



# The Catholic Virginian

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## Why teachers choose to work in Catholic schools Faith element, family atmosphere attract educators

JANNA REYNOLDS  
The Catholic Virginian

Some educators in Diocese of Richmond Catholic schools are in their first teaching assignments. Some have experience in the public school system, and others received a Catholic education themselves.

A common thread among teachers from these various experiences, however, is the appreciation they have for the “family feel” and sense of community they find in working at a Catholic school.

“That really is the one thing someone coming out of college should know – Catholic school is really much more like a family when you come to it,” said Matthew Eviston, religion and social studies teacher at St. Joseph School, Petersburg. “Whether as a student or a teacher, I’ve always had the Catholic identity, Christ-centered, family environment that you can’t get anywhere else.”

Amanda Patterson taught in Chesterfield County Public Schools for five years before joining All Saints Catholic School, Richmond, as a kindergarten teacher in 2017.

“It’s more than a school, it’s more than a job; it’s really part of your life, whereas I didn’t really feel that in the public school system. The difference is amazing,” she said.

### Support from students’ families

That sense of truly belonging to a community does not end at the school building doors; it extends to the families of Catholic school students, as well.

Noel Miller, in her first year as a second-grade teacher at St. John the Apostle School, Virginia Beach, said her experience has been

“very welcoming and very inviting,” and that she feels supported by her students’ families.

“I get a lot of support from my parents. They’re willing to work with their child if the child is struggling, and even if they’re doing well, they’re very supportive” she said.

Charlotte Murphey, a fourth-grade teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes, Richmond, since December 2020, said the engagement she receives from the students’ families is “mind-blowing” and that it helps her feel at home with her work.

“You’ve really got a sense of community with your coworkers, teachers, parents and your community,” she said. “It’s hard to put into words, but there’s just something so special about teaching in a Catholic school.”

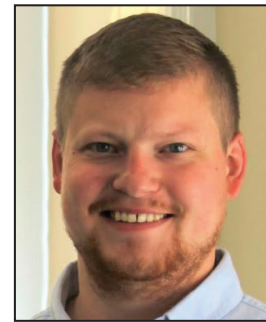
### Openly talk about God

Part of what makes Catholic schools such a special place to live out the vocation of teacher is the ability to have God present in work relationships. It helps teachers form a true sense of community in which everyone takes care of each other.

“I really enjoy coming to school. Or if something is wrong or something happens to me, I know that the other teachers and employees at this school truly care about my wellbeing,” noted Caitlin Price, kindergarten teacher at Sacred Heart School, Danville.

Eviston said his colleagues at St. Joseph lift him up to be a better teacher and noted that following Christ’s word “is what brings us together.”

At Catholic school, teachers have the freedom to be true to their personal beliefs. Trying to compartmentalize the faith while working in a



Matthew Eviston



Noel Miller



Charlotte Murphey



Amanda Patterson



Caitlin Price



Peggy Rogala

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## Vatican advises U.S. bishops on handling difficult matter

Notes process in considering Communion and pro-choice Catholic politicians

CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has urged the U.S. bishops to proceed with caution in their discussions about formulating a national policy “to address the situation of Catholics in public office who support legislation allowing abortion, euthanasia or other moral evils.”

Cardinal Luis Ladaria, congregation prefect, reiterated what he said he had told several groups of U.S. bishops during their 2019-2020 “ad limina” visits, namely that “the effective development of a policy in this area requires that dialogue occurs in two stages: first among the bishops themselves, and then between bishops and Catholic pro-choice politicians within their

jurisdictions.”

In the letter to Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Ladaria also insisted: such a policy cannot usurp the authority of an individual bishop in his diocese on the matter; the policy would require near unanimity; and it would be “misleading” to present abortion and euthanasia as

“the only grave matters of Catholic moral and social teaching that demand the fullest level of accountability on the part of Catholics.”

The letter, dated May 7 and obtained by Catholic News Service in Rome, said it was in response to a letter from Archbishop Gomez informing the doctrinal congregation that the bishops were preparing to

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# Time to till the soil spiritually in our Church



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

Something gardeners do in order to grow an abundance of flowers and vegetables is to turn soil over in fall so that it is ready for planting in spring. Our Church is tilling the soil spiritually as our parishes emerge from the impact of COVID-19, inviting people to return to Mass, restarting programs stalled by the pandemic and fortifying their outreach to those in need.

There are signs of our parishes becoming fully alive again. Every time I visit and talk to pastors, they report how they are seeing more and more people returning to Mass now that more people have been vaccinated. We're grateful that so many of our faithful have that spiritual hunger for the Eucharist and are returning. This is integral to our tilling of the spiritual soil.

The next step is for us, as Catholics and parish communities, to reconnect with and to encourage people to reengage in sacramental life. This is a concern for the Church locally and universally: How do we bring members of the faithful who have gotten used to not being personally present and active back into our midst?

The Scripture readings from the Acts of the Apostles during this Easter season have reminded us of our Church's roots, of how the Word of God was to be sowed by the apostles and the Christian communities they formed. It has been a time to recall the Great Commission Jesus gave us: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20).

We received this Great Commission in baptism, and God sent us the Holy Spirit in order that we can carry it out, to evangelize. We are again preparing to undertake — tilling the spiritual soil, if you will — the New

Evangelization in our diocese, our parishes and ourselves.

You may recall that more than seven years ago our diocese implemented a pastoral plan titled "Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze." For a few reasons other im-

***"However, the New Evangelization is not a program! It is an ongoing commitment by you and me to engage, renew and reinvigorate the fervor and life of our Church through the inspiration and gifts of the Holy Spirit. What better time to do this than as we are loosed from the grasp of the pandemic?"***

— BISHOP KNESTOUT

portant initiatives and activities in the diocese became our main focus in recent years. The New Evangelization plan was dormant while we focused on our diocesan bicentennial.

However, the New Evangelization is *not* a program! It is an ongoing commitment by you and me to engage, renew and reinvigorate the fervor and life of our Church through the inspiration and gifts of the Holy Spirit. What better time to do this than as we are loosed from the grasp of the pandemic?

I recently renewed the Commission for

New Evangelization, overseen by Father Jonathan Goertz, pastor of Sacred Heart, Danville, who holds a graduate degree in evangelization from Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, and Andrew Waring, director of the diocesan Office of Evangelization. In the months ahead, this commission, composed of a cross section of representatives from our diocese, will consider how it can best assist parishes with post-pandemic revitalization, and what diocesan initiatives are needed for all of the faithful to be engaged disciples.

With our celebration of Pentecost this Sunday, I am asking for your help with this endeavor. Please pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit that accompanies this column regularly. Prayer is a critical part of the New Evangelization — a part of which we can all contribute and till the soil of our spiritual life.

I am also asking that you reflect upon how you will use any or all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord — that you received at confirmation in order to engage others by your example and to renew and reinvigorate our Church.

## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, and guide us throughout the Diocese of Richmond as we embark on our third century in Your service. We humbly ask You to strengthen our trust in You and our eagerness to share the Gospel message with others. Enkindle in us a keen desire to grow in our relationship with You and to encounter You in Your sacraments. Through the intercession of Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, and St. Vincent de Paul, may we experience a new Pentecost and a profound renewal of faith in our diocese, our parishes, our families, and our hearts. Amen.

## Pope establishes catechist as formal ministry

Encourages laity to recognize 'missionary component' of baptism

CINDY WOODEN

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Calling for formal recognition of "those lay men and women who feel called by virtue of their baptism to cooperate in the work of catechesis," Pope Francis has instituted the "ministry of catechist."

"The Spirit is calling men and women to set out and encounter all those who are waiting to discover the beauty, goodness and truth of the Christian faith," the pope wrote in "Antiquum Ministerium" (Ancient Ministry), his document released at the Vatican May 11.

### Pastors' support imperative

Pastors must support laypeople in answering the Spirit's call and "enrich the life of the Christian community through the recognition of lay ministries capable of contributing to the transformation

of society through the 'penetration of Christian values into the social, political and economic sectors,'" the pope said, quoting what he had written about the vocation of laypeople in his 2013 document, "The Joy of the Gospel."

Bishops' conferences will need to determine the "process of formation and the normative criteria for admission to this ministry" and

devise "the most appropriate forms for the service which these men and women will be called to exercise," the pope said.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, he said, "will soon publish the Rite of Institution of the lay ministry of catechist." The congregation already is working on revised rites for the ministries of lector and aco-

lyte, which Pope Francis opened to women in January.

While millions of lay men and women around the world already serve as catechists, readers and altar servers, formal institution into the ministries signifies that the service is stable, delegated by the bishop and publicly recognized by the Church.

### 'Distinctive ministry'

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, noted how St. Paul VI wrote in 1975 about the importance of laypeople using their gifts for the growth of the entire Church.

"It has taken almost 50 years for the Church to come to recognize that the service rendered by so many men and women through their catechetical commitment

See *Catechist*, Page 7

# Deacon Lawrence steps away from career to answer call to priesthood

Wants to 'align with what God wants for me'

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI  
The Catholic Virginian

No one could have known that day in February 1980, in the midst of a Richmond blizzard, that a boy born at the Medical College of Virginia with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck would — 41 years later — be less than three weeks away from becoming a priest for the Diocese of Richmond.

Bishop Barry C. Knestout will ordain Deacon Thomas “Tom” Bagley Lawrence III a priest on Saturday, June 5, 10:30 a.m., at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond. The Mass will be livestreamed on the diocesan website.

His parents, Elsie King Miller Lawrence, a residential mortgage broker, and Thomas Bagley Lawrence Jr., a commercial properties' financier, had their own business. Their only child's early years paralleled those of the first years of desktop computers for homes and businesses.

“They asked me during one summer, probably when I had way too much time on my hands, to help them work on some project that either they didn't have the time or the inclination to do — or it was just a teaching opportunity to shove me in a room with a computer,” he recalled with a laugh.

That experience led to him becoming a “go to” person for others dealing with the unknowns of home computer technology. By age 13, he was on an entrepreneurial path in which he built computers, installed networks and trained their users well into the third millennium.

Following graduation from Benedictine High School, Deacon Lawrence attended the University of Richmond where he was involved in technology-related activities like website development, and from which he graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics in 2002.

“Even throughout most of college, I had thought I'd continue to work with technology, and that changed from hardware to software and then, of course, out to the internet as that emerged,” he recalled, noting he was “still primarily dedicated to the business and furthering technology goals.”

While he couldn't identify at the time what was happening in his life, Deacon Lawrence sensed a difference.

“It was only at a certain moment when I realized motivations had changed and interests had changed very slowly over time that I could wake up and realize there's a different path,” he said.



Deacon Thomas Lawrence III  
Early influence

While interest in technology made an impact on Deacon Lawrence's preadolescent and adolescent years, the Church had also gotten his attention while he was in middle school at St. Bridget School, Richmond.

“The then-youth minister of St. Bridget, Debbie McDonald, was

*“For years, without even realizing it, I was slowly growing closer to the Lord, learning more about the Church, and understanding a call that I didn't fully know how to process or even respond to.”*

sort of a homeroom teacher or assigned person, and those conversations with her and the other middle schoolers showed me that there was someone associated with the Church who was willing to talk to me, and I think that was a beginning moment,” he recalled.

McDonald, coordinator of youth ministry at the parish from 1986-2001, met daily for a half hour prior to the start of classes with seven or eight boys.

“It was a small faith community,” she recalled of her accompanying them. “We shared about faith, prayed, laughed, played games, had fellowship, did homework.”

As youth minister, McDonald, who is an assistant secretary for the Office of Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns for the Archdiocese of Washington, oversaw confirmation preparation for the parish's high

school juniors.

“Sometimes we talk about confirmation as an adult decision. You know, it's certainly a rational decision, and adult faith formation in general is critical in the Church today. And the more we can look at that for children that we want to operate as fruitful adults in the world, the better,” Deacon Lawrence said. “My confirmation experience was really sort of like a small adult faith formation that was available to me as a high schooler.”

## Traditional witness

The following year, he was part of the parish's confirmation preparation team, serving as a peer advisor. He would continue helping with confirmation preparation long after college.

“Our retreats had a lot to do with your own personal response and true relationship with Jesus,” McDonald said. “Tom called me to make it more traditional — to include prayers and experiences that were more traditional in nature.”

Msgr. William Carr, pastor at St. Bridget since 2005, said Deacon Lawrence's personal witness resonated with confirmation students.

“Tom's own love of the Lord and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, particularly in confirmation, was something that caught on with many of the students,” the priest said. “He was a good presence and a good witness, and they did rally around him. He led them and went with them on the journey.”

## 'Mild epiphany'

Deacon Lawrence continued along the technology business path, but the Church remained a part of his life, and his vocation to the priesthood was simmering.

“I suppose most people in their vocational response have something that slowly changes them, and then at a certain point, the change is significant enough to bubble over or tip over,” he said. “For years, without even realizing it, I was slowly growing closer to the Lord, learning more about the Church, and understanding a call that I didn't fully know how to process or even respond to.”

What he termed a “mild epiphany” occurred following the Easter Vigil at St. Bridget in April 2014.

“I was sitting in the church all by myself, most of the lights were off, everyone was gone, and I was just praying before the Blessed Sacrament, and this feeling of calm and peace came over me, and I realized sort of what my next step in life

## Inspired, influenced by three saints

Deacon Tom Lawrence said he is “hard pressed” to pick any particular saint as his favorite, so he defers to his first and last names.

“(Thomas) Aquinas is just a master in both organizing the deposit of faith and what we've been able to draw out of it, and yet at the same time, a very targeted mystic,” he said of the 13th century doctor of the Church. “His is a balance that I think I'd like to better emulate and can certainly aspire to.”

Deacon Lawrence named St. Lawrence of Rome as “a large influence” on his life, noting he had a holy card of the saint printed for his diaconate ordination.

The influence of the third century martyr, he said, was “both as a deacon, a man of service, and a man who understands and protected the poor and the vulnerable in the Church.”

“These are things that we need to pay an increasing amount of attention to in our world today,” Deacon Lawrence said, “and I'm happy for the intercession of both of these named saints in my life.”

He noted that in this Year of St. Joseph, the Diocese of Richmond's seminarians at the Theological College had participated in a consecration to St. Joseph.

“The litany of St Joseph brought us together every day this semester in morning prayer, so it's inspired those of us at Theological College to spend about 20-30 minutes in the morning together in prayer and share a meal, which is a fantastic way to start the day — besides the holy sacrifice of the Mass,” the deacon said.

Deacon Lawrence that St. Joseph had a “silent influence,” especially as a protector.

“St Joseph has a number of names — terror of demons was a favorite,” he said. “But dreamer is one — how do the dreams, how do our images that we receive from God and our own experience, motivate us and move us into providential paths? There's a lot with St Joseph to look at, but those are the ways he's intersected with my life.”

— Brian T. Olszewski

# Honored teacher takes Great Commission to classroom

## Bettina Robertson named Elizabeth Ann Seton Award winner

KRISTEN L. BYRD

Special to The Catholic Virginian

**B**ettina Robertson became the first teacher from St. Gregory the Great Catholic School, Virginia Beach, to receive the Elizabeth Ann Seton Award for overall excellence. Each year, the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools presents this accolade to one Catholic school teacher “based on their selfless work in service of the Gospel in both word and deed, their dedication to Catholic education, their instructional expertise, and their witness to their faith to help transform the lives of Catholic school students.”

The award is named for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born person to be canonized. She dedicated her life to teaching and is regarded as one of the founders of American parochial education.

She is widely known for her devotion to God in every act big or small, saying, “The first purpose of our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner he wills; and thirdly, to do it because it is his will.”

### ‘Catholic faith is rock’

Robertson lives the saint’s words daily as she sees her role as not only a teacher of subjects, but of souls.

“My Catholic faith has been my rock — the one thing I know that will always be there, and I want nothing more than to share it with as many people as I can,” she said. “Being a Catholic educator gives me meaning and purpose to teaching. I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to follow the Great Commission, to make disciples of the tiny nation I call my classroom.”

Joseph Branco, SGGs principal, said the decision to nominate her for the prestigious award was simple.

“Bettina teaches from the heart, doing the will of God in her daily work,” he said. “She has and continues to touch the lives of everyone around her — students, parents and colleagues alike. Bettina was a clear choice for consideration from the very beginning of the nomination process.”

He noted that Robertson’s work doesn’t stop in the classroom, as she mentors students through an SGGs program that promotes fellowship and encourages acts of service and good deeds. She is also actively involved in the parish as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and lector.

“Her quiet humility, genuine enthusiasm and interpersonal skills shine through in everything she does,” Branco said.

As a child, Robertson loved school — the books and binders, projects and pens. While most kids savored the summer sun, she was anxiously waiting for fall to arrive.

“I wanted to stay in school forever

and realized the only way to do so is by becoming a teacher,” she said.

Robertson, who holds an undergraduate degree in interdisciplinary studies from the University of Virginia and a graduate degree in education from Regent University, has been teaching eighth grade English language arts full-time at SGGs since 2016 and feels at home there.

“First and foremost, it is a warm, nurturing and supportive environment,” she said. “Our classes are small enough that we get to know our students very well. We support their every need and are engaged in helping them achieve their full potential.”

SGGs provides Robertson the opportunity to bring faith into the classroom.

“We examine if and how non-fiction texts fit into Catholic beliefs. For example, does stem cell research protect the sanctity of human life, or is it destroying a gift from God? Is the Catholic faith at odds with modern science? (It is not.)” she said. “In research writing projects, I ask my students to support their position with at least one biblical quote to strengthen not only their proper MLA-formatted citation skills, but also to nurture their biblical worldview.”

SGGs strives for students to develop a “growth mindset,” which Robertson explained means it equips students to persevere through any setbacks.

“The ability to get back up when life knocks them down and to recognize that grit and determination is

the key to success will sustain them as they try to make their way in the world,” she said.

Robertson incorporates the Socratic pedagogy into her teaching, encouraging open discussions. Her students learn not only by listening to her lectures, but by participating in them. They engage in “HOT” (high-order thinking) to foster critical thinking to make personal observations, interpretations and connections to texts or topics.

When the diocese decided to offer in-person and virtual learning for the 2020-21 school year, Robertson wanted to provide all students, whether at home or school, with structure. She still wanted her hybrid classroom to be a place of open discussion and engagement.

Robertson said she calls on students sitting at home just as often as those sitting at desks. All have equal opportunities to contribute to discussions, cast votes regarding assignments and ask questions.

“Almost more importantly, I try to help them feel connected,” she said. “From time to time, we reach out to the remote learners by sending a card or spending a few minutes asking them how they are doing at home. We assure them that we love and miss them.”

### Examining a wider world

Even when students are isolated, Robertson encourages them to examine the wider world. One way she does this is by teaching about



Bettina Robertson

different cultures and faiths, such as in her elective Holocaust literature course.

“Children need to learn when they are very young to love and understand someone who may not look like them,” she said. “It is modern teachers’ responsibility to prepare their students for a socially and culturally diverse world. Cultural intelligence is a key skill in future job markets, but, more importantly, in actively living the belief that we are all made in God’s image.”

Robertson has taught many students many things, but she wants them to remember one thing above all.

“I hope they will never forget that they are Catholics,” she said. “I want them to hold on to their faith even when it is deemed uncool to do so. If they cleave to their faith, they will never be alone.”

## 26 Catholic school teachers recognized

**C**atholic school teachers were honored Thursday, April 29, for the fourth annual Excellence in Catholic Education awards presented virtually by the Diocese of Richmond Office of Catholic Schools.

Administrators and colleagues at each school selected one teacher to be recognized based on their “exceptional commitment to Catholic education through their leadership and service to their students, parents, colleagues, parishes and school communities,” according to criteria established by the Office of Catholic Schools. Those receiving the Excellence in Catholic Education Award are:

**Richard Barnett,**  
All Saints Catholic School

**Annelise Shelton,**  
Blessed Sacrament Huguenot C.S.

**Joseph Bousquet,**  
Catholic High School

**Christi Martin,**  
Charlottesville Catholic School

**Rebecca Anthony,**  
Christ the King Catholic School

**Wendy Sellers,**  
Our Lady of Lourdes C. S.

**Theresa Barrett,**  
Our Lady of Mount Carmel C. S.

**Jessica Kovalcik,**  
Peninsula Catholic High School

**Kathy Noblin,**  
Portsmouth Catholic School

**Paul Begeman,**  
Roanoke Catholic School

**Sara Gauldin,**  
Sacred Heart Catholic School

**Scott Thiers,**  
St. Anne Catholic School

**Marylou Carter,**  
St. Benedict Catholic School

**Eric De Boer,**  
St. Bridget Catholic School

**Amy Young,**  
St. Edward-Epiphaney C. S.

**Bettina Robertson,**  
St. Gregory the Great C. S.

**Ryan Balsly,**  
St. John the Apostle Catholic School

**Elizabeth Kassel,**  
St. Joseph Catholic School

**Leeann Klein,**  
St. Mary Catholic School

**Jamie Green,**  
St. Mary Star of the Sea C. S.

**Linda Mercier,**  
St. Matthew Catholic School

**Shelley Lomogda,**  
St. Pius X Catholic School

**Joanne Selig,**  
Star of the Sea Catholic School

Each school nominee was considered for the diocesan Excellence in Catholic Education Award.

The winners are:

**Joseph Bousquet,**  
Catholic High School

**Elizabeth Kassel,**  
St. Joseph Catholic School

**Linda Mercier,**  
St. Matthew Catholic School

# Centennial celebration a journey through time, Norfolk

## Blessed Sacrament pilgrimage highlights history, memories

WENDY KLESCH

Special to The Catholic Virginian

**B**lessed Sacrament, Norfolk, celebrated its centennial anniversary this month with a journey through time and through the city, covering more than 200 years and six miles of pavement.

Around 100 parishioners gathered Saturday, May 8, for a walking tour of the west side of Norfolk — beginning downtown from the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, the first Catholic parish in Virginia, to Newport Avenue, where Blessed Sacrament stands. A shuttle bus was made available, too, for those who preferred to ride.

“It’s a pilgrimage through history, retracing the foundations of Catholicism in Norfolk,” Charles McPhillips, one of the event’s organizers, said.

Father Eric Ayers, pastor of Blessed Sacrament and episcopal vicar of the Eastern Vicariate, explained that the parish originally considered organizing a trip for the occasion, but the pandemic prompted them to look for a way to celebrate closer to home.

The change in plans had a serendipitous effect for many, making the pilgrimage a day not only for history, but for memories: of weddings, baptisms and confirmations, and of parish picnics and basketball games against rivals at Sacred Heart.

“It’s an emotional journey for me,” said McPhillips, whose family immigrated to Norfolk from Ireland in 1919 and have, over the years, held ties to all five sites on the pilgrimage.

“These are all places that hold memories for a lot of us,” CeCe Turrietta, a parishioner of 50 years, said. “Memories that are very dear.”

### Cradle of the community

“Congratulations,” said Father James Curran, pastor of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception. “Our oldest grandchild has turned one hundred.”

The pilgrims began their journey through time at St. Mary, the cradle of Catholicism in the diocese. Founded in 1791, it was original-



Blessed Sacrament, Norfolk, parishioners make their way to the third stop on their parish’s centennial pilgrimage, Sacred Heart in Ghent, Saturday, May 8. (Photo/Wendy Klesch)



Father Eric Ayers, pastor of Blessed Sacrament and episcopal vicar for the Eastern Vicariate, addresses the crowds outside of the old Blessed Sacrament Church on Colley Ave. in Norfolk during the parish’s centennial pilgrimage, Saturday, May 8. (Photo/Wendy Klesch)

ly known as St. Patrick Church.

By 1842, a stone church had replaced the original chapel, McPhillips said as he recounted a brief history of the parish, but troubles came in 1855, when Yellow Fever ravaged the congregation and Father Matthew O’Keefe faced threats from members of the anti-Catholic Know-Nothing party, who insisted that he celebrate segregated Masses.

When St. Patrick burned down in 1856, it was widely believed to be the work of Know-Nothing supporters.

Father O’Keefe worked tirelessly, McPhillips said, and managed to raise funds to build a new church, completed in 1858 and called St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception.

It’s a lesson in perseverance and hope, Father Ayers said, to consider how our predecessors worked “in a time of racial and religious injustice,” through Yellow Fever and Spanish Flu and through two world wars.

“They have kept the faith for us,” he said. “It’s good to remember those on whose shoulders we stand.”

### Walk by faith

After leaving the beautifully restored Gothic Revival church, the pilgrims headed along West Bute Street, where they paused along a seemingly ordinary stretch of sidewalk.

“On the other side of this YMCA,” McPhillips said, laughing at the marked contrast between the first two sites on the pilgrimage schedule, “over by the light rail tracks, is where Sacred Heart used to stand.”

If Blessed Sacrament is the grandchild of St. Mary, McPhillips said, it’s the child of Sacred Heart, a parish formed in 1894 to serve the growing neighborhoods of West Norfolk.

While no sign of the original building remains, its round, stained-glass window depicting the Sacred Heart is displayed in the “new” Sacred Heart, a Florentine Renaissance style church built in 1925 — just a walk along the Hague away and the third stop on the centennial pilgrimage.

### Tale of two parishes

At Sacred Heart, Father Ayers recounted how, in 1905, Father Richard Drake, then pastor of the parish, opened St. Francis de Sales

mission chapel in Lambert’s Point. The chapel soon became overcrowded, however, when construction of the Norfolk Naval Base at the advent of WWI caused the city’s population to skyrocket, leading to the need for a new parish. Hence, Blessed Sacrament was born.

In 1921, Father Leo Ryan dedicated a small, stone, Gothic church located at the corner of Colley Avenue and 37th Street, and although the building houses a Pentecostal church today, many parishioners still cherish fond memories of the old Blessed Sacrament.

“It’s a beautiful little church,” Deborah Alberti, a parishioner of nearly 70 years and chair of the centennial committee, said. “There’s something humble and quaint about it.”

The old church marked the fourth stop on the pilgrimage, and Alberti said she was glad for the chance to visit it again.

“It’s nice that we can have this, to remember,” she said. “History so easily gets forgotten.”

### Every stone is essential

From Colley Avenue, the crowds threaded over the Granby Street Bridge, finally arriving along the oak-lined street of Newport Avenue and gathering in the sanctuary of Blessed Sacrament Church, built in 1965 and renovated in 2002.

“Each layer of stone is essential to the unity of the structure,” Father Ayers said, reflecting on the day and noting that community is forged in the connections built between the current generation and in the legacy that they leave for the next generation.

“What will our role be?” he asked.

Afterward, alumni of Blessed Sacrament School, which operated from 1952 to 1988, held a reunion in the parish hall, where they looked over old photographs and reminisced about former teachers, talent shows and field trips.

Meanwhile, at a parish cook-out outside, a few children convened on the playground — children who will one day have their own Blessed Sacrament stories to tell.

The day they walked six miles through the city and across the Lafayette River will, doubtless, be among them.

*Editor’s note: A video on the centennial pilgrimage of Blessed Sacrament, Norfolk, can be viewed on the Catholic Diocese of Richmond’s YouTube channel.*

# Assisted suicide advocates' not-so-hidden agenda

## GUEST COMMENTARY

RICHARD DOERFLINGER  
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Most people have heard of the slippery slope. After making what seems a limited exception to a moral principle, we may find over time that it logically becomes far broader than we had in mind.

In his 1995 encyclical "Evangelium Vitae" ("The Gospel of Life"), St. John Paul II recounted how this can create a "culture of death" undermining the very idea that human life deserves respect.

On the issue of physician-assisted suicide, something even more troubling may be at work: The goal that proponents always

supported is becoming clearer only gradually to the rest of us.

In 2008, voters in my home state of Washington approved a law allowing doctors to prescribe a lethal drug overdose for patients expected to have less than six months to live.

They were persuaded to approve it by a well-funded campaign emphasizing the law's strict "safeguards" against abuse: agreement on the diagnosis by two physicians, a two-week waiting period to give patients time to reconsider and evaluation by a psychiatrist or psychologist to detect impaired judgment due to depression.

We now have the state's annual reports on cases from 2009 through 2018 (after which the state, without explanation, stopped issuing reports).

Assisted suicide cases have increased five-fold; almost no one receives a psychological evaluation, because whether to order one is up to those first two physicians; and there is no record that anyone in a decade was disqualified because of depression.

In 2020, the group End of Life Washington invited media to witness the assisted suicide process for cancer patient Robert Fuller. He received a sympathetic front-page write-up in The Seattle Times.

It turned out that Fuller had been subject to suicidal depression for much of his life, and twice tried to kill himself when he was physically healthy. He qualified for the lethal drugs.

In other words, such laws are riddled

*See Agenda, Page 13*

### Let people see Jesus within us

In our Catholic faith, there is a very strong belief in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This strong belief is emphasized in the article on eucharistic miracles (Catholic Virginian, April 19).

Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is what we believe as central to our faith, and this foundational belief leads to why we believe in Jesus' presence in the Eucharist.

We receive Jesus in the Eucharist so that we can become the body of Jesus to others in life around us. St. Augustine said it centuries ago, "become what you receive."

Our lives as Christians have to bear witness to the life of Jesus living within us so that Jesus within us can change the world around us to reflect the presence of Jesus in a world of peace, justice and love.

If people do not see Jesus really present within us, will they believe in Jesus really present in the Eucharist?

– **Father Louis R. Benoit**  
Roanoke

### Don't sow doubt about COVID vaccine

I am deeply concerned with the front-page piece, "Bishops to vaccine developers: 'Stop using abortion-derived cell lines'" (Catholic Virginian, April 19).

As this pandemic continues to spread throughout the world, another sensationalized headline which might dissuade some from a COVID-19 vaccination is reckless, especially when the, "however, what's most

important is that people get vaccinated," isn't stated until page 10.

Choosing the manufacturer of which vaccine we received was not an option for many of us. Those of us who do not have a choice to stay at home and work remotely are grateful to receive the vaccine at all. Let's not sow doubt when it's important for everyone to get vaccinated.

– **Sheila Franco**  
Mechanicsville

### Is Church's message being lost?

After reading the letters to the editor (Catholic Virginian, May 3), I was impressed by the profoundly negative effect that secular society and the media have on the Catholic faithful. The pro-life stance of the Church was described as "clearly an obsession with abortion among some."

The organization, Black Lives Matter, whose founders self-describe as trained Marxists, and have proclaimed to be anti-nuclear family, anti-heterosexual privilege and anti-traditional marriage, was presented in a most affirming way.

There was a rather rabid rant against President Trump which clearly demonstrated that the writer had no love for this neighbor.

It all read more like the op-ed section of a secular newspaper rather than a Catholic publication. Is the Church's message being lost or am I over-reacting?

– **Marilyn Stevens**  
Norfolk

### Disappointed in readers' opinions

You talk about disap-

pointing. I just finished reading the opinion of some Catholics (Catholic Virginian, May 4) regarding Joe Biden's "single issue," and that somehow abortion is now an "obsession." This single issue and obsession are in regard to life — the most precious gift God has so mercifully given to us.

How do we justify that this is a passing issue? The CDC estimates more than 600,000 babies were aborted in the U.S. from 2018-2020; the Guttmacher Institute estimates more than 800,000 during that same span. Most are performed by Planned Parenthood, which is funded by our federal government, which in turn is funded by us, the tax paying citizens. All Catholics and Christians should be outraged over this and many are, e.g., the annual March for Life in DC.

Roe vs. Wade is a bad law because it was decided by nine non-elected people in black coats instead of our representatives in Congress. The law needs to go away and let the states decide what should be done.

Faith in God is a discipline, and disciplines have specific doctrines to assist us in leading a life of dignity and respect for others. The 10 Commandments are the basis of our Catholic doctrine and act as an excellent pathway to loving one another, with "Thou shalt not kill" being one of those commandments. If you follow the science, abortion is just that.

– **John Aaron**  
Short Pump

### Church should establish 'Unplanned Parenthood'

I am a pro-life Catholic

who is deeply disappointed in the Church's apparent inability or unwillingness to create a compassionate, affordable, smooth pipeline between young women embroiled in the excruciating dilemma of completing or terminating a pregnancy and those who would desperately love to adopt those babies.

There are thousands of couples struggling with infertility or simply interested in expanding their own families but either give up or spend endless time and money for babies from other countries because the process here is so complex, expensive and bureaucratically prohibitive.

I've seen the heartbreaking notebooks hospital social workers show pregnant women who are considering giving their babies up for adoption — filled with pictures and bios of couples yearning for children.

I've had friends who honestly felt they had no choice but to abort and others who were exasperated by agencies that could not guide them through a simple and humane adoption process.

According to iFoster, there are more than 400,000

unwanted American foster kids who would give anything for a "forever family," and according to the CDC, from 2018-2020, more than 600,000 abortions were performed

I would rather know that the perfect souls of all those aborted babies go straight back into the arms of Jesus than have them born into a world where they'll be tossed around like street litter. Are we pro-life or simply pro-birth?

Perhaps the Catholic Church should start an organization called "Unplanned Parenthood" whose mission would be to lovingly guide those with unplanned pregnancies toward safe, loving homes for their babies.

– **Cecilia Thomas**  
Mechanicsville

### Thank you from Msgr. Golden

I want to thank everyone for your many prayers and cards at the passing of my father and now for my mother. Please know that your kindness in writing me is deeply appreciated and that your words were very consoling. Thank you all so very much. God bless.

– **Msgr. Patrick Golden**  
Roanoke

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# Jubilant's vocation is built upon grace, determination

## Father Joseph Mary Lukyamuzi marks 40 years of priesthood

JANNA REYNOLDS  
The Catholic Virginian

For 40 years, Father Joseph Mary Lukyamuzi has been standing on “the two legs of grace and determination” in his vocation as a priest.

Growing up in the Diocese of Masaka, Uganda, Father Lukyamuzi was raised in a “very staunch Catholic family” of seven children: two boys and five girls.

He began to consider priesthood in his youth when priests would visit his family’s home.

“I just wanted to be like them,” he said. “I was very much inspired by the priests who were visiting our family, and from there, that calling has never ceased.”

Father Lukyamuzi began formation after his high school education, attending St. Thomas Aquinas National Seminary, Katigondo, and St. Mary’s National Seminary, Ggaba.

He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Masaka on May 10, 1981.

Father Lukyamuzi came to the United States in 2001 and professed vows as a Benedictine monk at Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, Richmond.

While with the Benedictines, Father Lukyamuzi studied spiritual direction and formation at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm in Rome.

“I would say that at least every Catholic should visit Rome, because when you are in Rome, you are really at the core, at the ground, of where your faith comes from. It’s wonderful,” he said of that experience.

At the abbey, Father Lukyamuzi gave retreats and spiritual direction. He also taught at Benedictine High School for seven years.

During that time, in 2010, Benedictine Father Adrian Harmening was pastor of St. Joseph, Richmond, where Father Lukyamuzi worked as his associate.

“Having gone through the different weekend Masses, I decided to see if I could be part of the diocese,” said the priest.

His first assignment with the Diocese of

Richmond was to serve as parochial vicar of St. Bridget, Richmond, while still a Benedictine monk. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Richmond in 2019.

Father Lukyamuzi has served as pastor of Church of the Holy Comforter, Charlottesville, since 2013. Previously, he served as administrator of the parish (2012-2013) and as pastor of Our Lady of the Rosary Mission, Crozet (2018-2019).

Bishop Barry C. Knestout appointed Father Lukyamuzi vicar forane, or dean, of Deanery 10 in November 2018. In this role, the priest assists with parish visits within the deanery; works with pastors, deacons, parish staff and laity; and helps communicate pastoral messages and concerns from the bishop.

Of his 40-year vocation, Father Lukyamuzi said that his focus in catechizing has always been helping the people “know and appreciate the message of the cross and the message of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who helps us and who protects us from anything that could distract us away from God.”

He noted that the strongest devotion he has is to the Blessed Virgin Mary “because she is the one who worked out my way through the seminary formation even up to the priesthood.”

A love of serving people has brought Father Lukyamuzi great happiness in his life as a priest.

“Looking at the life of Christ and being able to identify whatever challenges I receive with him, it gives me joy to see that I am able to serve the people, to find joy in following Christ,” he said.

The priest recalled a time when he was traveling by motorcycle to anoint the sick in Masaka. It was raining, slippery and muddy:

“I was carrying Jesus with me to the sick, and I fell! And when I fell, I did tell Jesus, ‘Thank you, now I have shared the fall that you experienced when you were carrying the cross. But the good thing is that I’m falling with you!’ So that was something which to me I always searched for —

that identification with Christ, his life, that helps me serve the people with joy.”

Helping other men on their journey to priesthood has been another source of joy for the priest.

Father Lukyamuzi, who has two cousins who are priests — Father Gerald Musubire, pastor of St. Timothy, Tappahannock, and another who lives in Uganda — said that because he knows personally the difficulties that he and other seminarians had to go through, he would “from time to time see how they could be supported.”

“I knew a lot about how the families in Uganda are struggling,” he said. “And of course, they have some good children who really desire to be priests.”

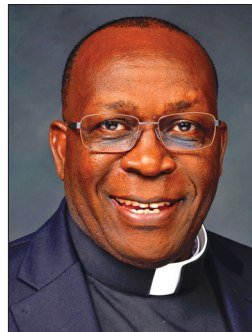
Currently, Father Lukyamuzi’s efforts support the formation of 10 seminarians in his home country. As part of Holy Comforter’s celebration of their pastor’s 40th anniversary, parishioners took up a special collection to further support those men — just one of the surprises they planned.

On Monday, May 10, parishioners decorated the church with special flowers, compiled a slideshow from the priest’s personal photo collection, and ordered holy cards with his ordination date. Children of the parish decorated banners and devotions.

The priest was presented with images of the Sacred Heart and Immaculate Heart for pillars in the sanctuary from the parish council, a custom stole from parishioners who attend daily Mass, and a statue of St. John Vianney, to whom the priest developed a devotion after a visit to Ars, France, in 2016.

Despite the positive impact he has clearly had upon those to whom he ministers, Father Lukyamuzi remains humble.

“I would say that I cannot take credit for anything, but the credit I can always give to God and especially the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has been my mother throughout up to now,” he said.



Father Joseph Mary Lukyamuzi

## Catechist

Continued from Page 2

truly constitutes a distinctive ministry for the growth of the Christian community,” the archbishop told reporters at a news conference to present the pope’s document.

In his document, Pope Francis noted how teachers of the faith were present from the earliest days of the Christian community and were recognized as having a special gift of the Holy Spirit for carrying out their role within the community.

“At times,” he wrote, “the charisms that the Spirit constantly pours out on the baptized took on a visible and tangible form of immediate service to the Christian community, one recognized as an indispensable ‘diakonia’ for the community.”

In looking at the history of evangelization, the pope said, Catholics cannot overlook “the countless lay men and women who directly took part in the spread of the Gospel through catechetical instruction. Men and women of deep faith, authentic

witnesses of holiness, who in some cases were also founders of Churches and eventually died as martyrs.”

### Community leaders

Still today, he said, “many competent and dedicated catechists are community leaders in various parts of the world and carry out a mission invaluable for the transmission and growth of the faith.”

Especially in communities without a resident priest, catechists are the leaders of the local Catholic community, evangelizing, convoking and guiding their fellow Catholics in prayer and works of charity. And, in missionary territories under the guidance of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, they already serve with a specific mandate from their bishop.

“The long line of blessed, saints and martyrs who were catechists has significantly advanced the Church’s mission and deserves to be recognized, for it represents a rich resource not only for catechesis but

also for the entire history of Christian spirituality,” Pope Francis wrote.

The formal institution of catechists, he said, should be a sign and encouragement for all lay Catholics to recognize “even more the missionary commitment proper to every baptized person, a commitment that must however be carried out in a fully ‘secular’ manner, avoiding any form of clericalization.”

### Faithful to the Gospel

Archbishop Fisichella said Pope Francis was insisting that lay “men and women are called to express their baptismal vocation in the best possible way, not as substitutes for priests or consecrated persons, but as authentic laymen and laywomen who, in the distinctive nature of their ministry, are able to experience the full of extent of their baptismal vocation of witness and effective service in the community and the world.”

Laypeople who feel called to the ministry of catechists should be actively involved in the life of their

Catholic communities and faithful to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church, he said. But they also must receive “suitable biblical, theological, pastoral and pedagogical formation to be competent communicators of the truth of the faith.”

“Catechists are called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith as it develops through its different stages from the initial proclamation” of the Gospel, preparation for receiving the sacraments and support in living a Christian life, the pope said.

Presenting the document to reporters, Archbishop Fisichella said catechesis “cannot be improvised.”

“Those who will be catechists must know that they speak in the name of the Church and transmit the faith of the Church,” he said.

*Editor’s note: Read the full text of the letter at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu\\_proprio-20210510\\_antiquum-ministerium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu_proprio-20210510_antiquum-ministerium.html)*

# What the Church expects regarding marriage, children



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

**Q.** In a recent column, you said that if a couple enters into marriage consciously intending never to have children, that marriage, in the Church's eyes, would be invalid. That response took me by surprise.

If a couple in their later years (past the age of childbearing) is seeking the sacrament of marriage, would their marriage be deemed invalid? Also, if a young couple simply cannot afford to raise a child, would their marriage also be invalid? (Roanoke)

**A.** The Church views children as the supreme gift of marriage and has always regarded openness to children as an essential part of what marriage is. That having been said, a couple who marry later in life (beyond childbearing years) may certainly contract a valid marriage in the Church's eyes.

One of the questions the priest or deacon asks a couple during the wedding ceremony is this: "Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"

But the ritual itself instructs the officiant that this question "may be omitted if, for example, the couple is advanced in years."

As to the young couple who feel they can't afford a child, I would ask: Do you mean "not right now" or "not ever"?

The difference is this: If the couple simply wants to wait to have children, that doesn't automatically affect the validity of the marriage; if, however, they intend to exclude children always and forever, this would render the marriage invalid in the mind of the Church.

I might also ask this couple whether they have considered deferring their marriage until a more suitable time.

**Q.** My question concerns Catholic sacramental marriage, which I always understood to include a commitment by the couple to do their best to raise their children in the Catholic faith.

So is a marriage invalidated when the parents, not even one of them, do not fulfill their commitment to raise their children in the faith — especially when they do not make any effort whatever to bring the children to Mass or share their faith with them, even at an early age? (Baltimore)

**A.** You are correct in assuming that a Catholic marriage includes the commitment to raise children in the Catholic faith.

In fact, during the wedding ceremony itself, the priest asks the couple: "Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and bring

them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"

And even in a mixed marriage (where one of the spouses is not a Catholic), the Catholic party must pledge to continue to practice the Catholic religion and must also (in the words of Canon 1125.1) "make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power so that all offspring are baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church."

But the failure later in marriage to carry out that commitment does not affect the sacramental validity of the marriage itself.

A valid Catholic marriage results when, in freely consenting to marry, the couple has the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and to be open to children.

**Q.** I am a 92-year-old homebound woman — nearing the end of my earthly journey. Lately I have been plagued by the thought that I might be committing a grievous sin for receiving holy Communion without going to confession first. With a clear conscience, I know that I have not committed a mortal sin.

I have not gone to confession for more than 50 years, if memory serves me right, but I had been receiving Communion weekly up until the onset of COVID-19. Now my grandniece plans to resume driving her mom and me to weekly Mass, since we have already had our second vaccinations. Can I continue to receive holy Com-

munion? (city and state withheld)

**A.** Please relax and be at peace. You may certainly continue to receive holy Communion. If you have not committed any mortal sins, you are not obliged to go to the sacrament of reconciliation first.

Canon 989 of the Code of Canon Law says, "After having reached the age of discretion, each member of the faithful is obliged to confess faithfully his or her grave sins at least once a year."

So, strictly speaking, one is obliged to go to confession only for mortal ("grave") sins. I am an advocate, though, of much more frequent confession, and I have read that Pope Francis receives the sacrament every two weeks.

Without any sense of urgency, I would suggest that you might ask your grandniece to drive you to church some Saturday afternoon to go to confession. I think it would bring you a sense of peace, and it would certainly be consistent with the mind of the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit" (No. 1458).

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

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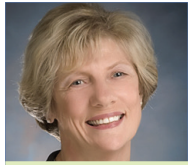
Featuring Jim Beckman, the executive director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City as well as the executive director of ImpactCenter, a nonprofit dedicated to leadership development in the Catholic Church, discussing maintaining zeal in your ministry.

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# Let Holy Spirit fill your heart with fire of love



## IN LIGHT OF FAITH

BARBARA HUGHES

The saying: “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” is for me synonymous with a conscious awareness of the presence of God. I was reminded of this when an email from Franciscan Father Richard Rohr landed in my inbox describing an experience of being surrounded by what he could only define as holy.

He wrote: “I had the sense that the world was good, I was good, and I was part of the good world — and I just wanted to stay there. It was like being taken to another world — the real world, the world as it’s meant to be, where the foundation is love and God is in everything.”

The interesting thing is that the priest was only 5 years old at the time.

Whether we view his experience as an epiphany, enlightenment or a spiritual awakening, his heightened awareness reminds us that since that first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is present on earth every moment of every day whether we are aware of it or not. Surveys have shown that when persons are asked if they’ve ever had a “spiritual experience,” most respond, “yes.”

Most people experience the presence of God as an intimate encounter, revealed neither by a driving wind nor tongues of fire. More often than not, the Spirit of God comes upon us quietly.

A beautiful sunset, an infant’s smile, keep-

ing watch at the bedside of a loved one may cause tears of joy to spring from the deepest recesses of the soul. The experience, though unexpected, overwhelms and leaves an impression that is impossible to forget, not unlike that one that Richard Rohr described.

Such sacred symphonies may be triggered by sights and sounds, but the real action is an interior one that mystics describe as “I know not what.” When the human heart is touched by the presence of God, words fall short, yet it leaves an awareness of all that is holy, changing the way we see. Accompanied by a deep abiding peace, the encounter blots out all that is not of God.

It’s what led Julian of Norwich to exclaim, “All shall be well” despite the suffering she endured. Similarly, St. Catherine of Genoa noted, “When you can see Christ in all things (including yourself!), you will see and live differently.”

That’s the real message of Pentecost. When we are touched by the Holy Spirit, we see the world through the eyes of God, gifting us with a heart that is able to love the sinner, even though we despise the sin.

Sin is sensational, which is why the media focus on it, but as Christians, we have been given a different mandate. We are called to spread the Good News, and by the grace of God to love the sinner and overcome evil by doing good.

It’s what impelled Francis of Assisi to embrace the leper, which changed his life. I suspect there are lepers in most every life. People we avoid because they look different, have different ideologies and belief systems, or because their personality is one that rubs us the wrong way.

Just as love is communicated through our actions, so disapproval is similarly communi-

cated. Whether we realize it or not, body language speaks volumes and so does the tone of our voice.

No matter how eloquent our words may be, studies have shown that only 8% of what a person says is heard. It’s a person’s demeanor and the tone of their voice that stays with an audience.

Perhaps that’s the reason the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles as a rushing wind and appeared as tongues of fire. In the absence of words, the message that the apostles received was loud and clear, and it changed their lives.

With hearts aflame, they went forth proclaiming all that they had seen when they walked with Jesus. How ironic that through Jesus, the Word of God was made visible and yet his silence during his passion and crucifixion speak volumes about the power of God.

During his public life, Jesus’ words were backed up by his actions as he went about doing good, reaching out to sinners and the marginalized.

Tertullian, (A.D. 160 –220), known as the “Father of Latin Theology,” was raised in a pagan family, educated to become a lawyer and civil servant in the Roman government. When he converted to Christianity it was because of what he saw and is best known for saying, “See how Christians love one another.” I wonder if the same could be said about us.

And so, we pray, “Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with the fire of your love”!

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

## Are you on fire this Pentecost?



## BELIEVE AS YOU PRAY

MSGR. TIMOTHY KEENEY

This year at the Easter Vigil, our Easter fire was the largest blaze I have ever been near. As I was blessing the new fire and the Paschal candle, fire was raining down on me and the other members of the assembly.

Unfortunately, and unlike the apostles at Pentecost, this fire did not merely alight on us; it also started to light me up – a post-Easter repair of my cope was necessary. But the experience did start me thinking about the connection between this Easter fire, which is a symbol of the resurrected Christ, and the flames that fell upon the apostles at Pentecost.

The tongues of fire that came to rest on the heads of those in the upper room were part of a theophany of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost shows us that the Holy Spirit is not some impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is a person in God from whom have flowed all the subse-

quent gifts to the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of Pentecost as the Passover fulfilled. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are only fulfilled in the giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and to us. Pentecost is the fulfillment of Easter.

Those tongues of fire also take us back to the theophany of the Father to Moses in the burning bush — it burned but was not consumed. God the Father revealed himself in those flames as I Am Who Am.

God would reveal himself to his people

again as he led them in the desert with a pillar of fire, and again on Mount Sinai as he gave Moses the law as the Lord come down upon the mountain in fire.

Jesus was revealed as God to his

apostles on the Mount of the Transfiguration as his face and clothes became dazzling white. Jesus is revealed as the Son, and the one alone to whom we should truly listen.

The theophany of the Transfiguration was given to help the apostles to understand what was really going to happen in Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection.

Pentecost is the first time the Trinity is revealed to us. Father and Son had now been

revealed, but for the first time the Holy Spirit is revealed as God. This is so we might understand what kind of life is now open to us — a time of life which up to that time had not even been in our collective imaginations.

In the flames of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is revealed as God and the one from whom we receive the graces necessarily to live our lives in Jesus Christ as we also make our lives an offering to the Father.

Jesus appeared to the apostles on the evening of Easter and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” He completes the action of his self-gift on the cross. He makes it possible for those gathered in the Upper Room and us to share in the very life of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are no longer just creatures. We have been divinized by God. Now we cannot only worship God, but we are given the gift of sharing in his very life.

We might not have visible flames fall upon us this Pentecost, but the fulfillment of the meaning of that Paschal fire can live in our hearts. Are not our hearts burning within us?

If your heart is not yet burning, ask. The Holy Spirit wants to give us the gift of a burning heart on fire with love. Burning with the presence of Christ, burning with the gift of the Holy Spirit, burning with the desire to give ourselves to the Father in love.

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

### Pentecost Sunday – Year B

Acts 2:1-11

Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Gal 5:16-25

Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15:26-27, 16:12-15

## Vatican

Continued from Page 1

address the situation of Catholic politicians and “the worthiness to receive holy Communion.”

### ‘Source of discord instead of unity’

Cardinal Ladaria warned that without the unanimity of the bishops, a national policy, “given its possibly contentious nature,” could “become a source of discord rather than unity within the episcopate and the larger Church in the United States.”

The cardinal also suggested the discussion “would best be framed within the broad context of worthiness for the reception of holy Communion on the part of all the faithful, rather than only one category of Catholics, reflecting their obligation to conform their lives to the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ as they prepare to receive the sacrament.”

Given the importance of the issue, which goes beyond the boundaries of the United States, Cardinal Ladaria also said, “Every effort should be made to dialogue with other episcopal conferences as this policy is formulated in order both to learn from one another and to preserve unity in the universal Church.”

The cardinal’s letter also mentioned a reference by Archbishop Gomez to a letter then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger sent in 2004 to then-Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington about Catholic politicians and Communion. The letter, Cardinal Ladaria said, was in “the form of a private communication” to the bishops and should be read only in the context of the formal 2002, “Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life.”

When the U.S. bishops made their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican in 2004, Cardinal Ladaria said, “it was clear that there was a lack of agreement regarding the issue of Communion among the bishops.”

“At that time, the development of a national policy was not under consideration, and Cardinal Ratzinger offered general principles on the worthy reception of holy Communion in order to assist local ordinaries in the United States in their dealings with Catholic pro-choice politicians within their jurisdictions,” he said.

“Cardinal Ratzinger’s communication,” he said, “should thus be discussed only within the context of the authoritative doctrinal note which provides the teaching of the magisterium on the theological foundation for any initiative regarding the question of worthy reception of holy Communion.”

### Eucharist not mentioned in 2002 communication

The 2002 note said, “Those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a ‘grave and clear obligation to oppose’ any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them.”

The 2002 note did not, however, mention reception of the Eucharist.

Cardinal Ratzinger’s 2004 letter, which was never published by the Vatican, said, “Regarding the grave sin of abortion or euthanasia, when a person’s formal cooperation becomes manifest — understood in the case of a Catholic politician as his consistently campaigning and voting for permissive abortion and euthanasia laws — his pastor should meet with him, instructing him about the Church’s teaching, informing him that he is not to present himself for holy Communion until he brings to an end the objective situation of sin and warning him that he will otherwise be denied the Eucharist.”

“When ‘these precautionary measures have not had their effect or in which they were not possible,’ and the person in question, with obstinate persistence, still presents himself to receive the holy Eucharist, ‘the minister of holy Communion must refuse to distribute it,’” Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, quoting from a declaration of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts on the issue of Communion for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.

### ‘Extensive dialogue needed’

Writing to Archbishop Gomez, Cardinal Ladaria said the U.S. bishops need an “extensive and serene dialogue” among themselves and between individual bishops and Catholic politicians in their dioceses who do not support the fullness of the Church’s teaching to understand “the nature of their positions and their comprehension of Catholic teaching.”

Only after both dialogues, the cardinal said, the bishops’ conference “would face the difficult task of discerning the best way forward for the Church in the United States to witness to the grave moral responsibility of Catholic public officials to protect human life at all stages.”

“If it is then decided to formulate a national policy on worthiness for Communion, such a statement would need to express a true consensus of the bishops on the matter, while observing the prerequisite that any provisions of the conference in this area would respect the rights of individual ordinaries in their dioceses and the prerogatives of the Holy See,” the cardinal said, citing St. John Paul II’s 1998 document on bishops’ conferences.

Cardinal Ladaria specifically pointed to paragraphs 22 of the document, “Apostolos Suos,” which says bishops’ conferences may publish doctrinal declarations when they are “approved unanimously,” but “a majority alone” is not enough for publication without the approval of the Vatican.

He also cited paragraph 24, which says the bishops’ conference cannot hinder an individual bishop’s authority in his diocese “by substituting themselves inappropriately for him, where the canonical legislation does not provide for a limitation of his episcopal power in favor of the episcopal conference.”

## Blessing ultrasound machine



Bishop Barry C. Knestout blesses an ultrasound machine at the Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond, Sunday, April 25. Msgr. Francis J. Byrne Knights of Columbus Council 5476 at St. Bridget, Richmond, raised funds for three machines through the parish’s Jennifer Stivers Campaign to Save the Lives of the Most Vulnerable, while the national Knights of Columbus matched those funds. Total cost was close to \$90,000. The machines were put into service in January 2020 and have provided 500 ultrasound exams. (Photo/Vy Barto)

## WHAT WE’VE HEARD



**Beard + Beads + Bangles = Bucks:** While COVID sidelined fundraisers that supported various parish outreach efforts, the need to fund outreach did not stop. At St. Thomas More, Lynchburg, the parish’s Haiti committee was not deterred. First, they raised \$6,000 through the sale of “You Are Loved” yard signs. Then they enlisted the support of their pastor, Msgr. Michael McCarron. If parishioners donated \$5,000, he would decorate his beard with beads and bangles. A parishioner matched that \$5,000. The donations, which eventually totaled \$18,000, were sent to Our Lady of the Nativity Catholic Church in Savanette, Haiti, where the money was used to pay teacher salaries, provide school lunches and to buy a generator to support a water treatment plant the parish helped build in 2014 in response to a cholera outbreak.

**Honored:** “How Can I Keep From Singing?” may have been the question most frequently asked by worshipers during the pandemic. Fortunately, several choirs in the diocese, including the one at Church of the Redeemer, Mechanicsville, produced digital videos for their parishioners throughout the year. They were honored to have their recording of “Jesus Christ is Risen Today” chosen as the first video to be featured in the National Association of Pastoral Musicians’ Virtual Choir Showcase on May 5. Watch/listen to it here <https://youtu.be/mO33QLava2s>.

**Written:** Tom Fame, a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem, has published, “The Lambi’s Call: Breaking the Chains” which focuses on his work in Central Haiti as well as with the Haitian community in the Roanoke Valley. Available for \$20 at 221 Homeplace Drive, Salem 24153 or on Amazon.

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

# Everything needed to make 6.5 million rosaries

RUBY THOMAS  
Catholic News Service

LOUISVILLE — From a low brick building on a commercial stretch of highway in Louisville, Our Lady's Rosary Makers packages enough beads and other supplies to make 6.5 million rosaries each year.

The lay apostolate was born of Xaverian Brother Sylvan Mattingly's desire in 1949 to do something special for the Blessed Virgin Mary, said Michael Ford, who serves as its general manager.

Seven decades later, the apostolate is still providing millions of rosary-making supplies at a low cost to groups of rosary makers locally, nationally and globally.

It started as a grassroots effort by Brother Mattingly, who would make rosaries and teach others to make rosaries to send to missionaries around the world. Brother Mattingly died in 1951, but his mission "took root," said Ford.

The endeavor, as it continues today, is a local one.

Advantage Plastics and Engineering molds each of the plastic components of the rosaries — beads, crucifixes and centerpieces.

Once the pieces arrive at the Rosary Makers facility, workers spend their days operating machinery that seals the pieces into plastic bags. Each packet contains enough materials to make 10 rosaries — beads, cording, crucifixes and centerpieces. Finally, workers fulfill orders — packaging and preparing them for shipping.

Ford said he saw an uptick in orders for rosary supplies in the 1990s that didn't really wane until the pandemic brought everyday life to a halt.

In 2020, the apostolate shipped supplies to make about 5 million rosaries, said Ford, noting that "people were not able to gather in rosary-making groups."

But he also believes the rosary-making supplies sent during the pandemic helped individuals find some "purpose and something to occupy their time in a good way" during the months of isolation.

The apostolate received a letter of thanks from a woman in New Jersey for the supplies she'd received. She was able to drop off supplies to the home of elderly rosary makers who had no connection to the outside world during the state's 100 days of lockdown, Ford said. The letter noted that the isolation "may have destroyed" the women had they not had rosary-making to keep them connected to their faith.

Over the years, Our Lady's Rosary Makers has shipped supplies near and far, and Ford and his staff have heard from several individuals about the impact their efforts have had. Ford said he realized the far-reaching impact of Our Lady's Rosary Makers a few years ago when a

woman visiting from the Philippines stopped by to see the facility.

"It blew my mind," Ford told The Record, archdiocesan newspaper of Louisville.

The letters sent from priests, religious sisters and grateful individuals have also shown the impact the apostolate has had around the world.

"We've heard from priests in missions who've said the rosary has done more than anything else to bring people back to the Church. That sticks in my mind," he said.

Chuck Mitchell, the group's mission director, said the letters of appreciation he receives, are a highlight of his service. While the apostolate provides rosary-making supplies, Mitchell's office is dedicated to fulfilling requests for rosaries that are already made. They are needed in missions as far away as Pakistan, India and Africa.

Rosary makers across the country — elderly individuals in nursing homes and parish groups, for instance — are dedicated to making rosaries for these missions. Mitchell said he sends about 100,000 of these rosaries abroad each year.

In many instances, they are given to children receiving their first Communion or being confirmed, he noted. Some of the religious sisters from India he's heard from travel to villages teaching children how to pray the rosary.

People in India are particularly grateful for rosaries right now, because of the toll the pandemic has taken in that country, he said. He's heard from priests who fear the lockdown in that country may lead to a rise in unemployment and hunger.

"The rosaries mean more to them now," said Mitchell.

Mitchell's office also sends materials such as prayer cards and guides to the sacraments in English, Spanish and French along with the rosaries.

The rosary isn't only what the apostolate produces, it's also an important part of their lives, added Ford.

From a "faith and family tradition" it was always part of his life, he noted, and it's taken on an even deeper meaning over the years as he serves at Our Lady's Rosary Makers.

"It's a prayer for a child, it's a prayer for an adult, it's a prayer for any and all times. ... The rosary is something you can pick up — from under your pillow at night to when you're driving or while you are walking or sitting," said Ford.

He prays the rosary daily with the 10 employees on staff.

Each morning at around 10, Ford rings a bell that tells them it's time to gather to pray the rosary. The facility's chapel has ceiling to floor windows that provide a view of an outdoor grotto housing a life-size



Jane Senn, a volunteer, prepares to assemble an order of rosary-making supplies at Our Lady's Rosary Makers in Louisville, Ky., May 6, 2021. The group was founded in 1949 with the goal of providing Catholics with low-cost rosary supplies so that assembled rosaries could be used in the mission field both locally and abroad. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

image of the Blessed Mother. In the chapel, the business of the day slows and Ford leads workers in the rosary.

The chapel is also open to the public from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each

day and offers exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Friday afternoons.

Learn more about Our Lady's Rosary Makers: <https://www.olrm.org/>.

## Cardinal tells India's COVID victims they're not 'alone'

STONY POINT, N.Y. (CNS) — New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, joined by priests and lay faithful, prayed the rosary's sorrowful mysteries May 8 for the people of India now suffering as COVID-19 ravages their country.

About 200 Catholics, including many natives of India, joined the cardinal in prayer at Mary Help of Christians Chapel at the Marian Shrine in Stony Point.

Before praying the five sorrowful mysteries, Cardinal Dolan reminded those gathered in the chapel that he also came to pray at the Salesian-run shrine March 20, 2020, as the coronavirus crisis was first unfolding in New York.

"I came here to pray to Jesus through Mary, Our Lady Help of Christians, as we were getting the terrible coronavirus pandemic," Cardinal Dolan said. "And now that we hear such desperate news from beautiful India ... I thought, 'She came through for us, and we can't forget the great people of India.'"

"We are blessed with so many people in our Catholic family who come from India," the cardinal said. "We can't forget them. They are not alone."

Also present was Msgr. Peter I. Vaccari, president of the Manhattan-based Catholic Near East Welfare Association, who told the cardinal and the congregation that he had been in touch with CNEWA associ-

ates in India in recent days.

The cardinal, who is chairman of CNEWA, explained that he had asked "our people to share in some way and be charitable" at Masses in the archdiocese the next day, "so we can entrust our offerings to Msgr. Vaccari with CNEWA."

CNEWA, a papal agency, for more than eight decades has worked closely with India's Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catholic churches. From its offices in Kerala state, CNEWA supports Indian communities' programs for the marginalized as well as the formation of priests and religious sisters.

On the day of the rosary, according to The Associated Press, India reported 401,078 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including a record 4,187 deaths. Overall, as of May 12, the nation had reached 23 million confirmed infections and 250,000 deaths.

Cardinal Dolan, in remarks before the rosary, told the congregation he had emailed "my three brother cardinals in India to let them know of our love, and our solidarity, and our prayers."

"We're in it together," the cardinal said. "This reminds us that we're part of the Church."

He asked those gathered to pray to tell their relatives and friends in India who are in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, "they are not forgotten here in the Archdiocese of New York."

## Teachers

*Continued from Page 1*

public school could prove to be a challenge for some educators.

Murphey, who attended Lourdes as a student, said that being able to put her faith into her teaching was important to her.

"I told them in the interview, 'I can't separate my faith from my teaching because I think they are the same thing,'" she explained, adding that returning to Lourdes as a teacher was "always a dream."

Openly talking about God and church at school was a great part of the appeal Patterson found in making the switch to a Catholic school. Peggy Rogala, religion teacher at Peninsula Catholic High School, Newport News, said that the ability to live out her faith in school and to bring faith into every subject area is a great freedom that makes Catholic schools unique.

"I know teachers care about kids, period. But in a Catholic school, we get to care about them and help them in a way that feels like they can take the tools we're providing to be a spiritual person and take that into life after they leave us," she explained. "And they might not get that anywhere else, so the religion aspect sets it apart."

### Teaching tailored to students' needs

A major benefit of working in Catholic education is the freedom to develop teaching styles that meet the needs of individual students rather than feeling pressured to meet state standards.

"It's just my opinion that teaching in a Catholic school does allow a teacher to really choose how they want to teach their class without any strict state standards you have to follow like in a public school," Eviston said. "We're teaching not so much for an SOL (Standards

of Learning) test, but we're teaching based off what is Christ-centered and what the Gospel is telling us."

Price noted that in college, education majors are taught that each student learns differently. She feels that the private school system is "much more adaptive" and gives teachers more freedom to cater to individual students' needs, which helps one "find out who you are as a teacher."

Patterson agreed.

"I think it depends on the public school you're in. I was in a Title I school, and you were very monitored – you have to be doing this at this time and something else at another time," she said. "That can be very stressful, and it took away from being able to teach and just enjoy it. In the Catholic school, I feel like I can enjoy my job."

She added that the presence of a teacher's aide in her classroom at All Saints, something she did not have in the public school, makes a big difference as well.

### Creative community

Rogala likes the "big happy family" at Peninsula Catholic, which is made possible by smaller class sizes than are typically found in public schools. This benefit allows teachers to get to know students on a "great level" and stay in touch with them after they move on.

Not only is getting to know students on a deeper level a valuable asset of teaching at a Catholic school, but educators also get to teach more than just the set curriculum.

For example, Miller said that "teaching students how to interact with people in a positive way, teaching them manners, showing them how to respect other views," is one of her greatest joys of teaching at St. John, along with fostering the Catholic identity through the inclusion of religion in the curriculum.

While teachers in Catholic schools are required to follow the consensus curriculum, they are able to achieve teaching goals through creative lessons and opportunities.

"The creativity and the freedom of that community in a Catholic school is just something that could not compare, would not compare, to a public school," Murphey said.

### Revived passion for teaching

For any educator who may be feeling unsure in the profession, or who may be considering making the switch from public to Catholic school, Rogala suggests considering the reasons one went into education in the first place.

"Remember why you became a teacher," she said. "Is it to grade papers all night? No. Is it to know the kids? Then this is the place. It gets re-ignited by the interactions with students, that reason for teaching."

Price, a teacher for nine years, started her career at a private Episcopal school and then made the transition to public schools. After two years in a public school, she found herself questioning whether education was the best profession for her.

"I kind of had lost my passion for teaching, and I knew, or was hoping, that in coming to a private school again, I would have more control over what I taught and how I taught it," she said.

"Sacred Heart really revived my passion for teaching and really made me see that this is what I love, and I do love teaching students and being creative and helping them to learn and grow every year. That is entirely due to Sacred Heart Catholic School," she said.

*Editor's note: For more information about teaching opportunities in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond schools, visit [richmonddiocese.org/office/catholic-schools](http://richmonddiocese.org/office/catholic-schools).*

# What Catholics are enduring in Gaza

JUDITH SUDILOVSKY  
Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM — Since early May 11, Israeli bombs have been falling around the Rosary Sisters School in Gaza, which sustained light to moderate damage inside and outside the compound — including to the front door and solar panels used for electricity.

"It is very terrible; from (today) 5 a.m. in the morning (there has been bombing) behind our school and in our school," Sister Nabila Saleh, principal of the school, told Catholic News Service in a WhatsApp call May 12. Bombs could be heard exploding in the background and, audibly distraught, Sister Saleh was unable to continue with the interview.

Because of COVID-19 and Ramadan, the school has been closed since mid-April, and only in early May was the COVID-19 lockdown lifted in Gaza.

Father Gabriel Romanelli of Holy Family Parish in Gaza told CNS May 12 that, in two days, 45 people, including 14 children and three women, had been killed in Gaza. Three hundred people have been wounded, he said.

Father Romanelli said he had left the parish compound early in the morning to make the 10-minute drive to the Rosary Sisters to assess the damage and celebrate Mass with



**Sister Nabila Saleh, principal at the Rosary Sisters School in Gaza, stands with others at the road outside the school damaged from Israeli bombing May 12, 2021.** (CNS photo/courtesy Holy Family Catholic Parish, Gaza)

them, but was unable to leave for eight hours because of the incessant bombing around the area, where many government buildings are located. As soon as he returned to the parish, the sisters told him bombing had begun again.

The tiny Catholic community in Gaza consists of 133 people — including a baby born in early May. Fewer than 1,100 Christians live in Gaza among the 2 million Muslim Palestinians. Many of the students at the Rosary Sisters School are Muslim.

Father Romanelli said the priests and religious have been staying in close contact with their parishioners

through phone calls, the internet and WhatsApp. Unfortunately, he said, they "are very used to war."

"The situation is very bad. We try to give our parishioners encouragement and ask them to keep serene and in peace, to find joy in the sorrow. We send them uplifting messages to live with patience and charity in life," the priest said. "There are moments of anxiety ... people are closed in, night and day, with the bombings. The bombings affect everything — breathing, nerves, violence. There is a feeling of impotence and sometimes that brings on violence. But the people

here are good and patient."

The apartment of one parish family was damaged; windows were blown out, debris was scattered throughout the apartment and a huge crater was in front of their building, Father Romanelli said.

He said the parish was organizing to see how it could help the family — a couple and their son — with any spiritual and material needs they might have. He said the priests offered to let the family sleep at the parish, but the family decided to stay in their home and cover their windows with plastic until they can be repaired.

Children are developing behavioral problems, Father Romanelli said.

"War is trauma, and if only one explosion can change a life, you can imagine this morning we had dozens of explosions. It is something that can break a wall; think of a child and how fragile they are," he said. "It will affect their hearts, their nerves, their eyes. It affects human beings. It is not just the moment of the attack, but it is the consequences that remain."

While prayer is important, Father Romanelli said there must be work toward justice for there to be real peace.

*Updates on this story are available at [www.catholicvirginian.org](http://www.catholicvirginian.org)*



Pope Pius IX, the last of the popes with temporal power over the Papal States, continued a smallpox vaccination campaign begun by Pope Pius VII and offered a small financial reward to those who were vaccinated. (CNS file photo)

## Papal vaccine campaigns offered punishments, rewards in 1822

CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — When popes were king, they ordered all their subjects in the Papal States to be vaccinated, using punishments and rewards to convince the hesitant and making sure the poor and the prisoners were inoculated as well.

Vatican News recounted how, as a smallpox epidemic swept central Italy at the end of the 1700s and beginning of the 1800s, Pope Pius VII threw the full weight of his temporal power behind a vaccination campaign.

The text of a law promulgated June 20, 1822, by Pope Pius' secretary of state, Cardinal Ercole Consalvi, described the new smallpox vaccine as a gift "put in place by divine providence" as a sign of God's "paternal love to save his children."

But the text noted that not everyone saw the vaccine as a gift, and it denounced appearances that "a deep-rooted prejudice was stronger in some parents than the love of their offspring."

"The legislation specified that to obtain subsidies, benefits or premiums, it was necessary to provide the 'certificate showing that the applicant, being the father of a family,

has had the vaccination,'" said the Vatican News report May 7.

Refusing the vaccine was defined as "reprehensible conduct" punishable by a loss of benefits.

The pope set up committees to oversee the vaccination campaign and tied the licensing of physicians to their willingness to vaccinate patients, the report said.

But two years later, Pope Leo XII, who succeeded Pope Pius in 1823, removed the vaccination obligation.

And his efforts drew the praise of one of Rome's most famous poets, Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, who wrote a sonnet extolling the virtues of the new pope who "liberated" his people from an invention of "the Freemasons" and restored the possibility that God alone would decide when it was time for someone to die.

Pope Gregory XVI, elected in 1831, restarted the vaccination campaign and extended it to all prisoners as well. Pope Pius IX, the last of the popes with temporal power, continued the campaign and designated a financial reward of "two paoli" — 20 cents of a scudo — for those who returned eight days after being vaccinated to have its efficacy checked, the Vatican News report said.

## Deacon Lawrence

Continued from Page 3

was going to be and needed to be," Deacon Lawrence said.

He recalled asking himself, "How did this liturgy go so well? That never happens." That was followed by "What do you do next — with your life?" and a response came.

At 1 a.m. Easter morning, he sent Father Michael Boehling, then the diocese's vocation director, "a far-too-lengthy email" asking to set up a meeting. In fall 2015, he began his seminary studies at the Theological College at the Catholic University of America.

"But until that moment (before the Blessed Sacrament), it was a very small background piece, but it was building a little more every week, every month, every day," Deacon Lawrence said.

Throughout the realization of his vocation, he has been influenced and nurtured by various people.

"What had a huge impact in slowly coming closer and closer to the Lord was working with adults either coming into full communion or receiving their sacraments of initiation and hearing their stories, what they turned away from and what they turned toward — with the Church, with the Lord — their stories of conversion and in some cases clawing toward the Gospel and the sacraments," he said.

Hearing those inspiring stories "about the emergent and critical areas of the faith," Deacon Lawrence said, "slowly turned my head and my heart."

### 'Forget about me'

Nearing ordination, Deacon Lawrence continues to reflect on the call he is answering.

"I hope my vocation is and will be in alignment with what God wants for me and wants for us, and that I

can surrender to that will," he said. "It comes into play when you talk about promises of obedience not just to our bishop and his successors, but to the Lord."

Deacon Lawrence takes to heart the words of John the Baptist: "He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

"Certainly, as we aspire toward holiness as we've been asked to do, certainly as we fulfill our roles and our duties of the workaday world, allowing Christ to be more present, listening, allowing ourselves to be more quiet, to be eventually maybe silent, so that the Lord can be present to people, is something I'm really looking forward to," he said.

McDonald sees her former confirmation colleague being the kind of priest Pope Francis describes.

"He'll be a priest who is really active and knows his flock. He'll be fully engaged with his community," she said. "That's the good pastor; he knows his people and serves that community."

Noting Deacon Lawrence's combination of "academic achievement and intellect, and simple, humble, personal witness," Msgr. Carr said, "I think Tom is going to make a darn good priest."

He continued, "Tom will come to a parish, come to an altar and to an ambo and will reveal the living Christ more than himself. That's what people really want. They want to know a little about him, but they want to know more about the Lord. Tom will present that and share that."

The soon-to-be priest is already thinking in those terms.

"I hope the people will forget me," he said. "I want to be less and less of what distinguishes me as me going forward, in a sense that I want the Lord to show through more. And so, if they could just forget me, that would be great."

## Agenda

Continued from Page 6

with loopholes. But assisted suicide advocacy groups in my state and others now declare that they are much too strict. The "safeguards" these groups once endorsed must be rescinded to expand "access" to "death with dignity."

The bills they support would reduce or eliminate the waiting period, allow nonphysicians to diagnose patients' physical and mental condition and provide the lethal drugs, and allow those drugs to be delivered by mail or parcel post. Some of their proposals have been approved, though they failed this year in Hawaii and Washington.

In Washington, voters should have realized that what they approved in 2008 was only a first step. The prime sponsor of that proposal, former governor Booth Gardner, had said as much to The New York Times, declaring that the law should later expand to assisting the suicides of people with chronic illnesses and disabilities.

Similarly, the current Oregon and Washington laws are limited to self-administration of the drugs by patients only because earlier proposals in those states and California, authorizing lethal injections by physicians, had failed.

Supporting groups made a tactical decision to take that frightening proposition off the table — temporarily.

Is this a slippery slope? Not on the part of these advocates, who always knew where they wanted to go. But they have engineered a slope for the rest of us, as we become desensitized to the evil of those first steps.

It is said that if you want to boil a frog so he won't jump out of the water, you slowly increase the temperature so he never quite notices how deadly it becomes. These groups are the cook, and the rest of us are the frog. Let legislators and voters beware.

*Doerflinger worked for 36 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He writes from Washington state.*

## OPPORTUNITIES

**The Catholic Diocese of Richmond** is seeking a director of campus ministry to serve the Catholic Campus Ministry at Christopher Newport University in Newport News.

The director of campus ministry is responsible for the development, implementation and oversight of a comprehensive campus ministry program for the students of Christopher Newport University. Furthermore, these responsibilities include developing student leaders, pastorally responding to student needs, and overseeing student programs and activities. Additionally, the director oversees financial accounts, serves as the liaison between the local Catholic parishes, furthers development efforts, and builds interfaith relationships among the other campus ministries.

**Qualifications:** Must be a practicing Catholic in good standing. A minimum of a bachelor's degree is required with a master's degree preferred (in a relevant field). 3-5 years of prior experience in pastoral work, preferably campus ministry.

This is a full-time exempt position on a salary basis. Salary is commensurate with experience and diocesan pay scale.

Interested candidates should please send a cover letter, résumé and completed Diocese of Richmond Employment Application to [jobs@richmonddioocese.org](mailto:jobs@richmonddioocese.org).

**Incarnation Catholic Church, Charlottesville,** seeks a full-time music coordinator. Responsibilities include three English Masses; parish choir; providing and/or scheduling music for other liturgical services; and works with Spanish language ensembles for three Spanish Masses. Required proficiency on piano or organ. Knowledge of Spanish helpful but not required. Please see our website [incarnationparish.org](http://incarnationparish.org) for more information.

**Peninsula Catholic High School has the following open positions:**

**Part-time dean of faculty** to serve as a senior member on the school administration team and work with the principal to carry out the educational policies of the diocese. This is a 20-hour-a-week position but could be coupled with a part-time teaching position to create one full-time position.

**Responsibilities:** Oversee the implementation of the Diocesan Consensus Curriculum with principal. Chair the Diocesan Teacher Mentor Program for new teachers. Chair the Cognia Accreditation process. Attend and participate in school advisory board meetings and other special events throughout the year as instructed by the principal. Promote and foster best practices in the fields of secondary education. Observe classrooms, evaluate teachers and support facul-

ty. Help teachers to learn, implement and maintain successful differentiation techniques to engage the in-person and virtual student.

**Qualifications:** Bachelor's degree — master's degree preferred — in education, administration or other related field with at least five years' service in faculty or administrative roles. Experience in an academic setting. Possesses professional oral and written communication skills. Exceptional time management skills and ability to prioritize work. Attention to detail and problem-solving skills.

**Application deadline:** Until position is filled.

**Theology teacher:** PCHS seeks an innovative, collaborative and experienced theology teacher who has an enthusiasm for youth, skills for effective integration of technology in the classroom 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. Must be in good standing with the Catholic Church.

**Application deadline:** Until position is filled.

For full job postings, visit <https://www.peninsulacatholic.org/about-us/employment-opportunities.cfm>

Please send cover letter, résumé, diocesan application (which can be found at [www.richmonddioocese.org](http://www.richmonddioocese.org)) and references to:

Janine Franklin, Peninsula Catholic High School, 600 Harpersville Rd. Newport News, VA 23601 [jfranklin@peninsulacatholic.org](mailto:jfranklin@peninsulacatholic.org)

**St. Ann Catholic Church, Colonial Heights,** is seeking a **social ministry coordinator (SMC)**. This is a part-time, 20-hour per week position. The SMC coordinates outreach efforts by the parish to those in need in our area and beyond. Duties include responding to inquiries for family assistance, serving as staff liaison to the parish food pantry, coordinating holiday food and gift drives, and coordinating volunteers. The SMC reports to the pastoral associate and the pastor.

Candidate must be a practicing Catholic. Bachelor's degree in theology, social work or related field required; master's degree preferred. One to three years of experience working with underserved populations. Must have an understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, compassion and excellent people skills, especially toward those in need, ability to keep organized and accurate records and budgets, ability to handle several projects at once, ability to maintain confidentiality.

**To apply:** Please send a résumé and diocesan application (<https://richmonddioocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CDR-Application-For-Employment-11-17-16.docx>) to Katie Johnson, 17111 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Colonial Heights, VA 23834 or [kjohnson@stanncc.com](mailto:kjohnson@stanncc.com).

## Director of Facilities Management

**The Catholic Diocese of Richmond** is seeking a director of facilities management.

The director of facilities management oversees all facilities maintenance and operations for the central administrative office (Pastoral Center) for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. General oversight includes office administration, maintenance, capital projects, planning and project management, purchasing, and the health, safety and security of employees in the workplace. Maintenance includes, but is not limited to, building structures, permanent interiors and exteriors, ground maintenance and all building systems (mechanical, electrical, fire/life safety, plumbing and waste management, etc.). The director ensures the building operations comply with all local zoning laws and regulations. The director oversees maintenance technicians, a receptionist, a diocesan retreat center and the maintenance needs of other diocesan properties. The director is responsible for preparing and monitoring related budgets and longer-range facilities plans.

**Qualifications:** Requirements include a bachelor's degree in business

administration or related field and related work experience at the supervisory level. Designation as a facilities management professional (FMP) or certified facility manager (CFM) is desirable. Working knowledge of contract negotiations, maintenance and capital project management, workplace safety and security, and purchasing procedures is required. Abilities include strong interpersonal skills, project management skills, customer service orientation, computer proficiency in Microsoft Office software, strong time management and analytical skills, leadership skills and detail orientation to projects and tasks. Must possess ability to lift and move objects up to 75 lbs. with heavier weight necessary at times and to walk long distances daily around a 56,000 square foot facility. Ability to drive vans or other diocesan vehicles is required.

This is a full-time position with some evening and weekend work required, along with overnight travel.

Interested candidates should send a cover letter, résumé and completed Diocese of Richmond Employment Application to [jobs@richmonddioocese.org](mailto:jobs@richmonddioocese.org)

## SHORTTAKES

**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](mailto:tours@albastours.com) or visit [www.albastours.com](http://www.albastours.com). Reservations are available now. Space is limited. COVID policies upon request.

**Father Nicholas Habets Assembly 1505,** the patriotic degree of the Knights of Columbus in Virginia Beach, is hosting the 2021 USO Warrior Classic Golf Tournament at the Sewells Point Golf Course, Friday, Oct. 8. The tournament is open to the public. Net proceeds will be donated directly to the USO-HRCV to support LOCAL programs. For more information, visit <https://birdeasepro.com/2021usowarriorclassic>.

**Join Father James Arsenault,** pastor of St. Elizabeth, Richmond, on an amazing Seine River cruise through Paris and Normandy, April 28 – May 5, 2022. Seven-night bucket list trip on AMA Waterway's AMALyra starts at \$4,005 per person and includes accommodations, meals, beverages during meals, choice of daily excursions, wreath laying cere-

mony in Normandy, taxes and gratuities during the cruise. There is also a pre-cruise optional Paris land package available that features a private Mass at Sacré-Coeur Basilica. Group airfare quotes available upon request. For more information, contact Stella Capocelli Carter at 804-359-3217 x310 or [s.capocelli@tourplaninternational.com](mailto:s.capocelli@tourplaninternational.com). Full itinerary and registration are available at <https://tourplaninternational.com/parisnormandy>.

**World-Famous Oberammergau Passion Play!** St. Therese, Chesapeake, has a few spaces left for a special journey, June 13-23, 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 Friday, April 30. To register or for more information, contact Megan Malhiot at [mmalhiot@sttheresechesva.org](mailto:mmalhiot@sttheresechesva.org); 757 488-2553.

**St. Paul Catholic Church, Richmond,** celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2020. In conjunction with the anniversary celebration, the parish published a 100-page book — "St. Paul's Catholic Church: First Hundred Years." The book, detailing the history of the parish, contains over 200 photographs. Copies of the book can be obtained by sending a check, payable to St. Paul's, to St. Paul Catholic Church, 909 Rennie Ave., Richmond, VA 23222. The cost is \$29 per copy (\$25 for the book and \$4 for shipping).

# Papa: usemos los medios de comunicación para construir y reforzar el bien común

**T**uit del Papa con motivo del Día Mundial de la Libertad de Prensa dedicado a la información como bien público. El Prefecto del Dicasterio para la Comunicación, Paolo Ruffini: somos lo que comunicamos, no hay libertad sin responsabilidad

## El impacto de la información en la pandemia

El tema de la jornada, “la información como bien público”, dice el sitio web de la UNESCO, “es de urgente importancia para todos los países del mundo”, ya que hay que reconocer “el cambio que el sistema de comunicación está teniendo en nuestra salud, los derechos humanos, las democracias y el desarrollo sostenible”.

### UE: el periodismo es la vacuna contra la infodemia

“En tiempos de Covid-19 está más claro que nunca que el acceso a una información fiable puede ser una cuestión de vida o muerte. Sin embargo, informar se ha convertido en una odisea diaria. El periodismo es la vacuna contra la infodemia, (es decir, la circulación de una cantidad excesiva de información, a veces no cuidadosamente tamizada, ed.). Protejámosla”, escribió el Servicio de Acción Exterior de la Unión Europea en un tuit. El periodismo es la “principal vacuna” contra la desinformación, reitera el último informe de Reporteros sin Fronteras, que muestra que en más de 130 países la prensa está “total o parcialmente bloqueada”.

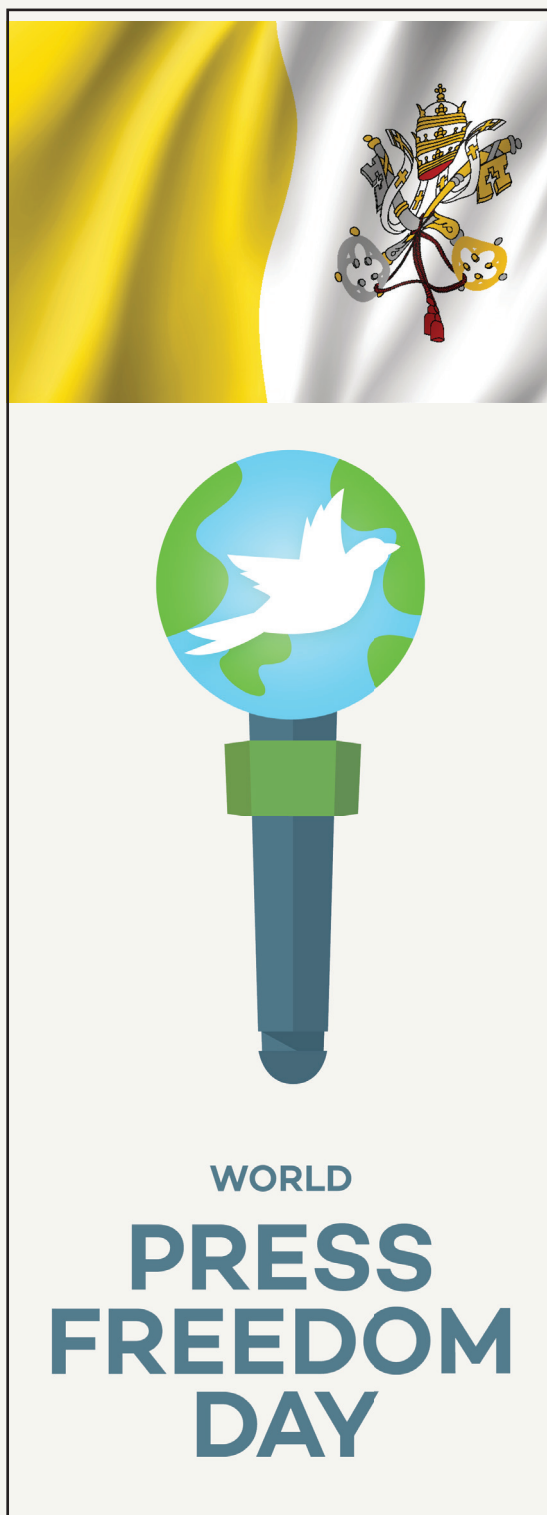
### Ruffini: todos somos responsables de lo que comunicamos

El Prefecto del Dicasterio para la Comunicación, Paolo Ruffini, también habló sobre el tema de la “información como bien público” como invitado del programa “Radio Vaticano contigo”.

R. - Decir que la información es un bien público significa que somos las cosas que comunicamos. Se dice que la información es poder, porque, a partir de la información que recibimos y compartimos, nos formamos opiniones y, si las informaciones no son libres y no son controladas, se pierde el bien público de compartir la verdad, claro que no hay verdad si no hay libertad y no hay libertad si no hay responsabilidad. Decir que la información es un bien público significa que todos estamos implicados de alguna manera en que haya una información plural, pero también que la información se base en la construcción de un valor común, de un bien común, que viene dado por la verdad de las cosas que compartimos. Garantizar la libertad de prensa significa garantizar un sistema en el que haya libertad. Por supuesto, también existe la libertad de cometer errores, pero lo que nos une es el deseo de hacer del intercambio de información verdadera un bien público.

**Este año, con la pandemia, nos hemos dado cuenta de que la información también está vinculada a la salud pública, porque la información correcta sobre la pandemia también está estrechamente vinculada a la asimilación de la conducta que teníamos que adoptar. ¿Cuál ha sido el papel de la información en este sentido este año?**

R. - Imaginemos cómo habría sido este año sin información. Pensemos en los periodos de



encierro tal y como habrían sido sin la posibilidad de comunicación; cómo habrían circulado las noticias sin control y cómo habría faltado ese aspecto relacional de compartir la información, que forma parte de nuestro ser humano. Por otro lado, también nos hemos dado cuenta de la cantidad de información falsa que se ha puesto en circulación y también de la dificultad de orientar los procesos de información con respecto al deseo de cada uno de nosotros de querer saberlo todo y de forma inmediata, lo cual no es tan fácil, porque la información para ser completa requiere tiempo, requiere tomarse su tiempo. ¿Cómo puede la información ayudarnos a hacer salir la pandemia? Se vuelve al concepto de antes. La salud es un bien público, la información es un bien público. Compartir informaciones exactas y falsear las falsas es un compromiso que debe implicar, en la era digital, a cada uno de nosotros y no pensar que existe la posibilidad de delegar en otros. Por lo general, de esta manera se avanza hacia regímenes totalitarios. Es parte de la responsabilidad de los periodistas y también de los lectores. En la era digital compartimos información que muchas veces no nos tomamos la

molestia de comprobar y con ello somos quizás portadores “sanos” de un virus diferente al de Covid, que es el de la mala información. Pensar que esto se puede delegar en un “vigilante” de la verdad o falsedad de las noticias tiene sus propios riesgos, que son los de limitar la libertad de prensa. Por eso creo que la pandemia nos enseña que, para combatir la “pandemia de la desinformación, todos debemos ser responsables”.

**También porque en cierto modo hay que “reaprender” la expectativa entre la noticia del evento y la recepción del mismo. Antes leíamos en el periódico lo que había ocurrido el día anterior y ahora todo se comenta, asimila y comparte en tiempo real. Cada vez hay menos tiempo para ese papel de mediación, que es una de las principales funciones de la prensa...**

R. - Siempre debemos comprobar el reflejo con la reflexión, se aplica tanto a la prensa como a los medios profesionales e insisto en decir “todos”, porque todos, incluso los no profesionales, somos protagonistas de este mundo digital de la información. Estamos acostumbrados a no querer esperar el tiempo que hace falta, como si la vida fuera todo un “game on” o un “game over”, todo muy rápido o instantáneo, pero en realidad, además de la rapidez de las noticias, hace falta un análisis en profundidad, hace falta una verificación. Basta con ser consciente de ello. A fin de cuentas, se trata de aprender las reglas y aprenderlas todas.

**Hay otro aspecto, y aquí tomaría prestadas las palabras del Papa en su último mensaje para la Jornada de las Comunicaciones Sociales sobre precisamente la gestión de la relación entre información y pandemia. Lo que el Papa dice es la importancia de ir a ver las cosas, de estar presentes. ¿Quién nos hablará de la espera de la curación en las aldeas más pobres de Asia, América Latina y África?, pregunta, precisamente para subrayar que se corre el riesgo de un doble nivel de información, el primero centrado en los países ricos en los que, si se quiere, es aún más fácil hacer la información dejando fuera al resto del mundo...**

R. - Hay algo paradójico en este mundo globalizado en el que la pandemia ha demostrado lo interdependientes que somos unos de otros, incluso de los que parecen estar muy, muy lejos. En esta paradoja nos engañamos fácilmente al pensar que podemos perimetrar todo en nuestra historia, en la narración de nuestras vidas, y por lo tanto que podemos contar la historia de la pandemia sólo para los países más desarrollados o que podemos contar la historia de la crisis económica sólo para nuestro país, o mejor dicho, tal vez para nuestra región de nuestro país. Este no es el caso y esto también es parte de la responsabilidad. Siguiendo con el tema de la libertad de prensa, el teólogo Bonhoeffer decía que la libertad y la responsabilidad son conceptos correlativos y, por tanto, la responsabilidad, a la que nos invita el Papa con su mensaje, es la de ir a ver incluso donde nadie quiere ir, porque si no vamos no entendemos y si no entendemos la historia que contamos es falsa. Al final, esto también es una miopía con respecto a las cosas más queridas, porque no podemos tenernos sólo a nosotros mismos en el corazón separándonos del otro, porque al final también nos hacemos daño.

# In times of worry, Jesus offers the best advice

EFFIE CALDAROLA  
Catholic News Service

When I was a little girl, my dad would tell me, “Don’t take your troubles to bed with you.” I was an inveterate worrier. I wanted the hallway light left on near my bedroom in our old farmhouse.

Monsters seemed to lurk, not just under the bed but in every nook and cranny. My imagination was, and remains, lively. My brain sometimes won’t shut down for the night.

When I was very young, I slept in a big bed with my little brother Tommy after he yielded his crib to the newest sibling. I mostly took comfort from his presence, but sometimes I would lie, sleepless and worried, staring at his toddler profile as he slumbered beside me.

I would imagine his image becoming fuzzy and indistinct. Was he my baby brother? Or in the darkness could I imagine him morphing into another threat? It’s funny now, but the humor escaped me then.

What’s ironic is that my dad, with his homespun advice about worry, suffered from intense anxiety and depression, which eventually led to his death. But perhaps that’s not so ironic.

We desperately hope our children can be spared the problems from which we suffer, so if we can offer them advice, even advice we ourselves can’t follow, we try.

This has been an anxious year for many people, and just because we’ve gotten our



vaccinations doesn’t mean the anxiety magically disappears. What comes next? Some of the decisions we face now increase our anxiety.

I have never completely overcome my nighttime fears. I still hear my dad’s advice, and often it works well until about 3 or 4 a.m. That seems to be the hour at which my internal alarm occasionally wakes me and my tummy seizes up with worry.

I know I am not alone at this dark hour, as a cohort of insomniacs are out there in the universe with me. Small comfort. But I am also not alone in that God is there as well, fuzzy and indistinct perhaps, but stronger and kinder than any of the unseen troubles that assail me.

The website pray-as-you-go.org is run by the

Jesuits in Britain. They have daily prayers and meditations available, but they also have special retreats and series that cover topics like depression, aging and insomnia. One is called Mental Health Awareness Exercises, and includes a short piece on anxiety.

It certainly doesn’t purport to be a cure-all, but it helps by walking us through Matthew 6:25-27: “Do not worry about your life. ... Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?”

The advice is good. For example, consider the lilies of the field, perhaps by taking a daily walk to observe nature and God’s gifts. Daily exercise relieves stress and anxiety.

During this strange year, counselors and therapists have had long waiting lists. If we’re really anxious, we might need to call a hotline or seek immediate help. But at the least, find a friend with whom you feel free to share. Be open. Go ahead and cry.

Consider what you eat at night. I find over-eating can lead to sleeplessness, as can an overly warm room. Remember that alcohol, which may seem to make you drowsy, also has stimulant effects and is an unreliable friend.

Perhaps list your worries on a piece of paper and give them to God right before bed.

Sometimes praying, “Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” helps me fall asleep.

And Jesus’ advice sounds a little like Dad’s: “Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take of itself.”

## How ‘ministry of sustaining presence’ can help seniors

MAUREEN PRATT  
Catholic News Service

If anyone needs evidence that a weekly, hourly visit from a friendly volunteer makes a big difference in others’ lives, the effect of the pandemic on homebound ministries to seniors is proof.

Before COVID-19, whether because of illness, effects of aging, weakness or other factors, seniors who had to stay at home often relied upon visits from fellow parishioners to bring companionship, Eucharist, news from the faith community or just kind conversation.

If they were present, family caregivers could take a brief break during the visits, go to another room for some quiet or run a quick errand or two without worrying. If family lived far away, they could be assured that someone local and friendly was checking in on their loved one.

But with the lockdowns, the visits, respite and peace of mind abruptly stopped and many suffered because of it.

Melissa Kelley, care team ministry program coordinator of Catholic Charities in Madison, Wisconsin, says, “During lockdown, the first thing we did was ask all 20 care teams to stop visiting completely and switch to phone calls and sending greeting cards.”

The move “helped a little bit,” Kelley says. But it was hard on volunteers, who “went through a lot of guilt” because they could not personally visit.

Also, although people who were confined could still have contact with volunteers, some did not benefit as greatly as they did with personal visits. For example, phone calls were difficult for the hearing impaired, and per-

sons with dementia missed the familiarity of seeing as well as hearing someone.

Another challenge was that, during the pandemic, the number of people home alone increased.

“I got a phone call from one of the big hospitals’ geriatric social worker,” says Kelley. “She said that the elderly were being discharged and going back to an empty home.”

Kelley started a “phone pals” project, sending out an “open invitation to all our current volunteers” to add people to their “visiting” list and asking if others wanted to join. Many did.

Now, as parishes reopen, Kelley is transitioning the program from phone back to in-person visits.

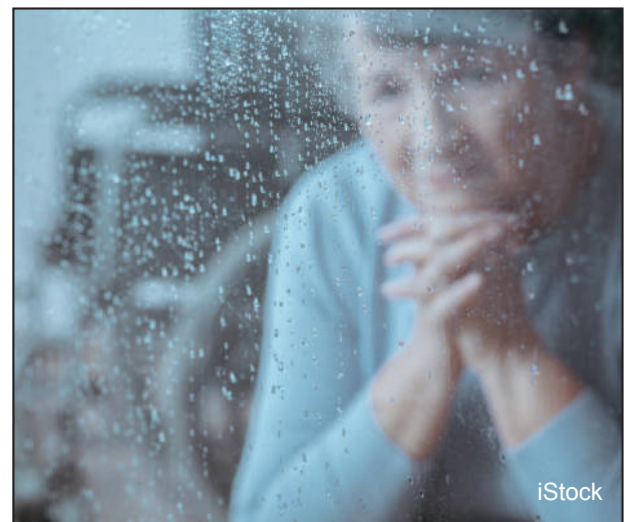
It will be a challenge, says Kelley, “We’ve had so many deaths among our volunteers, who are older, and some of our care partners who are older.”

Kelley notes, “Most of the churches and volunteer ministries need to be rebuilt and reinvigorated,” and the need within the community “is going to be huge. We had a pandemic of loneliness before the pandemic.”

Fortunately, the care ministry Kelley coordinates has a clear foundation and mission upon which to build. Kelley says, “We call it a ‘ministry of sustaining presence.’ We’re not there to solve financial problems or family dynamics.”

Volunteers go through a criminal background check and must prove they have a valid driver’s license and insurance. They also attend training and regular team meetings.

“We train in active listening skills, the limits of care, that it’s hands-off, nonmedical visitation,” says Kelley. “Confidentiality is huge, handling an emergency and boundaries.”



Those who receive visits and their caregivers agree upon a care plan with the ministry. Regular assessments are made with the volunteers and the senior being visited.

“We want elders in the parish to have a say,” says Kelley, “feel like their opinions are heard.”

Recently, the Catholic Health Association of the United States collaborated with Catholic Charities USA and the Community of Sant’Egidio on several webinars on topics related to aging, faith and our response. The webinars are available free of charge online at [www.chausa.org/events/calendar-of-events/elderly-webinar-series/overview](http://www.chausa.org/events/calendar-of-events/elderly-webinar-series/overview).

As discussion with and about the seniors among us increases, and needs emerge, may a collective ministry of sustaining presence grow too!

Pratt’s website is [www.maureenpratt.com.30](http://www.maureenpratt.com.30).