOPE IS WHERE THE *Heart* IS

804-360-1960 • ourladyofhope.com
13700 N. Gayton Road • Richmond, VA



Call Jenna Swann at 804-360-1960 to learn more about senior living care at Our Lady of Hope. We value your time and trust, and pride ourselves on providing prompt responses and quality care.



Coordinated Services Management, Inc.
Professional Management of Retirement Communities since 1981



Pope: 'Terrorism doesn't have the last word'

In historic trip to Iraq, 'pilgrim of peace' asks forgiveness, preaches faith

CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis summarized his "pilgrimage of faith and penitence" to Iraq in a prayer:

"If God is the God of life — for so he is — then it is wrong for us to kill our brothers and sisters in his name.

"If God is the God of peace — for so he is — then it is wrong for us to wage war in his name.

"If God is the God of love — for so he is — then it is wrong for us to hate our brothers and sisters."

Pope Francis' visit began March 5 in Baghdad, where he met with government officials in the opulent presidential palace, once home to Saddam Hussein and then the headquarters of the U.S.-led coalition forces that invaded the country in 2003.

With the dictates of protocol handled in less than three hours, the pope moved to the heart of his pilgrimage: visiting places of faith and suffering, bowing in tribute to the innocents who died and embracing survivors.

He put the blame for the death and destruction squarely on the sinful human inclination to define some people as "us" and others as "them."

'I come as a penitent'

That inclination, which all believers must resist, explains why he told government officials and civic leaders March 5, "I come as a penitent, asking forgiveness of heaven and my brothers and sisters for so much destruction and cruelty. I come as a pilgrim of peace in the name of Christ, the prince of peace."

During the trip, Pope Francis did not mention the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the toppling of the government. And, while he spoke of "terrorism" and war in reference to the 2014-2017 destruction wrought by Islamic State militants, he did not name the group until he was on the plane returning to Rome.

Even then, his point was not to condemn IS, but to honor the Christians, Yazidis and Muslims who resisted their efforts to set up a twisted, narrow vision of an Islamic caliphate.

"The life of Christians in Iraq is a difficult life, but not just the life of Christians. I just talked about the Yazidis and other religions that did not submit to the power of Daesh," he told reporters, using the militants' Arabic-language acronym.

The resistance, he said, "gave them a very great strength."

Constant refrain: restoring respect

The strength to move forward, to rebuild and to restore relationships of kinship and respect across religious and ethnic boundaries was a constant refrain during Pope Francis' trip.

The refrain was loudest amid ruins.

With representatives of Muslim, Christian, Yazidi, Mandaean and other religious communities, Pope Francis made a pilgrimage March 6 to Ur, an archaeological dig on a dusty desert plain about 10 miles from modern-day Nasiriyah.

There, at the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham, the first person to believe in the one God and father of all, the pope called all



Pope Francis meets Abdullah Kurdi, the father of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, whose body washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, at the conclusion of the Mass at the stadium in Irbil, Iraq, March 7, 2021. Kurdi lost his wife, Aylan, and another son in a shipwreck as the Syrian family was trying to reach Europe. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

believers to demonstrate their faith by treating one another as the brothers and sisters they are.

"From this place, where faith was born, from the land of our father Abraham, let us affirm that God is merciful and that the greatest blasphemy is to profane his name by hating our brothers and sisters," the pope said.

"Hostility, extremism and violence are not born of a religious heart: They are betrayals of religion," he insisted.

'No enemies'

The journey of peace, he said, begins with "the decision not to have enemies."

Standing in Mosul March 7 amid the ruins of four churches that Islamic State fighters had turned to a massive pile of rubble, Pope Francis did not name an enemy but pointed to the "tragic consequences of war and hostility."

With Islamic State gone and work underway to restore Mosul's damaged churches and mosques, Pope Francis proclaimed that today "we reaffirm our conviction that fraternity is more durable than fratricide, that hope is more powerful than hatred, that peace more powerful than war."

"This conviction speaks with greater eloquence than the passing voices of hatred and violence," he said, "and it can never be silenced by the blood spilled by those who pervert the name of God to pursue paths of destruction."

Returning to Rome, he told reporters he had seen photos of the site beforehand but was not prepared for the reality of being there.

"I stopped in front of the destroyed church and I just didn't have any words. It is something you cannot believe, you can't believe it," he said. "It is just unbelievable our human cruelty."

'Martyrs must inspire us'

The first evening of the trip, the pope had met the Iraqi bishops and representatives of

the country's priests and religious in the restored Syriac Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Deliverance, sometimes referred to as Our Lady of Salvation.

It is a church, he said, "hallowed by the blood of our brothers and sisters" murdered in a terrorist attack that shook the world. Forty-eight members of the church, including two priests and a 3-year-old child, died Oct. 31, 2010, when militants belonging to a group linked to al-Qaida interrupted a service, detonating explosives and shooting people.

The memory of Iraq's Christian martyrs, he said, must "inspire us to renew our own trust in the power of the cross and its saving message of forgiveness, reconciliation and rebirth."

"Christians are called to bear witness to the love of Christ in every time and place," the pope told the Catholic leaders. "This is the Gospel that must be proclaimed and embodied in this beloved country as well."

'Restore bonds of community'

Bells pealed in Qaraqosh March 7 to welcome the pope to another Syriac Catholic parish, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, desecrated during its use as a base by Islamic State fighters, who turned the courtyard into a shooting range.

While much of the town still needs to be rebuilt, Pope Francis said the presence of the jubilant crowds inside and outside the church "shows that terrorism and death never have the last word."

"The last word belongs to God and to his son, the conqueror of sin and death," the pope said. "Even amid the ravages of terrorism and war, we can see, with the eyes of faith, the triumph of life over death."

With Muslim and Yazidi guests joining Catholics in the church, Pope Francis told the people that "this is the time to restore not just buildings but also the bonds of community that unite communities and families, the young and the old together."

If one is fully informed, vaccine can be ethical choice

GUEST COMMENTARY DR. JOHN W. SEEDS, MD

I read with interest the guest commentary titled "Pope is right; vaccination is 'ethical choice'" (Catholic Virginian, Feb. 22), but I found no discussion of "ethics."

Medical ethics (Health Care Anal, 2017 September; 25(3):275-289) includes the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice, and should guide the informed consent prior to any medical intervention.

Autonomy is an individual's full control (consent) over their person and requires complete and accurate information about the intervention.

Beneficence is a discussion of the potential benefits from the intervention, the credibility of the information, and the potential consequences of non-intervention.

Non-maleficence is an accurate discussion of the potential complications that might be associated with the intervention, and justice requires that the in-

formation and the intervention be equally available regardless of ethnic or economic distinctions. Informed consent prior to medical interventions is required by most state legal codes.

Ethical informed consent that respects autonomy cannot be obtained from uninformed, misinformed or coerced patients. Approval by the FDA of a drug or device is typically an important basis for ethical consent.

The currently available COVID vaccines have not been granted full approval by the FDA but instead were granted approval for emergency utilization. Studies of long-term safety have not been completed.

Data, including lethal and non-lethal short- and long-term complications of these vaccines, are now being collected, making this emergency utilization investigational (experimental).

The expected benefit (beneficence) of vaccines is assumed to be the prevention of a serious illness. In the case of COVID, however, the initial statistical models predicting millions of deaths in the U.S. have been withdrawn as invalid.

Currently reported COVID overall mortality appears comparable to seasonal flu, and for those under 20 years of age, it is not zero but very low. The elderly and those with co-morbidities (diabetes, hypertension, obesity, immune compromise) have a higher risk that might impact their decision.

Moreover, no reliable information is yet available for the actual prevention of disease in vaccinated patients later exposed to the virus, and the duration of protection from the m-RNA vaccines is unknown.

Potential complications (maleficence) of vaccination include short- and long-term side effects, local at the injection site and systemic. These may include allergic reactions or the potential for hyper immune response following the exposure to the native virus after vaccination. The exact risks among large populations are unknown.

Deaths and miscarriages have been reported following vaccination, but it is difficult to ascribe causation with incomplete data. Anaphylactic reactions (severe systemic allergic

reactions) are a known risk of all vaccinations. The use in pregnancy before full assessment of risks is a concern.

The use of aborted fetal cell lines in the development, testing or production of all three available vaccines is a moral concern for many (USCCB, March 2, 2021) and should also be included in informed consent.

Justice requires the availability of the vaccines and complete information equally to all eligible recipients regardless of economic or ethnic distinctions.

The use of the currently available COVID vaccines can be an ethical choice if fully informed consent, as described, is provided prior to the injection. However, ethical choices may not necessarily always be wise or moral choices.

Dr. Seeds is emeritus professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Maternal and Fetal Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, and a member of St. Benedict Parish, Richmond.

Girls, boys should have own space, opportunities

I want to commend the young women's hard work and passion for their Eagle Scout projects (Catholic Virginian, March 8). While I am now grown, as a young girl I loved hiking, archery, shooting, camping and boating. I know the challenge of finding female compatriots in these activities.

However, I am concerned that since the Church seems to be the last bastion of authentic masculinity and femininity, we should not so quickly cheer the integration of women into a traditionally male group. Men are leaving the Church in droves, in part due to over feminization and infiltration by women into men's groups and roles.

This is not to say that women shouldn't be in Scouting or serving in any number of honorable pursuits that men and boys do, but it's important that we preserve those spaces for boys and for girls without outside pressure to incorporate. In a society where masculinity is a bad word, it is not appropriate that a paper representing the diocese is cheering for yet

another female co-opting of a special space set aside for boys.

Girls can and ought to do these things too, but why do girls have to join a boys' group to get the same recognition and publicity? Shouldn't we create, as some have, Catholic groups for young women that afford these opportunities and highlight them?

Girls should be able to have their own space and opportunities, but so also should boys. We are, after all, the different but beautiful creations that God has made, equal in the sight of our Lord, but different for a purpose in his divine plan.

— Maria MacBain
Roanoke

Concerned about Catholic politicians causing scandal

I read the article about 'weaponization of Eucharist' (Catholic Virginian, Feb. 8), and do not understand why the leader of our country, who calls himself a "good Catholic," is allowed to provide scandal for our Church.

The catechism teaches us that life begins at conception and ends at natural death. Yet there are

lawmakers — and now our president — who claim to follow the teaching of the Church but do not agree with this statement.

Why are they allowed to continue to spread scandal and receive our Lord in the Eucharist while not supporting basic Catholic teaching?

— Diane Butler
Waynesboro

President has to see abortion as murder

President Joe Biden has repeatedly affirmed that he agrees with Church teaching that human life begins at conception. Logically, therefore, he cannot hold abortion to be anything other than murder, the deliberate destruction of innocent human life.

Given that there have been more than 62.5 million unborn babies murdered in the U.S. in the last 50 years, and over 1.5 billion worldwide in the last 40, Biden cannot see it as anything other than mass murder.

Far from opposing what he believes to be murder, on such a scale as to dwarf every genocide in history, Biden seeks to

expand it — by legalization through all nine months and by actively funding it, domestically and internationally.

If you support him, do you support anyone else who has promoted and expanded mass murder on the basis of their aid

to poor and marginalized people? Exactly how great an evil must a candidate materially support to convince you to vote against them, with a third-party protest vote if necessary?

— Amanda Olmsted
Hampton

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.

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

Publisher: Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout

Editor: Brian T. Olszewski (804) 622-5225 bolszewski@catholicvirginian.org

Creative Director: Stephen Previtera (804) 622-5229 sprevitera@catholicvirginian.org

Circulation: Ashly Krebs (804) 622-5226 akrebs@catholicvirginian.org

Eastern Correspondents: Wendy Klesch and Jennifer Neville

Western Correspondents: Karen Adams and Joseph Staniunas

Central Correspondents: Kristen L. Byrd and Rose Morrisette

Postmaster: Send address change to The Catholic Virginian, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA 23294. The Catholic Virginian ISSN 0008-8404 — Published every other week on Monday by The Catholic Virginian Press, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA. Periodical postage paid at Richmond, VA and at additional mailing office. Sixty cents per copy, \$15 per year.

How will the Church welcome people back?

GUEST COMMENTARY

GREG ERLANDSON
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

What if you were a Catholic who had not seen a priest in 60 years? What if you had not seen a priest in one year?

Jesuit Father Anthony Corcoran was visiting an old folks' home in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan when he met a man who had waited six decades to see a priest.

"Priest! I'm Polish," the old man yelled excitedly when he saw Father Corcoran.

For those six decades, he had no contact with the Church. He had prayed the rosary on his fingers. Now, he was begging for the sacraments.

A lot of us may not have seen a priest or attended Mass in person in almost a year. What will our level of excitement be when we have the opportunity to return? Will we return?

As our country considers what a post-pandemic society will look like, many priests and bishops are

worried that their people might not all come back.

In a recent survey of a sampling of bishops, Francis X. Maier found that they predicted a 25% to 40% "permanent falloff in Mass attendance and parish engagement" after the pandemic recedes. If true, over time, this will mean less lay involvement, fewer marriages and baptisms, declining school enrollment and, of course, a decline in revenues supporting Church ministries.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported recently that all sorts of sacramental and religious education efforts in Catholic parishes were very impacted by the pandemic, ranging from baptisms to funerals to Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Many parishes livestreamed Masses during the pandemic closures. It was a blessing then, but it may have a downside now.

One priest told me that if people have grown used to sitting in their bathrobes and drinking coffee while watching Mass livestreamed, they might ask, "Why go

back?" If the homilies are better on TV and the timing is flexible, it could be easy to justify.

Worse still, in the privacy of one's home, it might be easy to skip one week, and then two, and then more.

But all should not be doom and gloom. The Church has had two opportunities to break the mold with this pandemic.

The first was the opportunity to respond creatively to the shutdown itself. Drive-by confessions, parking lot Masses, outreach to families in need, the quick reopening of schools — all are examples of parishes responding to challenging situations.

The anecdotes suggest such efforts varied from parish to parish, but I'm willing to bet that the parishes that made an effort to respond creatively will be rewarded by a better than average return of parishioners.

The second opportunity is coming. We have all been starved for community and fellowship in this lost pandemic year. Our Catholic parishes can

now respond to this hunger, but only if they make an effort.

The moment is arriving when parish and diocesan staff must use all the tools available to them to create a welcoming community, giving people a reason to come back as soon as they feel safe to do so.

It is also likely that people will want to retain parts of the pandemic lockdown that appealed to them: more time with family, more quiet and prayer time.

The Church can speak to that need, too. From the pulpit and in its media, at the door of the Church and in encounters with parish ministries, the Church has a rare moment for a reset.

We need to embrace a new normal, one in which parishes don't just talk about community but live it.

Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.

'Take abortion issue head on'

Re "Bishop's group completes work on Biden, "eucharistic coherence," (Catholic Virginian, March 8): Some time ago, it was "weaponization of the Eucharist" and now the Catholic hierarchy in this country addresses "eucharistic coherence."

I read the article twice and discussed it with my wife, and I still have questions. Why do we come up with some gibberish that doesn't advance the issue — changing President Biden's abortion position? Why can't we just take the abortion issue head on?

I ask myself one simple question: "What would Jesus do?" He would take the issue head on with a parable that makes sense.

More than half a million people in this country have died due to COVID-19 during the past year — that's making headlines across the country. However, compare that with more than twice that number who are aborted every year since Roe v. Wade in 1973. That tragic and sad news doesn't even make headlines.

In my prayers, I foresee a situation in 2023 when pro-lifers have control of

the U.S. House and Senate, and President Joe Biden has an epiphany and becomes pro-life.

— Ted Cors
Williamsburg

Sanctity of human life most important issue

Re: "Supporting the president" (Catholic Virginian, March 8): It is quite shocking to read in a Catholic newspaper a letter to the editor that says saving the planet is more important than the right to life.

The letter writer even makes the outrageous claim that Catholics who aggressively promote abortion, like Joe Biden, are compassionate people worthy of our vote. I disagree.

The sanctity of human life is, in fact, the most important issue of all, because without the God-given, inviolable right to life, all other rights collapse. Even Hitler did good things for Germany while committing unspeakable atrocities against the Jews whose right to life he abolished.

It is just as grotesque to say, "We defend your 'right' to tear your unborn baby apart limb from limb, but don't you dare chop down that tree." There is nothing compassionate about

poisoning, scalding and dismembering a baby.

How we treat the most vulnerable members of society is the true measure of our compassion. To suggest that the finite, material universe should be held in higher esteem than a human being endowed with an immortal soul, made to the image and likeness of God, whose only begotten Son shed every drop of his precious blood for love of us, is quite simply obscene and not Catholic at all.

— Scila Hudson
Virginia Beach

Let God be the judge

It seems so sad that we are so willing to judge one another and so argumentative about the separation of Church and state.

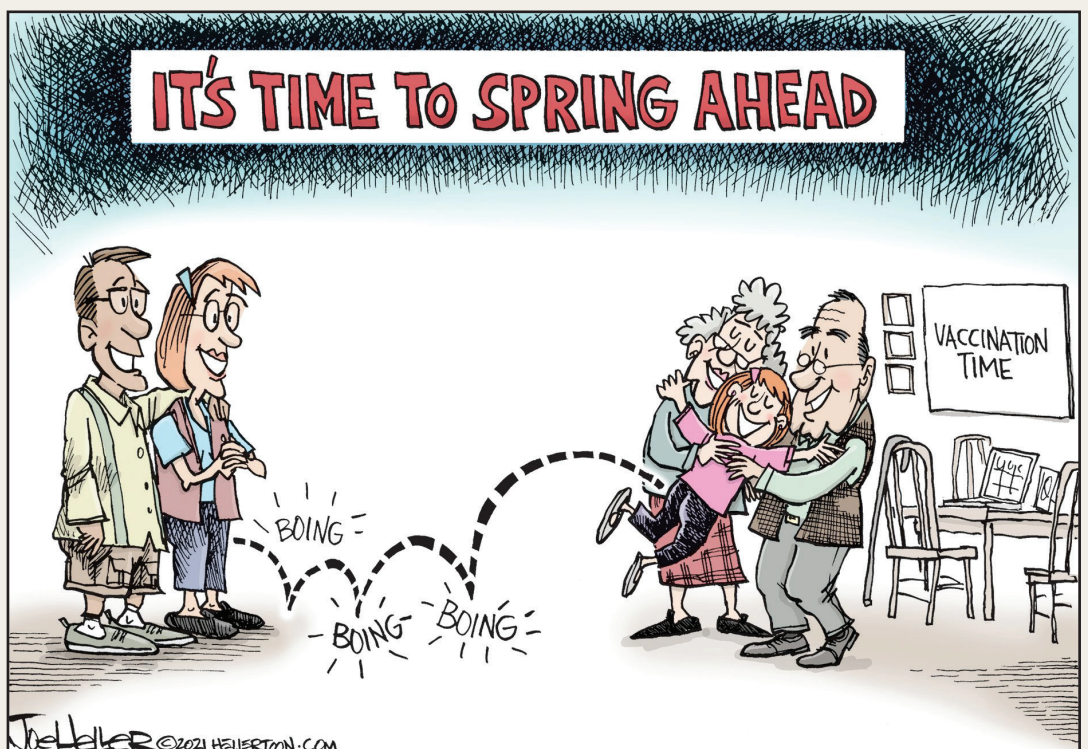
Of course, abortion is wrong. We are called to witness to our faith and so we should, but can't we trust our bishops and our pope a little more? And be less furious with each other? And bring our focus to bear on mercy as well as justice?

Are we feeding the

children who are here? Are we ensuring that they have shelter? Are we doing all this not as governmental policy (only), but for those who are living with and around each of us?

We are the Church and are in communion with each other. Let God, the reader of hearts, be the judge.

— Minerva San Juan
Blacksburg



Do not postpone vaccine until you have a choice



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Q. I have read that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has a connection with aborted fetuses. Now that this vaccine has been approved for use, does one have a moral obligation to request one of the other vaccines? Or is it morally acceptable to take whatever is available at a particular site? (Middletown, New Jersey)

A. In December 2020 — two months prior to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine — the Vatican's doctrinal congregation said that, when alternative vaccines are not available, it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines developed or tested using cell lines originating from aborted fetuses.

The Vatican went on to explain that the “moral duty to avoid such passive material cooperation is not obligatory if there is a grave danger, such as the otherwise uncontrollable spread of a serious pathological agent.”

In a March 4 video, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine, said that the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine “can be

used in good conscience.”

He also made a March 2 statement in conjunction with Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, that if a choice of vaccines is available, “the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen.”

If you have a choice, you should opt for the Moderna or the Pfizer vaccine; but if the only one available to you is Johnson & Johnson, you may take that, and there's no need to postpone vaccination until you have a choice.

Q. My husband likes playing PlayStation video games. One of the games, called Summoner, is a role-playing game where you summon the devil. It is violent and uses spells, hex, magic and other occult practices.

He had been playing for hours every day, but I insisted that he not play this game. (The Bible says to stay away from anything that deals with the occult.) He becomes more distant, angry and addicted when playing, and I want these games out of my house.

He threw a chair across the room once when I tried to talk to him about the dangers of engaging in this kind of game. He has now stopped playing for a while, but he has not removed the games from our home. I am afraid that when he retires soon, he may return to these games. Do

you have any advice? (New Hampshire)

A. Study of the link between violence and video games began in earnest with Columbine. In the spring of 1999, two heavily armed adolescent boys walked into Columbine High School in Colorado and shot to death 12 of their schoolmates and a teacher, before killing themselves.

When authorities investigated, they discovered that the two boys had spent thousands of hours playing a “first-person shooter” video game. The following year, a Chicago-area pediatrician named Michael Rich testified before the Chicago City Council and said that “more than 3,500 research studies have examined the association between media violence and violent behavior; all but 18 have shown that the more violence you see, the more likely you are to be violent.”

Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for World Communications Day in 2007, said that “any trend to produce programs and products — including animated films and video games — which in the name of entertainment exalt violence and portray antisocial behavior or the trivialization of human sexuality is a perversion, all the more repulsive when these programs are directed at children and adolescents.”

So I agree with your concern over your husband's fascination with violent video games; whether it actually produces violent behavior or not, it

baffles me that any Christian could find entertainment in the suffering or death of others — whether real or simulated. (Throwing a chair is certainly not homicide, but it bothers me that your husband did that!)

Is there any way you might persuade him to go with you to speak to a counselor about your concern? If not that, at least show him this column!

Q. I've been having conflicting ideas about cremation. My husband wants to be cremated; at first, I was all for it, but now I'm having a difficult time with that decision. I know in the Apostles' Creed it says, “the resurrection of the body,” and I also know that the Church prefers burial of the body, even though it does allow cremation followed by immediate burial of the ashes. Can you help me with these two options? (Wichita, Kansas)

A. For many centuries, the Catholic Church did not allow cremation. Historically, cremation was linked to the burial practices of pagans, whose religious beliefs did not include the expectation of eventual resurrection and viewed death as the definitive obliteration of the human person. It was only in 1963 that the Church began to allow cremation as it became more commonplace for both economic and sanitary reasons.

As you indicate, though, Cath-

See Father Doyle, Page 14

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



Mental Health Counseling

Telehealth and In-Person Available

Adult and Children • Marriage and Family • Depression Screenings • 24-Hour Emergency On Call Coverage

C.

757-467-7707



Only when we believe are we able to see



IN LIGHT OF FAITH

BARBARA HUGHES

When it comes to matters of faith, the saying, “seeing is believing” has it backward. It’s only when we believe that we are able to see. It explains why it’s difficult to convince non-believers that God is real and that proof of his love is everywhere.

When it comes to God, first we believe and then we see. To do otherwise is to remain blind and wounded creatures of our own making.

In “Therese of Lisieux: Nietzsche Is My Brother: A Play,” written by Carmelite Sister Bridget Edman, an imaginary dialogue takes place between St. Therese of Lisieux and the philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche who infamously proclaimed: “God is dead.”

The saint is portrayed after her death, when upon hearing of his lack of faith, she appears to him and invites the professed atheist to come and pick roses with her — roses that have no thorns.

In response to her invitation Nietzsche replies, “I will only pick roses with thorns.”

Puzzled by his answer and apparent refusal of her offer, Therese asks, “Why do you want to hurt yourself?”

Sadly, this is the irony of souls who long for happiness and wholeness, yet in rejecting God, they hurt only themselves. Further into the dialogue, Therese tells Nietzsche that she loves him, but he refuses to believe her. The saint looks at him and calls him poor, which riles him more

because he needs to be seen as strong.

Yet, it’s Therese with her childlike simplicity who reflects serenity and gentle strength. This is the great paradox of love that is transformed in God.

In some way, we are all a bit like Nietzsche in that we find it so very difficult to believe that God could love us. When we parade our sins before God as if they will keep him from loving us, our lack of faith in his divine mercy denies a simple truth which is that God loves us not because of who we are, but because of who God is.

No liturgical season depicts God’s love for humanity more than the drama that portrays the Paschal Mystery. As the curtain comes down on the scene of Jesus in the Lenten desert, we do well to pause before it rises for the next act to begin.

During the intermission, we might ask: “Do I believe that when Jesus took bread and wine, blessed it and shared it with his disciples, it became his Body and his Blood in anticipation of the sacrifice on Calvary?”

Do I believe that as the most perfect high priest, Jesus, who spent his life seeking the glory of the Father, would consummate his love on the marriage bed of the cross?

And can I trust that Jesus, knowing his hour had come, surrendered to death in order to glorify his Father?

Glory is a biblical word associated with the majesty and power of God. So, when the curtain is raised and the Passion begins, do I believe that the glory of God was made manifest when Jesus entered his agony in the garden?

When the second act begins, am I able to watch the Christ crowned with thorns and still see the honor and glory of God shine forth?

From Jesus’ arrest to his being lifted high on

the cross, the sacred drama reveals a king like no other. As the curtain falls, the lifeless body is placed in a tomb and the tomb sealed on a night like no other.

And so, we wait in darkness, keeping vigil during the midnight hour because Love became man and died for us. The stony sepulcher becomes a fortress daring us to believe as night cast a shadow on a borrowed grave that sheltered the corpse of God.

Sentinels stand guard with swords raised lest the sleeping God awake and punish their executioners. But no, this is not the way of God.

This is the paradox of divine love — the fullness of love which humans can ponder but never fully accept unless they believe. Faith reassures them that this is not the end. No tomb can conceal the glory of God.

When the veil is lifted and the final act begins, the glory of God shines, blinding all who insist that seeing is believing. The Savior’s wounds, now radiant, have rent the veil of unbelief, dispelling the night of darkness.

The risen Lord invites non-believers to touch the wounds in Jesus’ hands and place their hand into the side from which living water and saving blood poured forth.

As the curtain descends on the final act, like the first disciples, our mission to spread the Good News begins anew, because Jesus, the Eternal Now, has risen from the dead. We know this as surely as if we were present at the graveside on that first Easter Sunday.

All who believe understand that believing is seeing!

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

How the mystery of redemption unfolded



BELIEVE AS YOU PRAY

MELANIE CODDINGTON

The official title of this liturgy, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, points to the two Gospel readings that we hear on this opening day of Holy Week. We might easily dismiss the first, proclaimed between the blessing of palms and the procession, as lighter fare, but it sets the stage for the Scriptures that follow.

According to St. Mark’s account, Jesus dispatches two disciples with precise instructions to find and fetch the colt that will bear him into the city. He even tells them

what to say if anyone objects: “The Master has need of it and will send it back here at once.” To their wonderment, these words suffice, and their errand succeeds.

We might wonder along with them. How does Jesus make all this happen? Is it power or planning or both? The scene takes place near Bethany, and John’s Gospel tells us that Jesus has good friends there.

We can imagine Martha arranging things at his bidding or sending Lazarus to do so. All that said, the colt in question has never been ridden. What motivates Jesus to risk a rodeo?

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Mk 11:1-10;

Is 50:4-7;

Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24;

Phil 2:6-11;

Mk 14:1–15:47

Looking deeper, we see that this scene has roots in the Old Testament. Jesus acts intentionally to evoke the Messianic expectation spelled out in Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.”

Bringing this prophetic image to life, Jesus enters Jerusalem humbly, gently and peacefully, on an untried animal, and declares himself to be THIS sort of Messiah.

Similarly, humility reigns in Isaiah’s portrait of the suffering servant, an ideal Israelite, obedient to divine instruction and utterly dependent upon God for help and deliverance. This one endures pain and humiliation without resistance, demonstrating inner strength and courage both

admirable and honorable.

Despite the signs of public shame (beating, beard plucking, buffets, spitting), disgrace does not stick to the one who relies wholly on the Lord. Both gifted and compelled to “speak to the weary a word that will rouse them,” this one remains faithful to his mission, regardless of mounting persecution.

Jesus embodies this servant of the Lord, undergoing not only physical suffering, but also the rejection, betrayal and abandonment that lead up to it.

Psalm 22 develops the scene sketched by

Isaiah, citing an array of abuse. Verbal taunts, physical injuries and the seizure of personal belongings all figure into the hardship suffered. Yet in committing his dire circumstances to God’s care, the psalmist finds strength to express the praise he vows to give.

Mark’s readers need only hear the opening verse of Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” from the lips of Jesus as he hangs on the cross to bring the whole arc of the psalm to mind.

In St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we find another portrait of humility. In saying that Jesus “did not regard equality with God something to be grasped,” Paul contrasts Jesus with Adam (and Eve) who surely “grasped” the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in a vain effort to gain equality with God.

In his fully human life and death, Jesus’ surrender to God in trust and obedience to the Father’s will form a potent corrective on the original failure of humanity.

This drama takes place most profoundly in the Garden of Gethsemane. “Troubled and distressed,” with his soul “sorrowful even to death,” Jesus pours out his heart to the Father, asking for a reprieve from the bitter cup to come. Yet he ends his plea with humble surrender — “not what I will but what you will.”

In this garden, the tragedy of Eden turns around, making way for the mystery of redemption to unfold in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Melanie holds a master’s in pastoral studies from Loyola University, New Orleans.

God needs us to be hopeful disciples of Jesus

FATHER JOHN BAAB

Special to The Catholic Virginian

I've backpacked across Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Truly, I love adventures of all kinds. Maybe this is why I imagined priesthood as one great adventure. And it is — though not as I expected. This adventure with Jesus is even more hopeful.

On Saturday, June 2, 2018, I arrived early in the morning at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. I wanted to walk around my hometown. Richmond's streets had always cleared my mind.

I strolled around the Fan for an hour and made my way back to the bishop's residence in peace. The excitement was thick in the air, and the smiles were childlike on the faces of James O'Reilly, Nick Redmond and me as we vested for our priestly ordination. But something was awaiting that none of us expected.

Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo once said that priests today are like men running into a burning building. It's a good, prophetic metaphor, but as prophecy goes sometimes, it became literally true as well. The three of us entered the cathedral to find standing-room only and the air-condi-

tioner on the fritz.

Sweat beaded down under my vestments for two and a half hours. An omen perhaps? I don't know, but an unforeseen adventure had begun — one with darkness and yet overflowing with light.

The shadows came first. A dear friend of mine left the priesthood a month later. Since then, probably a dozen priests I know have left or been dismissed. Many are friends. There were also the "reports" — Pennsylvania, McCarrick, Virginia and many more. The first year of priesthood was lonely, too. In Virginia Beach, my nearest friend was 45 minutes away. I made good friends eventually but only with effort.

But there was light.

Despite the struggles of my first year, there was tremendous grace: Accompanying a family after the tragic loss of their teenage daughter. Being surrounded by boisterous, smiling kids after Easter Mass, and then having one mom hand me an infant for the picture. Learning to golf with patient parishioners.

God placed many in my path to reach for him. Then after only



Father Bob Brownell, a retired priest of the Diocese of Richmond, vests Father John Baab during the Mass at which the latter was ordained a priest, Saturday, June 2, 2018, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond. (Photo/Billy Nguyen)

a year, I transferred to one of the largest, busiest and most delightful parishes, St. Bede in Williamsburg.

Then came 2020.

Amid the pandemic, Jesus surprised me with what I always wanted as a priest. My "pod family" isn't bothered by my "make it up as I go" style. Unannounced visits are welcome. Their three beautiful children ask incessantly, "Is Father John coming over?"

I've also seen light shining brightly in many rediscovering their faith: Notes detailing how a family learned to pray together during the pandemic. Catholic school students smiling because they're in their desks. One non-religious student told me I reached her with my homily. Dozens of cards and emails about lives changing are encouraging. So, too, are parishes entering the digital age.

My young priest counterpart, Father Cassidy Stinson, fashioned a professional grade livestream system from scratch for our parish. From across the globe, people have watched our English and Spanish Masses and become adopted parishioners.

I've witnessed many people returning to the Eucharist after long years away, even if with having to wear a mask or only worshiping online. Parishioners reaching out to estranged friends and relatives; a young woman giving up TikTok and starting to pray; the Williams-

burg House of Mercy overflowing with donations of food, dollars and eager volunteers; and once dust-covered Bibles have become worn.

All of these experiences have been grace.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul wrote that Abraham "hoped against hope" (4:18) in believing God would keep his promise. I hope to have such hope. I don't mean to suggest naive optimism, but authentic Christian hope.

We don't need more "prophets of doom," to use St. John XXIII's term. God needs us to be hopeful disciples of Jesus and emboldened, spirited missionaries for his vineyard.

I've had the grace of delivering the Gospel to many hungry for Good News — in the parish, at the DMV, in trailer parks and in gated communities. God couldn't have given us a better time for harvest.

God will keep his promises. I believe that. There is no shortage of lonely, forgotten and maligned souls in our world. If we allow the Lord to fill us with the Spirit, we will have the hope and courage to speak, and many will respond. The adventure of yours and mine will then continue in the Kingdom.

Father Baab is a parochial vicar of St. Bede Parish, Williamsburg, and chaplain to Walsingham Academy Upper School.

Foster the GOOD

A LUNCH SPEAKER SERIES

Realizing that ministry has radically shifted in the past year, the Office for Evangelization and the Office of Social Ministries are presenting a new monthly speaker series: Foster the Good. Those that serve the church: Youth Ministers, Social Ministers, Campus Ministers, and Volunteers, have found themselves pushed in new directions, and this series looks to build up the skills needed to truly serve the Church in this particular period of time.

MARCH 25, 2021
12:30-1:30PM

Featuring Peter Andrastek,
Senior Ministry Consultant,
from The Evangelical
Catholic, discussing small
group ministry.



Register for FREE at: [Bit.ly/FosterTheGoodMarch](https://bit.ly/FosterTheGoodMarch)

Why Church terms blessing of gay unions 'illicit'

Vatican says negative judgment is not aimed at individuals

CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — While homosexual men and women must be respected, any form of blessing a same-sex union is “illicit,” said the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The negative judgment is on the blessing of unions, not the people who may still receive a blessing as individuals, it said in a statement published March 15.

The statement was a response to a question or “dubium” that came from priests and lay faithful “who require clarification and guidance concerning a controversial issue,” said an official commentary accompanying the statement.

The response to the question, “Does the Church have the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex?” was “Negative.”

“It is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage — i.e., outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life — as is the case

of the unions between persons of the same sex,” the doctrinal office said in an explanatory note accompanying the statement. Pope Francis approved both the statement and the note for publication.

Community must be welcoming

“The Christian community and its pastors are called to welcome with respect and sensitivity persons with homosexual inclinations and will know how to find the most appropriate ways, consistent with Church teaching, to proclaim to them the Gospel in its fullness,” the explanatory note said.

The clarification “does not preclude the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations, who manifest the will to live in fidelity to the revealed plans of God as proposed by Church teaching.”

“Rather, it declares illicit any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such. In this case, in fact, the blessing would manifest not the intention to entrust such individual persons to the protection and help of God,

in the sense mentioned above, but to approve and encourage a choice and a way of life that cannot be recognized as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God,” said the doctrinal office.

The statement came days before the launch March 19 of a yearlong reflection on “Amoris Laetitia” that will focus on the family and conjugal love.

The date marks the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), which affirmed Church teaching on family life and marriage, but also underlined the importance of the Church meeting people where they are in order to help guide them on a path of discernment and making moral decisions.

The doctrinal congregation said in its note that some Church communities had promoted “plans and proposals for blessings of unions of persons of the same sex.”

“Such projects are not infrequently motivated by a sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons, to whom are proposed paths of growth in faith,” it said.

In fact, the question of blessing same-sex unions arose from this “sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons” as indicated by Pope Francis at the conclusion of the two synodal assemblies on the family, it said.

That invitation, it added, was for communities “to evaluate, with appropriate discernment, projects and pastoral proposals directed to this end,” and in some cases, those proposals included blessings given to the unions of persons of the same sex.

No power to impart blessing

The doctrinal congregation said the Church does not and cannot have the power to impart her blessing on such unions and, therefore, “any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such” is illicit.

That is because a blessing “would constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing invoked on the man and woman united in the sacrament of matrimony,” it said, citing paragraph 251 of “Amoris Laetitia,” which reiterated the synod members’ conclusion that “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.”

“Only those realities which are in themselves ordered to serve those ends are congruent with the

essence of the blessing imparted by the Church,” it said. As such, it is illicit to bless any relationship or partnership that is outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open to the transmission of life, it added.

Declaring “the unlawfulness of blessings of unions between persons of the same sex is not therefore, and is not intended to be, a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite and of the very nature of the sacramentals, as the Church understands them,” the doctrinal office said.

The Church teaches that “men and women with homosexual tendencies ‘must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.’”

As such, the doctrinal note makes a “fundamental and decisive distinction between persons and the union. This is so that the negative judgment on the blessing of unions of persons of the same sex does not imply a judgment on persons,” it said.

‘Cannot bless sin’

Such blessings are illicit for three reasons, it said:

- In addition to such a blessing implying “a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing” imparted to a man and a woman united in the sacrament of matrimony, there is the nature and value of blessings.

- Blessings belong to “sacramentals, which are ‘liturgical actions of the Church’ that require consonance of life with what they signify and generate,” so “a blessing on a human relationship requires that it be ordered to both receive and express the good that is pronounced and given by the blessing.”

- And, “the order that makes one fit to receive the gift is given by the ‘designs of God inscribed in creation, and fully revealed by Christ the Lord.’” The Church does not have power over God’s designs nor is she “the arbiter of these designs and the truths they express, but their faithful interpreter and witness.”

“God himself never ceases to bless each of his pilgrim children in this world, because for him ‘we are more important to God than all of the sins that we can commit,’” the congregation said. “But he does not and cannot bless sin: he blesses sinful man, so that he may recognize that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him. He in fact ‘takes us as we are, but never leaves us as we are.’”

Guaranteed return for you. Guaranteed generosity for the Diocese.

Charitable Gift Annuity Rates

Age (Single Life)	Annual Payout Rate
65-69	4.2 – 4.6%
70-74	4.7 – 5.2%
75-79	5.4 – 6.2%
80-84	6.5 – 7.4%
85-89	7.6 – 8.4%
90+	8.6%

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



Transformation

Continued from Page 1

in 2030 would be half of what it had been in 2010, Manion told CNS.

"I think what the pandemic has done has brought that window way forward," he said. "It's not going to be 2030. It could be 2022, 2023."

Manion expects to see a sweeping parish shake-up in the U.S. post-pandemic to deal with fewer people in the pews.

"We are built for a Church that no longer exists," he said, "and we have an infrastructure for a Church that no longer exists. An infrastructure that can no longer be supported in many cases."

Hard decisions will have to be made, including parish merging and closures, Manion said.

A smaller and more humble Church isn't necessarily a bad outcome for this moment in Catholic Church history, said Massimo Faggioli, professor of historical theology at Villanova University.

It gives the people in Church communities the opportunity to enrich their faith in the Gospel, find new ways to worship and ultimately employ better methods of evangelization to help their parishes flourish, Faggioli told CNS.

"We're going to need a new approach to formation," O'Malley said. "We're going to need lay folk who are doing outreach, who are trained theologically and spiritually to do this kind of outreach within the parish, talk to their neighbors, be involved in conversations."

"We just can't presume a sort of model where (the priest) stays in the parish, teaches and does catechesis," O'Malley said. "It's going to require a renewal of lay Catholic life."

'We're evangelizing'

During the pandemic, priests, women religious, members of parish councils and other members of the laity pulled together to try and reach Catholics through the use of technology while communities were in lockdown, said Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington.

More Masses were livestreamed, parish council members collaborated via Zoom video conference and the creative spirit began with the production of catechetical videos for people stuck at home with more time on their hands, which helped engage people in the faith, Bishop Burbidge said.

"What we began to see is, 'Guess what we're doing? We're evangelizing,'" he said.

There was a missionary approach to religion in the early days of the pandemic that took priests and religious out of the rectories and into the communities to offer COVID-19-safe confessions, outdoor Mass, eucharistic adoration and community lay-led prayer groups.

When Marie Miller attended Mass in the parking lot of St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania, last October, she marveled at the creativity of her parish in providing a pandemic-safe liturgy, and she really liked worshipping outside in the fresh air.

"I hope they keep something like this after this whole coronavirus pandemic is behind us," she told CNS. "I hope they at least continue to give us an opportunity to attend Mass outside. I feel closer to God out here."

It currently requires a dispensation from a local bishop to authorize a Mass outside, something that was done generously during the pandemic to provide safe worship spaces.

Continued creativity

Faggioli believes Church leaders will be looking at more use of outdoor worship in the post-pandemic era, because people like Miller discovered a greater sense of her Creator while attending Mass outside.

"What we saw from this Church during the pandemic was a Church that attempted every method they could think of to keep people faithful to the Gospel," he said. "Some of it worked and some of it didn't. I'm hoping you're going to see that same kind of creativity and transformation in how we do Church in the future. If the pandemic is any gauge, it shows the will is there."

It's likely that more lay-led catechesis, devotions, prayer life and evangelization will emerge with less reliance on the clergy, O'Malley said.

"We should be doing more outside and in our neighborhoods, and the laity can help lead devotional life," he said. "I'd love to see more outdoor processions and outdoor visible participation in religious life."

There can be more participation in the digital space as well, such as group catechesis and even a monthly Zoom meeting with a bishop, which may be a more practical way of faith involvement, O'Malley said.

The pandemic brought an openness to try new things, which can bring necessary reforms to the post-pandemic Church, Manion said.

"I hope that we don't immediately go back to 'OK, good, we survived, let's go back to the way everything was,'" he said with a laugh. "I hope we take the things that were good from before and the things that were good that were learned through this (pandemic) to continue to spark new ways of doing things."

Follow Muth on Twitter: @chazmaniandevyl



SAINT MARY
STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

Register Now!







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

Weekly Activities:

- STEM Challenges
- Guest Speakers
- Fitness Games & Sports
- Arts & Crafts
- Teambuilding
- Fishing
- Gardening
- Cooking Projects
- Math & Science Activities
- Camp Journaling
- Swimming (if permitted)
- Library (if permitted)




www.saintmarystarofthesea.com

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

LENTEN MENU

HEALTHIER THAN A FISH FRY

Every Friday during Lent, The Catholic Virginian is offering two healthy servings of spiritual nourishment at www.catholicvirginian.org. Prepared by Catholic News Service's finest writers, we invite you to try one or all of the following.

Catholic Social Teaching
An overview on a different aspect of Catholic Social Teaching, this is excellent fare for personal reflection and/or group discussion.

This Week in Lent
Much about which to think and pray as you journey through each week of Lent. Plenty here, so you'll want to share.

Ash Wednesday Special!
Get your Lent off to a good start with what we're offering on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17.

WWW.CATHOLICVIRGINIAN.ORG
SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT THROUGHOUT LENT

Responding to racism is ‘our call as a Church’

Bishop Fabre says issue must be presented in parishes, schools

RUBY THOMAS
Catholic News Service

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The work it takes to respond to the issue of racism in the Church and the wider community is difficult and slow, but it must be done, said Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana.

Speaking at the Archdiocese of Louisville’s online Archdiocesan Leadership Institute March 9, Bishop Fabre discussed “witnessing to the dignity of the human person as an antidote to the grave sin of racism.” And he shared six ways to respond to racism.

Typically, the institute draws parish leaders, clergy, staff and volunteers together for a daylong gathering of learning and sharing, but this one was presented via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bishop Fabre spoke to a group of 149 individuals, including Louisville Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, archdiocesan chancellor Brian Reynolds, clergy and individuals who serve in various ministries in the archdiocese.

During the first part of the day, Bishop Fabre discussed the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ 2018 pastoral letter on racism “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love.” As chairman

“Racism attacks the human life and dignity of its victims. ... To truly and authentically be pro-life, we must strive to dismantle in our own hearts as well as in society all attacks against the sanctity of life and one such attack is racism.”

— BISHOP SHELTON J. FABRE

of the bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, he played a key role in drafting the letter.

His presentation posed the question: “How can we move forward in responding to issues of racism in the Church and our communities?” This work is difficult and may be slow, but doing this work is “our call as a Church and our task as disciples of Jesus Christ,” he said.

Racism affects how “we experience the journey through life,” he said.

For some, that journey is one of “optimism, hope and advancement,” he said. For others, it’s one of “fear, dread, injustice and discrimination.”

Bishop Fabre shared six ways to respond to the sin of racism:

- “Recognize and respond to racism as a life issue,” he said.

“Racism attacks the human life and dignity of its victims. ... To truly and authentically be pro-life, we must strive to dismantle in our own hearts as well as in society all attacks against the sanctity of life and one such attack is racism.”

- Seek to overcome individualism and encounter others who are racially different.

Racism “traps people into individualism, blaming others for the misfortunes they encounter in life,” said Bishop Fabre. He noted that the 2018 pastoral stated that only by “forging authentic relationships can we truly see each other as Christ sees us.” This can only happen, he said, “if we step out of individualism.”

- Accept the growing racial diversity in the nation and the Church.

“The Church in the U.S. has been enriched by many races and cultures. ... We must believe and act upon the fact that there can be unity in our diversity,” said Bishop Fabre. He noted that racism is typically seen as a “Black and white” issue but noted that in reality racism affects “people of all colors.” “Educating ourselves on the Church’s teachings and catechizing the youth and adults must be a way forward,” said the bishop.

- Seek the conversion of one’s own heart.

Bishop Fabre said that while it’s important to work for civil legislation that protects people from racism, “as people of faith we must understand that it is ours to undertake a deeper task,” he said. “Each must examine our own hearts ... or what we declare will be empty words.”

- Preach against racism. He urged members of the clergy to regularly preach against racism.

“We all know that preaching against racism will elicit a response, but we must nonetheless lead our people to a path of goodness, charity, justice and peace,” said the bishop. It’s also necessary to give people hope and to remind them of the “grace available to overcome racism,” he said.

- Pray for an end to racism. “Rely on the power of prayer. Prayers are often dismissed in

these times as having no effect, but authentic prayer keeps us honest about where we are in our fight against racism,” said Bishop Fabre.

In a question-and-answer session that followed his presentation, the bishop was asked to address “the pain and realities of the past year” in which Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, both African Americans, were killed in altercations with white police officers.

“We have to find opportunities as parish communities and as people to really hear stories and to learn and share our thoughts, as well,” the bishop said, adding that Jesus knew the power of stories and used them to teach his followers.

Taylor, 26, was fatally shot in her Louisville apartment March 13, 2020, during a police raid. No officers were charged in her death.

Floyd, 46, died while in police custody May 25, 2020. He was arrested after a store clerk alleged he had passed a counterfeit \$20 bill in Minneapolis. He was pinned down by then-Officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on his neck, and he later died after being taken to the hospital.

Jury selection began March 9 for Chauvin’s trial. He was charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. The three other now-former officers involved in the arrest were each charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder, as well as aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter.

After Floyd’s death, Bishop Fabre invited parishioners of the Houma-Thibodaux Diocese to speak to someone “racially different” to find out how Floyd’s death made them feel. Those whom he heard from said that in talking to others they finally started understanding the pain.

Asked what will generate “the needed passion” to respond to racism, the bishop that getting people to understand that racism is a life issue is a way to start.

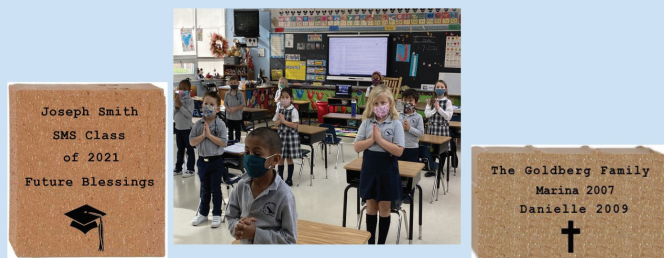
“The more we can get them to see it as that it will hopefully generate a passion, and hopefully we will have the same passion to end racism as we have to end all the other attacks against life,” he said, adding it also is important to preach about racism at the parish church and teach about it in schools.

“Placing it before people in positive and constructive ways so that it becomes a part of our conversations” also is needed, he said, “so we can get passionate to see the injustices happening.”

St. Matthew’s Path

St. Matthew’s Catholic Church & School
Parishioners, Alumni, and Friends!

We want to include your family name in the legacy of families that have walked this path and celebrate our patron Saint.



St. Matthew was one of the apostles to witness the ascension of Christ.

In a very humble way, contributing a paver to this pathway project celebrates the ascension of our children into a bright, intellectual, and spiritual future.

Purchase an engraved 4”x8” brick (\$100) or an 8”x8” brick (\$500) online at <https://brickmarkersusa.com/donors/smc.html> and help us create St. Matthew’s Path!

Questions? Contact LaDonna Sinsabaugh

OPPORTUNITIES

Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Newport News has the following openings for the 2021-2022 school year. For each of these three positions, candidates must be practicing Catholics who are enthusiastic about educating students academically and spiritually in the Catholic tradition and have a current Virginia teaching license.

Part-time K-7th Spanish teacher.

Full-time mid-school science teacher.

Full-time elem. school teachers.

Full-time resource teacher.

Candidates must be practicing Catholics who are enthusiastic about educating students academically and spiritually. Must have a current Virginia teaching license with an endorsement in Special Education. Candidates should have organizational skills, as well as effective classroom management skills.

Please submit a résumé and a diocesan application to sajoseph@olmc-school.com. All inquiries should be directed to Dominican Sister Anna Joseph at 757-596-2754.

Also hiring elementary substitute teachers for the remainder of the 2020-2021 and the 2021-2022 school year. Please submit a résumé and a diocesan application to ctucker@olmc-school.com. All inquiries should be directed to Christine Tucker at 757-596-2754.

Peninsula Catholic. a college preparatory high school in Newport News, will continue to offer both in-person and virtual learning for 2021-2022. Unique to PCHS, in-person and virtual students take classes together, experiencing the same high-quality instruction and engaging learning activities for which we have become known.

We are seeking qualified, innovative instructors in the following areas: **math** (algebra I and above), **science** (earth, chemistry and physics), **computer science and/or engineering**, **social studies**, **personal finance/economics**, **Spanish**, **English**, **theater** (experience in directing theater productions preferred), and **health/PE**.

Candidates should have experience in teaching (preferred), enthusiasm for youth, effective integration of technology and a desire to be part of a community with a 118-year history of excellence in Catholic education.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree required; master's degree preferred. The successful candidate must have a current Virginia teaching license with endorsements in the assigned subject areas.

Please send cover letter, résumé, diocesan application and references to: Peninsula Catholic High School, Attn: Principal, 600 Harpersville Road, Newport News, VA 23601 or email jfranklin@peninsulacatholic.org.

org. Applications for employment can be downloaded from the Diocese of Richmond's website (Human Relations tab).

Application deadline is April 30, 2021, or until the position is filled.

Diocese of Richmond, is currently accepting applications for a part-time IT technical support specialist. This position will support a number of school and parish locations, providing desktop support to end-users in a Windows 10/Mac environment.

The support specialist will be working with the Microsoft Office Suite, cloud technologies such as Office 365, audio-visual applications and configuration, software installation and configuration and desktop and printer maintenance. Twenty-one hours per week, Wednesday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Interested candidates should please send a cover letter, résumé and completed Diocese of Richmond Employment Application to jobs@richmond-diocese.org.

SHORTTAKES

Join us for the World-Famous Oberammergau Passion Play!

The Church of St. Therese, Chesapeake, has a few spaces left for a special journey, June 8-18, 2022, to the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play, as well as Budapest, Vienna, Prague and Munich. Due to the pandemic, the Passion Play, which is held only every 10 years, was moved from 2020 to 2022. Save \$300 if reservation and down payment are made before April 30, 2021. To register or for more information, contact Megan Malhiot at mmalhiot@sttheresechesva.org; 757 488-2553.

Join Deacon Charles Williams, director of the Diocese of Richmond's Office for Black Catholics and deacon at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, on a **Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**, Oct. 21-30, 2021, for the most deeply moving spiritual experience of your lifetime. The 10-day tour for \$3,599 includes airfare, hotels, tours, breakfast and dinner, daily Mass in holy places and much more. For further information, contact: Alba Kim 804-298-4035 or email tours@albastours.com or visit www.albastours.com.

Reservations are available now. Space is limited. COVID policies available upon request.

Annual Easter Sunrise Mass will be celebrated Sunday, April 4, 6:30 a.m. in front of the garden mausoleum of St. Mary Cemetery, Norfolk. Celebrant for the Mass will be retired U.S. Navy chaplain, Msgr. Frederic Elkin. Please adhere to diocesan COVID guidelines if attending. For further information or to volunteer, contact Jim Fitzpatrick at 757-572-1420 or fitzpatrick1100@aol.com.

"Walking with Jesus" trip to the Holy Land: Join Father Kevin J. O'Brien, pastor at St. Therese, Chesapeake, as the spiritual director for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (with an optional two-day excursion to Petra and Jordan) Nov. 30 — Dec. 10, 2021. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus as we explore Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Jerusalem and other biblical sites. Cost is \$3,695 (double occupancy) with an additional \$1,045 for the optional excursion to Petra and Jordan. To register or for more information, contact Megan Malhiot at mmalhiot@sttheresechesva.org; 757 488-2553 as soon as possible!

Join Msgr. Patrick Golden,

pastor of Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, on a **Pilgrimage to Poland, Prague and Budapest**, Sept. 18-30, 2021. We will reflect on the lives of St. Faustina and St. Pope John Paul II. In addition, experience scenic and historic Central Europe. 13-day tour for \$4,299 including airfare, hotels, tours, meals, Mass every day in holy places, including at Our Lady Victorious, home of the Infant Jesus of Prague, and much more.

For further information, please contact: Alba Kim: 804-298-4035 or email: tours@albastours.com or visit www.albastours.com.

Reservations are available now. Space is limited. COVID policies available upon request.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD



Honored I: The Virginia Sports Hall of Fame selected Catholic High School Senior Joseph "Joey" Kagel as one of its four student athletes of the year on Feb. 28. While maintaining a 4.55 GPA, he has captained the football and lacrosse teams; he will play the former at University of Virginia, where he will also study biomedical engineering. Kagel is a peer minister and student ambassador at CHS, and volunteers with the EQUI-KIDS Therapeutic Riding Program at St. John the Apostle Parish.

Also chosen as one of 16 finalists by the hall of fame's foundation was senior Austin Miranda, a national level swimmer with TIDE and a five-year state qualifier for the CHS varsity team.

Honored II: Joseph Wentzel, a seventh grader at St. Mary's School, Richmond, won first place in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8046 Patriot's Pen Essay Contest. The theme for 2020-2021 was "What is Patriotism to Me?" The monetary reward was presented by Marie Fuentes-Sherman, the scholarship chairman of the post's auxiliary.

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

Father Doyle

Continued from Page 8

olic teaching continues to prefer burial of the body because, in the Church's mind, burial reflects a greater reverence and respect for the deceased and more clearly expresses the Christian belief in an eventual resurrection, when a person's body and soul will be reunited.

As the appendix to the Order of Christian Funerals puts it: "The body of a deceased Catholic Christian is also the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the bread of life. ... The body of the deceased brings forcefully to mind

the Church's conviction that the human body is in Christ a temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead" (No. 412).

The choice is yours to make, but the Church's preference is clearly for traditional burial. And as you mention, if the option is made for cremation, the cremated remains should be buried in a grave or entombed in a mausoleum.

Editor's note: For information on Catholic funerals in the Diocese of Richmond, including cremation, please call 757-229-0851 or email ehandel@richmond-diocese.org.

MORE Information
catholicvirginian.org Instruction
Inspiration

Una comprensión de las raíces bíblicas de la migración

MAR 8, 2021 VOCES COMUNIDAD POR
MONS. MARIO DORSONVILLE

Un artículo reciente del *Center for American Progress* indica que el 70 por ciento de los estadounidenses cree que se necesita una reforma migratoria. En la actualidad hay razones para tener una esperanza cautelosa de que habrá una reforma migratoria integral, pero eso solo se puede lograr a través de un acuerdo bipartidista.

Esta reforma beneficiará a los 11 millones de indocumentados que viven en nuestro país y abrirá una senda para los migrantes potenciales. Con una reforma, se enviará un mensaje a la comunidad internacional. Pero, ¿cuál puede ser su guía?

Como hemos escuchado en el pasado, la inmigración es a menudo un acto de amor, ya que los padres buscan una vida mejor para sus familias. Es, podríamos añadir también, un acto de fe y de esperanza. Fe, esperanza y amor: estas virtudes nos colocan directamente en la corriente de la historia de la salvación, que moldea nuestro pensamiento y acción cristiana. Y en el texto bíblico encontramos los bloques que nos ayudarán a construir una respuesta bondadosa y justa: para nuestros ciudadanos, para quienes cruzaron nuestras fronteras hace años y para los que ahora buscan un nuevo hogar para su futuro.

¿Qué entendemos por “historia de la salvación” en la Biblia? Los cristianos no simplemente leemos las Sagradas Escrituras. Las Escrituras interpretan y guían nuestra vida, y nos invitan a crecer y cambiar a medida que procuramos hacer la voluntad de Dios. Cada experiencia encuentra acogida en el encuentro humano con lo divino, que se convierte en historia de salvación.

Aprendemos del Libro del Génesis que la primera experiencia migratoria de la raza humana no fue fácil. Al principio, todo lo que Dios creó era bueno. La persona humana creada a imagen y semejanza de Dios es libre por causa del amor. Pero podemos hacer mal uso de nuestra libertad. Podemos pecar. Y lo hacemos. Como castigo por el pecado, Dios expulsa a Adán y Eva del Edén, aunque nunca los priva de su amor.

Más tarde, en la Sagrada Escritura, aprendemos que la inmigración no se limita al destierro; también es una prueba del amor y la compasión de Dios por los seres humanos. En Génesis 12:1 Dios le dice a Abraham: “Deja tu país, a los de tu raza y a la familia de tu padre, y anda a la tierra que yo te mostraré.” Adán y Eva fueron desterrados del Paraíso, pero Abraham es llamado a salir de su terruño. Este llamado presagia todas las experiencias posteriores que tuvo Abraham. En repetidas ocasiones, el Señor le pide que actúe con confianza; y Abraham responde bien una y otra vez. Entra en Egipto y luego en Canaán y recorre Canaán. Incluso el llamado del Señor a Abraham de ir al monte Moriah y sacrificar a Isaac es una especie de migración hacia la confianza, que siempre se revela en un profundo deseo de cumplir la voluntad de Dios.

Aunque la experiencia de la migración



(Photo/EL PREGONERO)

es individual para Abraham, en el Libro del Éxodo, el Señor la amplía para incluir a todo el pueblo de Israel en su caminar desde la esclavitud hacia la libertad. Moisés, el instrumento escogido por Dios, es en sí mismo un refugiado de Egipto cuando Dios se le aparece en la zarza ardiente y le dice: “Ven, te enviaré al Faraón para que saques a mi pueblo de Egipto”. Moisés obedece, y en los 40 años siguientes el pueblo de Israel experimenta la ambigüedad y la incertidumbre de la migración. Por el camino encuentran obstáculos y peligros. Anhelan llegar a su destino, pero saben que sus vicisitudes no terminarán ahí.

Aun así, no toda la migración bíblica es tan dramática. A diferencia de Abraham, Rut no escucha un claro llamado de Dios de salir de su país de Moab y radicarse en el de Judá. A diferencia del pueblo de Israel en Egipto, no hay indicios de que ella esté oprimida en su tierra natal. El deseo de Rut de acompañar a su suegra motiva su emigración. Una vez en Judá, Rut obedece la legislación local y subsiste recogiendo granos de trigo de acuerdo con la ley levítica. Con el tiempo se casa con Booz, convirtiéndose así en bisabuela del rey David y antepasada del Mesías. Su migración es causa de bendiciones para su país adoptivo.

A lo largo del Antiguo Testamento, Dios quiere dar a su pueblo —individual y colectivamente— una patria; pero también parece querer que sigan de viaje. Y este motivo encuentra su realización en Cristo, que no tenía dónde reposar la cabeza (Mateo 8:20).

El propio Jesús aún no nacido experimenta la migración. Sus padres van de Nazaret a Belén para el censo, lo que significa que él nace lejos de casa.

Luego la Biblia nos presenta la huida de la Sagrada Familia a Egipto, un viaje con un desenlace incierto. Esta terrible odisea ocurrida en la infancia de Cristo debe haberle quedado grabada en el corazón y le debe haber infundido un vivo sentido tanto de confianza en la voluntad del Padre como de gratitud hacia quienes acogieron a su familia en circunstancias tan difíciles.

Finalmente, Jesús ya adulto siempre está

ocupado en algo. Tan pronto como predica y cura a los enfermos en un pueblo, va al siguiente haciendo la voluntad de su Padre. Lo vemos en la vía dolorosa cargando la cruz y subiendo al Calvario. Y después de su resurrección, envía a sus discípulos a Galilea y se reúne con ellos.

Este rápido bosquejo de las raíces bíblicas de la migración muestra que, para algunas personas, la migración —y la acogida de los migrantes— es parte del plan de Dios. También vemos que la migración apoyada en leyes justas puede ser una bendición tanto para los migrantes como para el país que adoptan como suyo.

¿Qué conclusiones podemos sacar de todo esto?

“La política”, observó Otto Von Bismark, “es el arte de lo posible”. En otras palabras, la política tiene objetivos específicos y prácticos que cumplir: mantener, y cuando sea necesario, promulgar leyes justas y crear instituciones que propicien el adelanto y la prosperidad de la persona humana. La Iglesia Católica apoya estos objetivos.

Sin embargo, la aplicación y reforma de las leyes no es suficiente; son los corazones los que deben cambiar para albergar la verdadera justicia y la paz. Por medio de su Iglesia, Cristo nos llama a cada uno de nosotros a una conversión de corazones. Y al tratar de leer los signos de los tiempos, con la ayuda del Espíritu Santo, la Iglesia continuará promoviendo principios de respeto a la dignidad de la persona humana desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural.

La historia de la salvación continúa. Puede que nunca tengamos una política migratoria que sea perfecta; pero, reflexionando sobre las experiencias bíblicas de la migración, debemos hacer lo posible, aquí y ahora, para acoger y dar la bienvenida a los inmigrantes con amor y verdad.

Artículo de El Pregonero Multimedia
Catholic News de la Arquidiócesis de Washington D.C.

Remains of POW camp chaplain identified

Kansas priest's cause for sainthood under consideration

CHRISTOPHER M. RIGGS
Catholic News Service

WICHITA, Kan. — William Hansen kept his silence for over 50 years about being one of the POWs who buried Father Emil Kapaun's body after the priest died May 23, 1951.

In 2005, Hansen was in his doctor's office at a VA Hospital in Florida when he read an article about the U.S. Army chaplain who died a hero in a North Korean POW camp in Pyongyang.

Scott Carter, coordinator of the Father Kapaun Guild for the Diocese of Wichita, said Hansen told his doctor that Father Kapaun was a fellow POW and he helped bury the priest.

Hansen said he had never talked about his connection to Father Kapaun, Carter added, because he said he was sworn to secrecy about the matter by the U.S. Army.

"His doctor told Hansen that he felt it was OK with the Army now and that he definitely needed to contact them," Carter told The Catholic Advance, Wichita's diocesan newspaper.

A native of Pilsen, Kansas, Father Kapaun was ordained for the Diocese of Wichita June 9, 1940, and was a U.S. Army chaplain in World War II and the Korean War.

Although he could have avoided capture by the North Koreans, he allowed himself to be taken prisoner with his fellow soldiers. He heroically served his flock in the camp where he died.

"Hansen explained that Father Kapaun wasn't buried in a mass grave like most of the POWs had assumed. That he was buried in the town behind one of the huts in kind of a lean-to," said Carter.

As a result, it was more likely that Father Kapaun's remains had

been transferred when the remains of about 4,000 prisoners were exchanged as part of the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement, Carter said. Over 800 of those were unidentified.

The identification of Father Kapaun's remains was announced March 4, when the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or DPAA, stated that Department of Defense investigators had identified them among the unknown Korean War soldiers buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

"I heard that they had made a lot of progress recently in their ability to extract DNA from the bones to identify these men," Carter said. "In the last three years, they developed a new technique to extract the DNA."

He added the agency hopes to have all of the remaining unknown soldiers identified in the next five or six years.

"The DPAA contacted Ray Kapaun, Father Kapaun's nephew," he said. "Thankfully we've got a great relationship with Ray, and he contacted Father Hotze to share the great news. He quickly contacted the bishop and then told me as well."

Father John Hotze is the postulator for Father Kapaun's sainthood cause. The postulator is the official who presents a plea for beatification or canonization.

Carter said when he got the call March 4 from Father Hotze, he thought it might be a minor update from Rome.

"We knew they were working on the remains, but we still weren't prepared to receive the good news," he said.

About 95% of Father Kapaun's skeletal remains were identified by the DPAA. "That is quite remark-



U.S. Army chaplain Father Emil Joseph Kapaun, who died May 23, 1951, in a North Korean prisoner of war camp, is pictured celebrating Mass from the hood of a jeep Oct. 7, 1950, in South Korea. He is a candidate for sainthood. (CNS photo/courtesy U.S. Army medic Raymond Skeeahan)

able because a lot of the other remains they've been working on recently were just fragments from the battlefield," Carter said.

Bishop Mark K. Carroll, Wichita's bishop from 1947 to 1967, celebrated a memorial Mass in 1953 for Father Kapaun, he said, "but we've never been able to have an actual funeral or an actual burial."

During that Mass, celebrated July 29, 1953, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Wichita, Bishop Carroll said the faithful must be like soldiers, that Christ died for the truth. "Not in all history can we find anything to equal the heroism of Christ the soldier."

A priest is the vicar of Christ, he said. "The work of a priest is the same as that of Christ. He is to be an apostle of love and the ambassador of peace, and at the same time he is to be preeminently a sol-

dier of Christ, the captain of souls ... fighting error and superstition and the sinful spirit of the world."

Carter said now that the remains have been identified, many other details regarding the status of his cause and Father Kapaun's remains will be discussed.

"When I heard that his remains were coming I was super-excited, but at the same time the thought about Father Kapaun's last words to his fellow prisoners: 'Hey guys, don't worry about me. I'm going to where I always wanted to go. And when I get there, I'll say a prayer for you. And tell my bishop I died a happy death.'"

Editor's note: For details about Father Emil Kapaun's life and his cause for canonization, visit www.frkapaun.org.

Funeral helps parishioners fulfill Matthew 25 instruction

RONKONKOMA, N.Y. (CNS) — Parishioners at St. Joseph Church in Ronkonkoma, New York, wanted to make sure Celia Teresa de Jesus Alferez went home to God surrounded by friends.

So about 50 of them attended her funeral Mass March 12 when no one from her family, believed to be in Colombia, could be found.

And it's all because they strive to live Matthew 25:40: "... Whatever you do for one of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

"It was unbelievable. It was awesome," said Father Michael Rieder, pastor, who presided at the funeral liturgy. "It was really a sacred experience."

The priest credited the parish's Ministry of Consolation and its coordinator, Clare Antonucci, for "being there" for Alferez, an immigrant who would have turned 85 in April.

Antonucci said the ministry reaches out

to the family members of any parishioner who has died. Normally, Antonucci would contact the next volunteer whose turn it was to represent the parish. The outreach to survivors involves kind words and offers to help plan the funeral Mass and, finally, to attend the liturgy.

In this case, however, Antonucci told Catholic News Service that she decided to take on the task herself when she realized no one from Alferez's family could be reached.

"While I'm doing that, I was thinking it's going to be very sad if there's no one in the church for the funeral," Antonucci said.

She got on the phone. Among the first people she reached was Michele Nappi, a volunteer with the ministry and the parish's director of new evangelization.

Nappi called friends who pray the rosary before or after daily Mass at St. Joseph. Then

Nappi thought it would be good to invite people to attend the Mass through the parish's Facebook account.

After Mass, a handful of people even joined the vehicle procession to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Coram, New York. "They said Celia shouldn't be buried alone," Antonucci added.

Father Rieder told CNS that Alferez was a longtime member who formerly lived in an assisted living facility sponsored by the church and then moved to a nursing home. Alferez attended Sunday Mass, but was known only to a few St. Joseph parishioners. She also was a lay Carmelite.

The priest expressed pride in being a pastor to people who care for each other.

"I've already preached about it," he said. "And it will be part of Lenten retreat next week. I want to share this. I want to tell the whole world this is an amazing experience."