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Basilica renovation: ‘Nothing is impossible for God’

The choir at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Norfolk, sings during the Mass at which the church and its altar were dedicated, Sunday, Sept. 26. Nearly 400 people attended the celebration. (Photo/Vy Barto)



Historic parish celebrates dedication of church, altar

JENNIFER NEVILLE
Special to The Catholic Virginian

As church renovations go, those at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Norfolk had a modest start. While walking into Mass one Sunday in 2014, parishioner Will McCadden noticed a dip in the roof line. A physical inspection of the roof revealed it was leaking and that termites had eaten 60-70% of it. Damage was so extensive that had there been a strong storm, the roof would have “caved in,” he said.

During the planning stages to repair the roof, a plaster angel fell from an interior column to the area below where the youth choir was singing during a weekend Mass. No one was hurt, but it was a catalyst to investigate other hazards in the church interior.

As work progressed on the interior and exterior of the building, new issues were discovered.

“We kept finding things, and we kept finding things,” said McCadden, who served as project manager and whose company, Capitol General Construction, managed the project.

In addition to remedying safety issues, the parish also decided to make cosmetic changes when construction began in 2016.

About 75% of structural roof and upper columns were reconstructed. New pews with kneelers were installed and arranged to have a central aisle, something the church hadn’t had since a 1989 renovation.

Other renovations included a new floor, restoration of stained glass windows, installation of air conditioning and heating in the balcony, repairs to an existing restroom, turning the grand altar to face the congregation and plastering and painting. A platform for the choir was installed, the organ repaired and the angel replaced.

Other tasks completed during the project were restoration of existing lights and updating the sanctuary’s lighting to energy-efficient LED and installing a light dimming system and a fire/smoke detection system to assist in protecting the historic building.

‘Angels of glad tidings’

On Sunday, Sept. 26, Bishop Barry C. Knestout celebrated the Mass at which he dedicated the church and the altar of the basilica, the culmination of a project during which parishioners had to celebrate Mass in the fellowship hall for four and a

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Worshippers fill the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Norfolk, for the Mass celebrating the dedication of the church and altar, Sunday, Sept. 26. The \$6.7 million project, begun in 2016, included repairs to the interior and exterior, remedying safety concerns and making numerous cosmetic changes. The basilica is the only predominantly African American basilica in the United States. (Photo/Eric Labat)

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The Catholic Virginian
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Richmond, VA 23294

Deacons vital to continuity in Catholic community



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

One of the influences on my vocation to the priesthood was my dad, who was a permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of Washington, and who headed the archdiocese's Office for the Permanent Diaconate. Dad's diaconal service, particularly his ministry to the disabled, the sick and abandoned, was exemplary witness to the Gospel for my family and me.

I was reminded of that several weeks ago when I spoke to our diocese's permanent deacons at their annual convocation. Our deacons make a unique contribution to our parishes. While priests are reassigned, our deacons provide a stable, spiritual presence in our parishes. They are vital to the continuity that is essential to the life of the Catholic community.

Combined with their daily lives being rooted in our local parishes, deacons' gifts, often cultivated in their careers, professions and family life, provide a unique experiential perspective as they assist in pastoral care and oversight for a parish community. They are a constant amid the faithful.

In preparing to ordain 15 permanent deacons on Sept. 25, I met with the men and their wives. Again, recalling the extent of Dad's diaconal ministry, I saw how important Mom's support of it was.

When a married man seeks to study for the diaconate, his wife must agree to that commitment. While the deacon's attention to and support of his marriage and family come before his service to the Church, there are times when his ministerial responsibilities require him to sacrifice time with his family.

What impressed me about our newly-ordained deacons and their wives is their devotion to the Church, their deep faith in God and their readiness to serve wherever the Church directs. Their spiritual bonds and commitment to their parish communities were strong.

The "National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States" states, "A deacon and his wife, both as a spiritual man and woman and as a couple, have much to share with the bishop and his priests about the Sacrament of Matrimony. A diaconal family also brings a unique presence and understanding of the domestic family."

That "presence and understanding" is not only important for the bishop and priests to see, but it is also an example to the community in which they serve, especially to young couples who are or who will be learning to balance the demands of marriage, parenting, careers and engagement in Church life.

Next year, another cohort of men will begin their formation for the diaconate. Unlike those who have gone before them, their formation program will be different. Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology will provide what we believe will be a comprehensive academic and pastoral experience. In addition, there will be more emphasis on spiritual formation, and an increase in the number of retreats candidates will make and pastoral projects they will undertake as part of their formation for the diaconate.

Sometimes people might not understand the role of the permanent deacon. In 2017, in



Michael Carlucci promises respect and obedience to Bishop Barry C. Knestout and the bishop's successors during the Mass at which he was ordained a permanent deacon, Saturday, Sept. 25, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond. At left is Deacon John Kren, director of the Diocese of Richmond's Office for the Permanent Diaconate. (Photo/Michael Mickle)

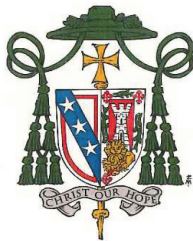
response to a question from a permanent deacon in Milan regarding his role, Pope Francis replied, "We must be careful not to see deacons as half priests, half laypeople ... The diaconate is a specific vocation that requires service."

Our Holy Father continued with what might be considered a deacon's job description:

"You are the guardians of service in the Church: service to the Word, service to the Altar, service to the poor. And your mission, the mission of the deacon, and your contribution

consist in this: in reminding us all that faith, in its various expressions – community liturgy, personal prayer, the various forms of charity – and in its various states of life – lay, clerical, family – possesses an essential dimension of service. Service to God and to brothers. And how far we have to go in this sense! You are the guardians of service in the Church."

Let us thank God for who these "guardians of service" are and for the gifts they bring to our local Church.



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Richmond

October 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

World Mission Sunday – the annual, worldwide Eucharistic celebration for the Missions of the Church – will be on **October 24** this year. This important day in the life of the Church universal fortifies our understanding of our shared call to mission, bestowed upon us at Baptism.

Pope Francis' message for World Mission Sunday reflects on the theme: "**We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard**" (Acts 4:20). The Holy Father shares his zeal, reminding us that, "as Christians, we cannot keep the Lord to ourselves," as we "recall with gratitude all those men and women who by their testimony of life help us to renew our baptismal commitment to be generous and joyful apostles of the Gospel." He invites us to speak of our faith!

World Mission Sunday provides us with that very opportunity. We can speak about our faith and respond to our missionary call – *through prayer, participation in the Eucharist, and giving generously* to the collection for the **Society for the Propagation of the Faith** on that special day. Your gifts support and sustain priests, religious and lay pastoral leaders in more than 1,100 mission dioceses in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and parts of Latin America and Europe as they proclaim the Gospel, build the Church, serve the poor – and speak of our shared faith in all corners of the world.

"The global pandemic has brought to the fore and amplified the pain, the solitude, the poverty, and the injustices experienced by so many people," reminds Pope Francis. This year, as the world recovers from the loss and the challenges that resulted, let us respond with reciprocal generosity to the fullest extent that we are able.

If you were unable to support missionaries last year due to difficulties arising from the pandemic and assembly, I urge you to double your generosity for those most in need. As we rebuild our lives, help us to also reach out in solidarity and support for the Mission Church, and the work and witness of missionaries in the Pope's missions.

In this spirit, I offer my sincere personal gratitude for your kind missionary heart, reaching out in love throughout Mission Month.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond

For more about World Mission Sunday, please visit missio.org/resources for additional materials.

Bishop instructs new deacons to ‘serve people in love, joy’

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI
The Catholic Virginian

Bishop Barry C. Knestout ordained 15 men to the permanent diaconate Saturday, Sept. 25, instructing them to “be stewards of God’s mysteries.”

Joined by more than 700 people at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, including 36 priests, 48 permanent deacons and additional congregants via Facebook and YouTube, the bishop provided a catechesis on the development of the diaconate.

Referencing the liturgy’s second reading, Acts 6:1-7b, in which the apostles call forth the deacons, Bishop Knestout said, “The apostles want and need to devote themselves to prayer and word; sacrifice is their priority, yet they

also must ensure that the good works of the Church are properly expressed and not neglected.”

The bishop noted that this was part of a “movement inspired by the Holy Spirit flowing from prayer — the ministry of the Word, toward love — the ministry of the altar, and toward action — the ministry of charity.”

He compared it to the Holy Spirit bestowing his presence and inspiration on the disciples as a response to their prayerful plea and openness to God’s work in them.

“This movement — the progression — impels them to assist the apostles and go into the world with the work of evangelization, of worship, and charity,” Bishop Knestout said.

Reflecting on the Gospel, John 15:9-17, in

which Jesus instructs the apostles at the Last Supper to keep his commandments and adds, “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for a friend” (13), the bishop explained, “We see here another spiritual movement from action, that is, obedience to God’s commandments as a manifestation of love, leading to friendship with God, back again, coming back full circle, to prayer.”

Inspired by the love of God, Bishop Knestout said, deacons’ works of charity express and return that love, which leads to deeper prayer and a greater receptivity to hearing God’s Word in order to build up the Church community.

Speaking directly to the ordinands, the

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Bishop Barry C. Knestout imposes hands upon Domingo Caratachea Torres during the Mass at which he was ordained a permanent deacon. The imposition of hands signifies the conferral of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Barry C. Knestout stands with the permanent deacons he ordained Saturday, Sept. 25, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond. Front row: Hoang Viet Le, Domingo Caratachea Torres, Daniel Derringer, José Cuenca and Myles Pocta. Middle row: Lawrence Mikkelson, Joseph Badalis, James Findley and Mark De La Hunt. Back row: Michael Carlucci, Steven Cottam, Kirk Collins, Gregg Whisler and Liem Do. (Photos/Michael Mickle)



Above: Bishop Barry C. Knestout presents Deacon John Carey with the Book of the Gospels as a sign of the deacon’s duty to preach and live the faith. Left: Valerie Collins helps her husband, Kirk, vest following his ordination to the diaconate.

Basilica

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half years. They were able to move back into the church on Dec. 8, 2020.

Quoting the Archangel Gabriel's words to the Blessed Mother at the Annunciation, "For nothing will be impossible for God" (Lk 1:37), Father Jim Curran, rector of the basilica, told the nearly 400 people gathered for the celebration that those words were fitting for what the parish had encountered and accomplished.

"We began this project as a simple roof repair and every week we discovered something new that needed to be replaced or repaired, including the revealing of a mysterious tunnel underneath the church and the crypts of former parishioners, long forgotten," he said. "In the end the simple roof repair turned into a \$6.7 million renovation and restoration. Impossible for us, but nothing will be impossible for God."

Father Curran acknowledged "the kind and generous support of so many people, the angels of glad tidings that kept reminding us that nothing is impossible for God," adding, "Every time we began to feel dejected and defeated someone was sent to announce it to us."

In his homily, Bishop Knestout spoke on the importance of serving others, "no matter who they are, whether they are of our number or not."

He continued, "This generosity of service to the poor and vulnerable is an honored legacy of this parish community."

Each week, a soup kitchen serves hot meals to 800 to 1,000 people, and a food pantry gives groceries to 300 to 400. Following the Mass, Bishop Knestout dedicated a new mobile food pantry which, starting in October, will take groceries to people in neighborhoods where there are no grocery stores.

Dr. Ruth Nichols, president and CEO of Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore provided the parish with a mobile market — a 20-foot truck that, according to Father Curran, "We can pack it with fresh produce and fresh meats and dairy and bring it to the food deserts outside of our reach."

History

Established in 1791, the basilica is the oldest Catholic community in the diocese and is often called "The Mother Church of Tidewater." Located in downtown Norfolk, the parish was first called St. Patrick Church. It predates the establishment of the Richmond Diocese by 29 years. Early parishioners at St. Patrick were French Catholics fleeing persecution in the French Revolution. Later, some of the earliest Irish immigrants coming to the country joined the parish.

The original church, built in 1842, was destroyed by a fire in 1856, a suspected arson by the Know Nothings, a short-lived, once-secret political party in the mid-1800s known for its anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic beliefs.

The current church was built in 1858, and the parish changed its name to St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, making it the first church so named after Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, 1854.

Black Catholics began worshipping there in 1886 in a portion of the choir loft reserved for them. Many African Americans left St. Mary when St. Joseph Parish was established for Black Catholics in Norfolk in 1889. St. Joseph Parish lost its church building due to urban development in 1961 and merged with St. Mary Parish.

On Dec. 8, 1991, the Church of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception became a minor basilica. It is one of 34 minor basilicas in the United States, one of two in Virginia, and the only predominantly African American one in the country.

'It's about the warmth'

Parishioner Jimmy Gray said he was attracted to the parish 30 years ago because of the large number of Black Catholics worshipping together, the Gospel choir and music, the culture and the "whole African Amer-

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Above: Elaine Ward, a 103-year-old member of the parish, presents Bishop Barry C. Knestout with the keys to the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception near the beginning of Mass. Right: During Mass, Bishop Knestout placed a first-class relic of St. Martin de Porres into the altar. (Photos/Vy Barto)



After Bishop Barry C. Knestout anointed the altar, members of the parish placed an altar cloth on it prior to the offertory.



Above: Following the dedication Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Norfolk, Bishop Barry C. Knestout blesses the “mobile market” — a 20-foot truck provided by Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore — that will go to the “food deserts” in the community. (Photos/Vy Barto) Right: The bishop greets members of the basilica following the Mass and the truck blessing. (Photo/ Eric Labat)



‘Little umbrella’ priest’s gift of thanksgiving to basilica

What kind of gift does someone give to a basilica that is being dedicated?

For Msgr. Timothy Keeney, who served the parish as a deacon, was ordained a priest there and then was assigned as its parochial vicar after ordination, it was something unique to basilica — an ombrellino (Italian for “little umbrella”).

“I gave it as a gift to them in thanksgiving,” he said.

An ombrellino is made of red and yellow silk and is displayed partially open in the sanctuary. The one at the basilica includes the coats of arms of the basilica, the Diocese of Richmond, St. Pope John Paul II, who designated St. Mary’s a basilica in 2001, and Pope Francis. Basilica member Shari Evans, who designed the diocese’s bicentennial logo, designed the basilica’s coat of arms.

Msgr. Keeney said that when he served at the basilica he researched ombrellinos and learned that they cost \$10,000. That was 25 years ago. Today, the price is around \$15,000.

Over the years, Adam Miller, a representative of A.T. Merhaut and Company, a religious goods company in Allison Park, Pennsylvania, would be at the diocesan priests’ convocation. In discussions with Msgr. Keeney about the priest’s proposed gift, Miller suggested that an ombrellino could be made for the basilica at a much lower cost.

With the help of his mother, Barb, who did the sewing, and his father, Arch, who constructed it, Adam Miller was able to provide Msgr. Keeney with his gift for the basilica for a cost of around \$5,000.



The ombrellino is a gift to the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception from Msgr. Timothy Keeney who was ordained a priest there, and who served at the parish as a deacon and priest.

— Brian T. Olszewski (Photo/Vy Barto)

Basilica

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ican experience,” which Dixon described as “spirit-filled, joyous, uplifting and very engaging.”

Cunningham said that listening to the Gospel choir “takes you to another level, to a spiritual place where you almost feel like you are the only one in that space and it’s literally just you and Jesus.”

Dana Dixon said the church is a Black Catholic legacy which needs to be “intact” and kept “beautiful and vibrant” for future generations.

The newly restored sanctuary is “absolutely breathtaking” and “stunningly beautiful,” according to parishioner Patty Costis

For Dana Gray, the worship space is breathtaking, magnificent, beautiful and awesome.

And for Monique Cunningham, it’s like a long-awaited “Christmas present.” After six years of construction and repairs, she finally got to metaphorically “rip the paper off,” adding, “It feels really good.”

Parishioners brought memories with them to the dedication.

Cerice White, 41, has been a parishioner all of her life and remembers that at one time, there was a Liturgy Alive ministry in which people would act out the readings during Mass. As a child, it kept her “engaged” and helped her “understand the Word a little bit better.”

Dixon said when she was a student at the now closed parish school, each spring there was a musical in which all of the students were required to participate. One year, the children in her fifth-grade class were recovering from chicken pox and performed with scabs and scars from the illness.

Karen Womack, 73, was a parishioner at St. Joseph as a child and then at the merged parishes. She remembers that there were different types of youth activities during the summer, such as cooking lessons, plays and baseball teams. When youth couldn’t get to an event or activity, one pastor would often take them.

She laments times past when there were daily rosary services, and the church was open during the day for private prayer. It was a place to go for refuge at any time. It provided an opportunity to draw strength, she said.

Parishioners praised the church for its warmth, sense of community and inclusiveness.

Ebyn Brinkley said, “The church itself is beautiful, but it’s about the warmth you get when you go in the doors and about feeling the presence of God when you are there.”

Nenneh Marshall, who is from Gambia in West Africa, has been a parishioner since the 1980s and described the parish as her “home away from home” where she feels “very welcome” and “part of the whole community.” She said Masses are “spiritually uplifting” and the parishioners “welcoming.”

Even children recognize the sense of community. Alivia White, 10, said she likes the church because it feels like a family where people love and care about her. Likewise, Noah Cunningham, 10, said he has a “church family” that he has come to know and love. When public Masses were suspended due to COVID, he planned to go back so he could socialize with them again.

Monique Cunningham said the beauty of the church is more than cosmetic.

“The building is beautiful, but there’s something about St. Mary’s that just grabs you even before the renovation occurred,” she said. “It’s rare that anyone leaves without feeling some sense of being full, being refueled to face whatever your oncoming week will play.”

Womack was moved by the rededication.

“It was a victory in Christ that we worshiped together as one in the basilica,” she said.

Dixon said, “The beauty of the church does enhance the experience, but it doesn’t change the amount of reverence that you bring to the space.”

Despite informed consent, abortion is intrinsic evil

GUEST COMMENTARY

DR. JOHN W. SEEDS, MD

Abortion is the deliberate termination of a living human pregnancy. It results most often in the ending of the life of a genetically complete living human being.

Abortion can be a direct surgical procedure or result from medications that poison the pregnancy and result in its death. These two are ethically and morally equivalent.

Virginia legal code requires informed consent from the patient before abortion or, if underage, consent from one parent or guardian (or a court order).

Ethical informed consent classically requires respect for patient autonomy as a measure of her freedom to choose based on full and complete information about expected benefits (beneficence), possible harm (non-maleficence), and free access regardless of ethnic or economic distinctions (justice) (Health Care Analysis, 2017 September; 25(3):275-289).

Ethical principles protect the personal freedom of choice of the patient over her own person. Informed consent is not valid if there is coercion and is not valid if obtained from the uninformed or misinformed.

If the patient's decision is being coerced by

financial or personal circumstances or another person, the consent is invalid, and it is the responsibility of the physician to identify and mitigate that coercion.

Beneficence describes the expected benefit from any medical procedure. The supposed benefit of abortion, of course, is the removal of a pregnancy (child) to avoid a threat to the mother's life or health, the cost or the circumstantial disruption of her life.

There is no benefit to the child, only harm (usually death). The vast majority of abortions are performed for financial or other personal reasons, not threats to maternal health (www.guttmacher.org).

Since one in five pregnancies prior to 12 weeks' gestation are not viable for natural causes, wouldn't the mother want to know through ultrasound that her decision to abort did not cause the death of her baby?

The ethical principle of non-maleficence means do no harm. However, 2% to 10% of abortions, either surgical or medical, may carry some kind of significant complication including hemorrhage, infection, organ damage or possibly even loss of fertility and increased risk of premature labor with future pregnancy.

Also, a significant risk of serious anxiety disorders and even suicide have been reported following abortion. An extensive bibliography of reported abortion complications and mental

health issues is available (www.AAPLOG.org).

The alternative to abortion, of course, is continuation of pregnancy and keeping the child or offering the child for adoption. Adoption opportunities abound in our society with multiple agencies ready to help the patient identify suitable adoptive parents. Public funding agencies such as Medicaid or private charitable resources may help defray costs of the pregnancy.

Abortion might be arguably ethical if all of this information is provided to the patient. But, regardless of ethical informed consent, abortion remains an intrinsic evil in the eyes of the Church and is only rarely licit (Linacre Quarterly, vol. 79, 1: pp. 81-87).

Life itself is supernatural. The natural world cannot fundamentally explain what makes a heart beat or what animates the human soul. Our Catholic faith has no similar problem. Life is of God (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2258).

"Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion" (CCC, No. 2271).

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

Replace fear with faith, condemnation with love

Regarding "Vaccines + masks" (Catholic Virginian, Sept. 6):

First, God, our divine creator, has designed the human body so wondrously! At the very moment of conception, all the microscopic developments within the growing fetus go into hyperdrive.

It's insane to fathom what a complex "machine" our bodies are! From the cellular level to the organs, the muscles, the skeleton, etc., the human body is fantastic how it operates.

Second, corona viruses (colds) aren't new. Yes, we've taken other shots to beat illnesses, but the difference this time is the administration of the mRNA. The former used strands of the "invaders" (polio, measles, flu, etc.), which taught our bodies how to fight them.

Today, Big Pharma interests want (beg, bribe, guilt, bully) us all to disregard God's perfect design and scrap that for a "miracle in a tube." This tube isn't a strand of the virus; it's a subunit (tiny component) with a mechanism (mRNA) to hijack our system, thus circumnavigating it.

One year in use is not enough time. What historically would've shut other

vaccines down, at double digits (deaths and other issues), somehow gets a "pass" with digits in the tens of thousands for deaths alone. Perhaps we should pause, use other less extreme options.

Exception: The "perfect body" doesn't exist for some or isn't as strong as it once was. This is where new technology explores, not mandates.

Absolutely continue to be a good neighbor (wash hands, cover coughs, stay home when sick, be kind). Reach out to others, the sick, weak, lonely. Replace fear with faith. Replace condemnation with love. Take a moment, slow down.

— **Rebecca Quick Smithfield**

Don't scorn, ridicule the unvaccinated

Re: "Vaccinations + Masks = Love of God, Self and Neighbor" (Catholic Virginian, Sept. 20):

For Barbara Hughes, who is a well-respected retreat facilitator and spiritual guide, to be so judgmental of those who choose to not receive what is an experimental shot is troubling.

Hughes states that she is flummoxed by those who are not vaccinated having no problem exposing them-

selves to others in what she deems a deadly virus. Has it occurred to her and other pro-"vaccine" folks that the flu kills millions of people every year? We are finding out the vaccines don't work so well in preventing COVID and people are coming down with the virus.

For folks being scorned and ridiculed for deeply held convictions is unprecedented in our country. What happens next? Will those who don't receive the vaccine be forced to wear an armband or be rounded up and put in camps because they are considered a danger to society? Where does it stop?

I am a person of faith with strong convictions about freedom and liberty, and I respect those who decide to receive the shot as much as those who do not. I will not be coerced into receiving something in my body that has already killed and maimed thousands of people.

That should give us pause to step back, evaluate and do our due diligence by asking why the powers-that-be seem to be working overtime to convince us through fear tactics that we must have this shot or be denied our basic freedoms.

— **Linda Browning-Kaloski Chesapeake**

Pope's simple message: 'Listen'

VATICAN CITY — In the search for truth, Catholic communicators must learn how to listen above all else, the Vatican said.

"Listen" will be the theme for the 2022 celebration of World Communications Day, said the statement released Sept. 29. A papal message on the theme should be published on or around the Jan. 24 feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists.

"The pandemic has struck and wounded everyone, and everyone needs to be heard and comforted. Listening is also fundamental for good information," said the statement announcing the theme.

The pope's choice of the theme for the 2022 celebration, which will be held May 29 in most dioceses, is drawn from Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke, "Take care, then, how you listen."

The search for truth, the statement said, "begins with listening" as does "bearing witness through social communications media."

"Every dialogue, every relationship begins with listening," it said. "For this reason, in order to grow — even professionally — as communicators, we must relearn to listen a great deal."

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

Publisher: Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout

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

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

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

Eastern Correspondents: Wendy Klesch and Jennifer Neville

Western Correspondents: Karen Adams and Joseph Staniunas

Central Correspondents: Kristen L. Byrd and Rose Morrisette

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Bishop says witnesses make the best teachers

First Heralds of Faith gathering brings Western Vicariate catechists together

JOSEPH STANIUNAS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

During his first meeting with Emily Filippi, director of Christian formation for the Diocese of Richmond, Bishop Barry C. Knestout asked when he could meet his catechists. The result was the Heralds of Faith/Heraldos de la Fe program, an annual gathering of catechists with the bishop and formation office staff, the first one taking place at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, on Saturday, Sept. 18.

“We chose the title to try to express what is the role and responsibility of catechists in cooperation with the bishop, who is the chief catechist,” Filippi said. “We wanted to bring catechists together to thank them, to bless them and to support them in a variety of ways.”

About 100 people involved in youth and adult formation from 20 parishes in the Western Vicariate took part in the bilingual event. Keynote presentations were given virtually in English and Spanish, and the combined choir from St. Gerard and Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, and Holy Spirit, Christiansburg, sang in both languages. The Gospel at the opening Mass, the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, was proclaimed only in Spanish.

“Our efforts to make a very pleasing English-Spanish experience I think was pretty good for the first time out the door,” Filippi said.

Delayed a year due to the pandemic, Heralds of Faith featured personal stories from catechists, some expert advice and a chance to chat with fellow teachers and the bishop.

“I came to meet more people, for the fellowship, for the encouragement,” said catechist Iris Lopez of St. Joseph, Martinsville, after the meeting. “What it infuses me with is joy, energy, happiness. The Lord takes all this and confirms that I’m doing a good job and a very important job.”

In his homily, Bishop Knestout focused on the idea that the world listens more to witnesses than to teachers, an insight he said that was promoted by St. Paul VI and one that each of that pope’s successors has endorsed. The bishop said that even if their students don’t seem to be moved by personal stories of faith, catechists should keep at it.

“God assures us that by being witnesses as well as teachers we can turn the tide, overcome whatever those obstacles are,” he said. “Our work is to persevere with the patience of the sower of the seed, rejoice in those occasions where we see the fruit of our labor but



Above: Some of the nearly 100 catechists from the Western Vicariate celebrate Mass with Bishop Barry C. Knestout at the Diocese of Richmond’s first Heralds of Faith conference, Saturday, Sept. 18, at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke. The event was sponsored by the diocese’s Office of Christian Formation. (Photo/Vy Barto)
Right: Bishop Knestout visits with Francesca Brownsberger, a catechist at Sacred Heart, Big Stone Gap. (Photo/ Joseph Staniunas)

never give up on all of those areas where they seem to be kind of barren.”

The keynote speaker in English, Loyola Press faith formation consultant Joe Paprocki, also encouraged the catechists to bring their personal experiences into the classroom.

“Heralds of faith, if we’re going to be presenting Good News,” he said, “we need to tell stories not only about how God was good to people 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked the Earth, but how God is good to us now, and how God has been good to me, how Jesus has changed my life.”

Each of the three catechists who spoke did just that.

Kenia Aguilar, leader of adult faith formation at Blessed Sacrament, Harrisonburg, gave her presentation in Spanish. She said later that one thing she told the group was that she enjoys this ministry “because it helped me grow in my own spirituality and learn about the Bible, and it helped me to love Jesus more.”

Isaura Muñoz de Márquez, a youth ministry catechist at St. Gerard, Roanoke, told how “the pandemic has taught me that we should always be willing to open up ourselves, to try new things, to enrich families and children as we spread the Word of God. This



year I am very thankful to God for keeping me alive and healthy and for giving me the opportunity to go back to the classrooms face-to-face with everyone.”

“It was a lot of work, doing the virtual classes,” said Rani Wood, a second grade catechist at St. Andrew, Roanoke, in her talk. “I spent a lot of time looking for videos and books that I could read to them and make videos. They really were a light in the darkness. It just brings me great joy to be a catechist and be able to spend my time with these kids and just seeing the excitement in them as they learn the Word of God.”

Reflecting on the witness talks, Bishop Knestout told the group that “it doesn’t require a huge intellectual background or degrees to be effective as a teacher and a catechist because it is at heart a witness of our faith to those around us.”

Participants said they appreciated the support from the bishop and diocesan staff.

Francesca Brownsberger of Sacred Heart, Big Stone Gap, has degrees in theology and has worked in parishes before.

“This was a big jump coming to

this Appalachian region,” she said. “And I feel like it’s a gift, a call to missionary activity, and I really just want to be ready. Theology isn’t something you just drop. You have to constantly be learning. This isn’t like any other subject. This is an encounter with Christ.”

“It’s helping our youth and young adults and adults develop that relationship with Christ, through sharing of the faith and through action,” said Kaky Bowden, director of faith formation at Holy Cross, Lynchburg. “You can’t learn about the faith unless you know Christ. But to know Christ is to want to go deeper into your faith and to do those Corporal Works of Mercy.”

“As catechists, we need to give witness to the parents,” added Linda Contreras, also from Holy Cross, Lynchburg. “It’s not just checking off a test. It’s not just finishing the work in the book. It’s the parents being empowered to help their children to live the faith. It’s making the faith come alive.”

The next Heralds of Faith gathering with Bishop Knestout is scheduled for the Eastern Vicariate in September 2022.

Why you might not see US flag in the sanctuary



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Q. When I was at Mass yesterday, the congregation sang a rousing rendition of “God Bless America.” That brought to my mind the flag issue. I have been in many Catholic churches of late — especially for funerals — and I have not seen a single flag. What is the Catholic Church’s stand on American flags in the sanctuary? (Niskayuna, New York)

A. Some might be surprised to know that there are currently no regulations regarding the display of national flags in churches — neither in the Church’s Code of Canon Law nor in the books that govern the celebration of the liturgy. That matter is left to the judgment of the diocesan bishop who often, in turn, delegates the decision to the local pastor.

Under the heading of prayer and worship, the U.S. national bishops’ conference does say on its website:

“The bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy has in the past encouraged pastors not to place the flag within the sanctuary itself, in order to reserve that space for the altar, the ambo, the presidential chair and the tabernacle. Instead, the suggestion has been made that the American flag be placed outside the sanctuary, or in the vestibule of the church.”

Q. Why has the Catholic Church not condemned boxing? It is the only sport in the world whose purpose is to hurt your opponent, even to knock him out. People in other sports get hurt, but the purpose is not evil. The goal is to get a home run or a basket or a touchdown.

Boxing is a barbaric sport where the participants try to pummel their opponent into oblivion. It certainly doesn’t belong in a civilized society whose rules are based on divine law. (Little Rock, Arkansas)

A. I agree with you completely and, while the Church has no “official” position on boxing, Catholic theologians have long questioned the morality of professional prizefighting.

Back in 2005, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, in an article titled, “The Immorality of Professional Prizefighting,” called the sport a “legalized form of attempted murder” and noted that fighters who don’t die in the ring often suffer long-term physical and psychological injuries.

The particular significance is that this journal reflects the official view of the Vatican and that its articles are preapproved by the Vatican’s Secretariat of State. “From a moral point of view,” said the article, “the judgment of boxing can only be gravely and absolutely negative.”

More recently, in August 2021, Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk authored an article that ran in *The Catholic Spirit*, the official newspaper of the St. Paul and Minneapolis archdiocese.

Father Pacholczyk, who holds a doctorate in neurosciences from Yale University and serves as director of education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia, wrote:

“If the goal of a professional boxing match is ‘just’ to knock out the opponent to gain victory, the purpose of the competition itself still raises moral concerns, because participants are striving to inflict potentially serious harm to their opponent’s brain by causing a concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury.”

He also noted that “the sport of boxing not only risks serious impairment and even death, but poses many uncomfortable questions for us regarding our own appetites as spectators, and our willingness to allow for certain elements of brutality and even barbarism in the practice of sporting events.”

Q. For more than 10 years, a member of my parish has been disrupting Mass on a regular basis. She will sit in the pew rocking back and forth, throwing her arms toward heaven and calling out in a loud voice — sometimes “Papa” and sometimes just a guttural scream.

At Communion time, she will sometimes come up to the altar before anyone else has been directed to leave the pews. She has a faraway look in her eyes and physically resists if anyone tries to have her move on.

Our current pastor has told her that she is no longer welcome, so she now waits until he has begun Mass before appearing and taking

her place. What can we as a parish church do? (Richmond)

A. The first step, of course, would be for your pastor to take the woman aside and have a quiet conversation with her. This conversation would highlight the fact that, in fairness to other parishioners, a church needs to be a quiet place where people can pray peacefully. I am going to assume that your pastor has already tried this approach without success.

Some dioceses have written policies for approaching such situations. The Diocese of Stockton in California, for example, says on its website that “in the event that an individual should cause a disturbance during the liturgy, it is the responsibility of the usher(s) to escort the individual outside the church if the individual is willing to go. Otherwise, the usher should call the police and ask that the individual be removed from private property.”

It’s important to know that churches are private property and Church officials are entitled to extend or withdraw the invitation to enter their premises as they see fit. Simply because a church’s services are open to the public does not mean that a parish is legally bound to admit someone who disrupts those services.

Involving the police seems the wisest and safest approach, especially since in many jurisdictions law enforcement is allowed not only to remove such individuals but to bring them to a local hospital for evaluation.

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



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Transform the world as living flames of God's love



IN LIGHT OF FAITH
BARBARA HUGHES

The other day, I came across an advertisement for a book written by a psychologist claiming to have figured out how to solve all the ills of humankind. To learn the secret, all you have to do is purchase his book, numerous videos and subscribe to his newsletters. Not surprisingly, he added the caveat that it would take generations for these problems to disappear, so no one should expect to see results during their lifetime.

Talk about an escape hatch! Sadly, he must have found enough people to purchase what he was peddling to make it profitable.

It's part of the human condition to believe that we are in control of all that happens. We seek answers, plan for eventualities, arm ourselves with tools to accomplish what has been known as the "American dream."

But for people of faith, that so-called dream is short-lived, and can take us only so far. We are reminded of this on a regular basis, particularly when the readings at Mass turn to the end times. The purpose is not to frighten us, but to help us gain a right perspective, keeping in mind that everything in life is passing away.

As Jesus reminded us, "Heav-



en and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away" (Mt 24:35). Perhaps there's no better visible symbol of this than the changes that occur in nature during autumn. As leaves change colors and eventually fall and die, so we will all die one day.

As difficult as it is to lose someone we love to death, Christians know that death is not the end, but only a transition to a new type of existence. Nevertheless, the way we live every day of our life will make a real difference in what life after death will be like.

It's a sobering thought, prompting the words of St. John of the Cross who wrote, "At the end of our life, we will be judged by the way we love."

To help us better understand how to live, Jesus told parables that are relevant for people from all walks of life – young and old, wise and foolish, rich and poor. His teachings included stories about farmers, bridesmaids, land-

owners, a priest, a levy and a good Samaritan. The narratives involved people in debt and people who were wealthy. The son of God cited examples from the flowers of the field, birds of the air, and weeds and wheat.

But one of the most assuring stories is the one about the welcoming father who ran out to meet his prodigal son. It's the father's mercy and the compassion of Jesus to which people of faith cling. And yet, lest we sin by presumption, God's justice also made its way into the stories that Jesus told.

Storytelling and story listening have always been part of the faith journey, so it's no surprise that the desert fathers took up the mantle. The story is told about the desert father who was approached by a young seeker who said, "Father, I keep my rule, I eat very little, I pray and I am silent. I work with my hands, I share my bread with the poor and I purify my heart. What more can I do?" Then the

abba raised his hands and said, "You can become a living flame."

Becoming a living flame is less complicated than it may seem, for all who have been baptized and anointed with the Spirit have already been recipients of divine fire. However, unlike the flowers of the field or the birds of the air, we can choose life or death — an awesome choice, but not an impossible one.

We can wait until our fragile life begins to slip from our grasp, and then with nothing to lose, let go and fall into life. We can live by the energy of our own pale light and grow increasingly cold, or like Sts. Therese of Lisieux, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila or John Paul II, whose feasts we celebrate this month, we can cast ourselves into the fire of God's love.

That fire already exists within us; we need only allow it to penetrate and draw us peacefully into the heart of God. To be drawn peacefully is not to imagine it will be easy or painless. It is, after all, the way of the cross.

Yet, if we believe that we have been baptized with the fire of the Holy Spirit, every word and deed that we unite with the fire of God's love is capable of transforming us into living flames that can ultimately transform our world.

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

Rid yourself of what hinders you from following Jesus



BELIEVE AS
YOU PRAY
DEACON CHRISTOPHER COLVILLE

We all have to make decisions. They can be easy or difficult, important life-changing decisions or simple everyday ones. Sometimes choosing one thing means we have to exclude another, like the rich man's decision in this week's Gospel.

Sometimes we may want to change a decision because we don't like the outcome or we realize what we gave up was actually more important. However, sometimes a decision we make is final and can't be changed.

The presumption made by most commentators and Scripture scholars is that since the rich man in the Gospel went away sad, he didn't or couldn't sell his possessions and follow Jesus. What about the possibility that he had a change of heart? What might have led him to change his mind?

Throughout the Old Testament there are numerous citations that speak about the

law to help the poor and to take care of the orphans and widows. It would have been unheard of in Jewish custom to sell everything you had and give all the money to the poor. Doing so would make a person poor and dependent on others.

There are also places in the Old Testament where people pray for an increase of wealth. The psalm asks God to prosper the work of our hands. So, the statement Jesus makes to the rich man was probably surprising to him and the disciples.

The rich man was schooled in the Torah and knew the law and customs. The commentary in the Jewish Annotated New Testament (p 91), says that the commandments Jesus cites are from Exodus, the second half of the Decalogue, which is about our relationship with others.

If the rich man knew the commandments, studied them and kept them from his youth, he would also know the first half of the Decalogue, which is about our relationship with Yahweh. He would also have the wisdom we hear about in the first reading and come to the realization that his possessions had become more important than his relationship with Yahweh and that Jesus was trying to

make a point.

Although he was initially disheartened by Jesus' response, using this wisdom and knowledge, he might have changed his mind.

We all encounter things which interfere with following Jesus, much like the rich man in the Gospel. They could be money or possessions, our career or one of many vices.

How will we know which way to go? It is not the wisdom of the mind that will help guide us. It is the wisdom we hear about in the Book of Wisdom and the psalm. It is the "wisdom of the heart" that will guide us and teach us what is right.

Jesus knows our life of discipleship will be hard work, especially if things take our attention and focus away from it. Maybe he knew the rich man was too focused on riches and possessions, and that is why he told him to sell everything. Maybe we are too focused on possessions and wealth and need to follow Jesus' advice and rid ourselves of those things that interfere with our following Jesus.

What things interfere with our life of discipleship? We need to know so we can divest ourselves of them in order to follow Jesus more closely.

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

**Twenty-Eighth Sunday
Ordinary Time, Cycle B
Wis 7:7-11; Ps 90:12-17;
Heb 4:12-13; Mk 10:17-30**

Roanoke's 'little church that could' celebrating 75th anniversary

St. Gerard is southwest Virginia's only Black Catholic parish

KAREN ADAMS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

"I see in my neighbor the person of Jesus Christ."

— St. Gerard Majella

On Oct. 16, 1946, the feast of St. Gerard Majella, a house in an African American neighborhood near downtown Roanoke was chosen for what would become St. Gerard Parish. It will celebrate its 75th anniversary on Oct. 16.

"This is 'the little church that could' – and did, and does," said Father Danny Cogut, pastor of St. Gerard. "The people of this parish are known for working together because of their faith."

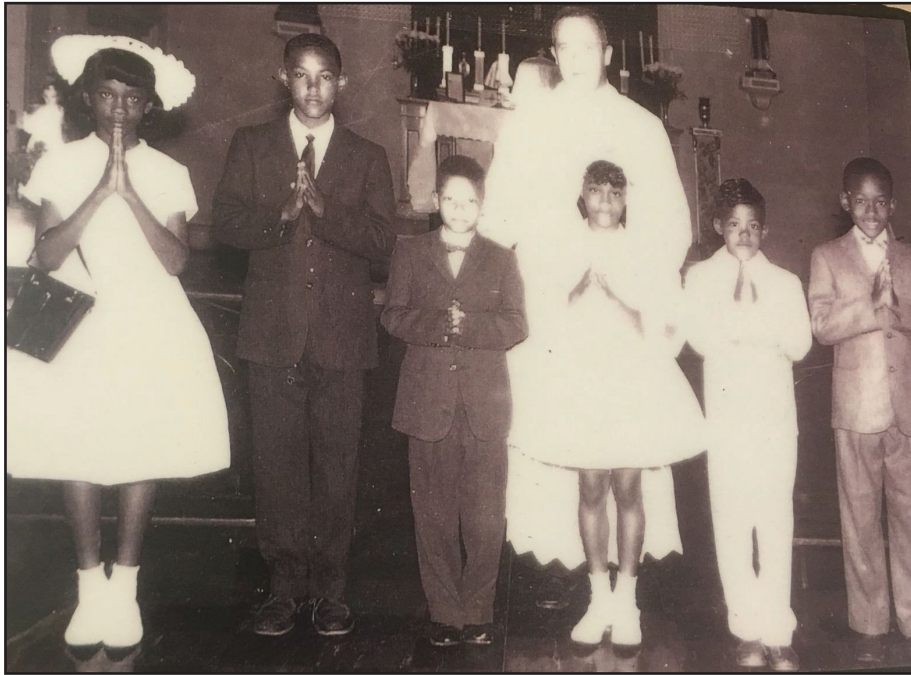
In the wake of World War II, Bishop Peter Ireton asked a group of Redemptorist priests to set up a mission to serve the Black community of Roanoke. Father Maurice McDonald arrived in September 1946 as pastor, celebrated the first Mass at Harrison School for 17 people, and in October secured a house at 835 Moorman Road for the mission church. The brick church that still houses the parish was built in 1951.

"They founded a humble church that is still humble, but it has a rich legacy that continues to grow," said Father Cogut. "We need to remember what the U.S. was like for African Americans in 1946, during segregation." He is also pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem, which was founded in 1948 as a mission of St. Gerard and was served by priests based at the Black parish until 1963.

The Black parish, known for its welcoming spirit, has seen its demographics change in three-quarters of a decade. It now is more than half Hispanic, with white and Black American parishioners, and parishioners from Burundi and the Congo. Masses are celebrated in English and Spanish, with translators for African members who speak Kinyarwanda, Kirundi or Swahili.

The diversity of St. Gerard Parish is reflected throughout the church building.

The welcome sign outside is in English, Spanish and Kinyarwanda. The bulletin is bilingual (English and Spanish) with some Kinyarwanda. A banner in the nave



Father Bernard Krimm, who served as St. Gerard pastor in the early '60s, was known for his kindness toward children and drew new families to the parish. He is pictured with First Communicants in this undated photo. (Photo/St. Gerard Parish)

proclaims: "St. Gerard: A house of prayer for all people" in English, Spanish and Swahili. Behind the altar stand statues of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Gerard Majella. Above them hangs a hand-carved African crucifix with a Black Christ.

Founding parishioner Charles Anderson Sr., who turned 100 earlier this year, has spent most of his life serving St. Gerard Parish. Born and raised Baptist, Anderson became Catholic at 25, shortly after meeting Father McDonald in 1946. The two became close friends.

"He had a big influence on me and made the Catholic Church so appealing," Anderson said. "We were almost like brothers."

Helping to establish the first and only Black Catholic parish in southwest Virginia was a highlight of Anderson's life. "I love this church so much," he said. "I have a personal love for it that goes back a long way."

Virginia Mignon Chubb-Hale, a former educator and longtime parishioner who chairs both the social justice and safety committees, joined St. Gerard around 1966 after finishing college but had been attending since childhood.

Her late father, Leon Chubb, was an early member.

"He was a Methodist but entered the Catholic Church at St. Gerard's in 1947 or 1948," said Chubb-Hale, who also attended the Methodist church with other

family members. This was during segregation when Blacks did not feel welcome in many places, including other churches, she said. "But St. Gerard's was special. I loved to go with him through elementary school and high school." After college, she became a Catholic.

"What I love most about St. Gerard's is the diversity," Chubb-Hale continued. "I've always enjoyed getting to know people of other backgrounds because that's how you learn and understand people from other cultures."

Bea Johnson has attended St. Gerard since the early '60s. After meeting Father Bernard Krimm, the pastor at that time, she visited to discuss the parish and the Catholic faith.

"I was very enthused by his teachings," said Johnson, who grew up in the Holiness Church. "It was so encouraging to go into the Catholic Church."

"We felt at home there because of the people, who had lots of concern for each other," she said. She and her late husband, James, raised their three children in the parish, and she was an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and usher board member, as well as an office volunteer for many years.

"Since I began attending, when it was mostly Black, I have seen more white church members join us and remain at St. Gerard's for the same

reasons we joined: the warm and welcoming community."

The growing diversity makes the parish better, Johnson said. "St. Gerard's strengthened my faith in God. The Holy Spirit is very strong there."

Betty Harvey started coming to St. Gerard's in 1961 when she was in the seventh grade, even though her family attended a nearby Christian Church.

There was a daycare at St. Gerard "and Father Krimm was always outside playing with the children," she said. She and a friend, Lelia Coleman, started attending the church and, with their parents' permission, became Catholic.

"Our parents felt that anything religious was good," Harvey said. "They were very open-minded. And I liked learning, and I found comfort in the order of the Mass."

She described the vibrant Black community at St. Gerard's – which included youth ministries, sports teams, exercise classes, Boy and Girl Scout events, a choir and charitable organizations – as "a family."

"Everyone knew everyone," she said. "It was the center of activity for that community."

In 1997, St. Gerard welcomed Father Walter Barrett, the Diocese of Richmond's first Black diocesan priest, as its pastor.

Maria Morales and her husband, German, originally from Venezuela, began attending St. Gerard in 1996. She has served as the religious education coordinator since 2001 but began volunteering as a Spanish translator soon after she arrived.

When the first Spanish Masses were celebrated in 1996, the Moraleses felt they could be "bridges" between the pastor and the English-speaking community because they were bilingual. As a couple, they also began to offer marriage preparation classes in Spanish.

As word of the Spanish Masses spread, more Hispanic Catholics attended, some from as far as 80 miles away.

"They are looking for a place where they can understand the Mass in their own language and feel welcome," Morales said.

Paul English was among the

See St. Gerard, Page 11

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daily at www.catholicvirginian.org.

St. Gerard

Continued from Page 10

few white parishioners to join St. Gerard more than 40 years ago and has been involved in many ministries, especially music.

“This tiny church, built in the Jim Crow era, attracted me,” he said, adding that he felt embraced by the community even though he was in the minority. “It had more soul than any church I’d ever attended.”

As part of the music ministry, he attends all Masses and hears the parish pray and sing in multiple languages.

“It’s been enlightening, stepping into other cultures and worshipping God together,” he said. “St. Gerard’s may be poor in material goods, but it is wealthy in spirit.”

Father Louis Benoit, who served the parish for one year long ago, fondly recalled the distinctive and remarkable music.

“St. Gerard had an outstanding Gospel choir,” he said. “I never heard them when they were not good.”

When Tom and Becky Carr moved to Roanoke in 2007 they wanted a diverse parish, and they knew from the first visit that they had found it.

“The church looked like a mirror image of the city, with Black, brown and white faces,” said Tom Carr, who has since served as a pastoral council member and catechist.

“At one time, I remember hearing a priest say in his homily, when he looked out at all the different

people there: ‘This must be what heaven looks like,’” he added.

Like others, the Carrs also were impressed with the “different and joyful sound” of the racially mixed Gospel choir. That choir eventually disbanded; now the African choir is drawing attention with their unique languages, harmonies and drums.

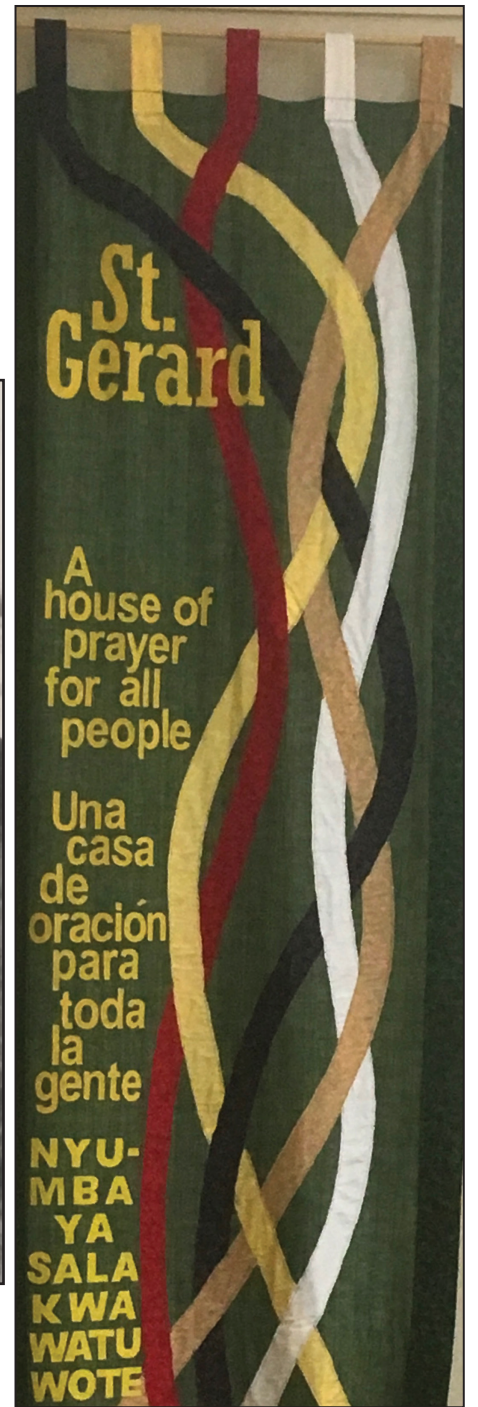
Chubb-Hale sees the diverse

parish growth as an ongoing chance for personal growth.

“Having a better understanding of different people is so important,” she said. “Racism will not end in my lifetime, and it frightens me sometimes. But when I see people come together as they do at St. Gerard’s, when I see different races working together for the common good, it gives me hope.”



Above: This house on Moorman Road in Roanoke was purchased in October 1946 as the first home for St. Gerard parish. Six years later, the parish built its church. (Photo/St. Gerard Parish) Right: This banner reflects the diversity of the parish with the message expressed in English, Spanish and Swahili. (Photo/Karen Adams)





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Deacons

Continued from Page 3



Deacons Liem Do, Gregg Whisler and Lawrence Mikkelson process from the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, following the Mass at which they were ordained to the diaconate, Saturday, Sept. 25. (Photo/Michael Mickle)

bishop said, "... do the will of God from the heart — serve the people in love and joy as you would the Lord."

Bishop Knestout said they should "be men of good reputation, filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit."

"Never allow yourselves to be turned away from the hope offered by the Gospel," the bishop said.

"Now you are not only hearers of this Gospel but also its ministers."

The newly-ordained are: Deacons Joe Badalis, John Carey, Michael Carlucci, Kirk Collins, Steven Cottam, José Cuenca, Mark De La Hunt, Daniel Derringer, Liem Do, James Findley, Hoang Le, Lawrence Mikkelson, Myles Pocta, Domingo Torres and Gregg Whisler.

IN MEMORIAM

Daughter of Charity Sister Catherine Fitzgerald



A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Villa St. Michael, Emmitsburg, Md., Saturday, Sept. 18, for Sister Catherine Fitzgerald (Catherine Annette), a Daughter of Charity. Sister Catherine, 88, died Wednesday, Sept. 15.

A native of Washington, D.C., she entered the Daughters of Charity in 1952. She earned a bachelor's degree in education from St. Joseph College, Emmitsburg, and her master's in mathematics from the

University of Detroit.

Much of Sister Catherine's life was devoted to education. In the Diocese of Richmond she taught at St. Joseph School, Petersburg (1963-1970); and Portsmouth Catholic High School (1970-1974). She then served as principal at Gibbons High School, Petersburg (1974-1979).

From 2014 until the time of her death, Sister Catherine was missioned to Villa St. Michael for the Ministry of Prayer.

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Parish Partner Spotlight



Thank You Our Lady of Mount Carmel



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"Our Lady of Mount Carmel pray for us!"

Project touches the 'sole'



On Friday, Sept. 17, middle school students at Portsmouth Catholic Regional School help Babs Zuhowski, executive director of Maison Fortune Orphanage Foundation, load the more than 300 pairs of shoes the school collected during its shoe drive for the orphanage in Hinche, Haiti. The goal of the service project, according to organizers, was "an exercise of walking with Jesus to make the walk for others more safe and comfortable." (Submitted photo)

Create culture of care for all, pope tells youth

CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis praised and encouraged young climate activists in their efforts to build a more fraternal society that cares for the environment.

"There must be harmony between people, men and women, and the environment. We are not enemies; we are not indifferent. We are part of this cosmic harmony," he said in a video message.

"It is time to make wise decisions so that we can make use of the many experiences gained in recent years, in order to make possible a culture of care, a culture of responsible sharing," he said, encouraging them to keep working for the good of humanity.

The pope's message Sept. 29 came during a "Youth4Climate" gathering in Milan Sept. 28-30.

He encouraged young people to combine their efforts "through an extensive educational alliance to form decent, mature generations, capable of overcoming fragmentation and rebuilding the fabric of relationships so that we can achieve a more fraternal humanity."

"I would like to thank you for your dreams and good projects, and for the fact that you are as concerned about human relations as you are about caring for the environment. Thank you. It is a concern that is good for everyone," he said.

"This vision is capable of challenging the adult world, for it reveals that you are prepared not only for action, but also for patient listening, constructive dialogue and mutual understanding,"

the pope said.

He said the Global Compact on Education, launched in 2019, "aims to provide shared responses to the historical change that humanity is experiencing and that has been made even more evident by the pandemic."

"Technical and political solutions are not enough if they are not supported by the responsibility of each member and by an educational process that favors a cultural model of development and sustainability centered on fraternity and on the alliance between human beings and the environment," he said.

The pope said the Vatican would be interested in seeing whether the Council of Europe will decide to create "a new legal instrument to link the care of the environment to the respect of fundamental human rights."

"There is no more time to wait; we must act. Any instrument that respects human rights, the principles of democracy and the rule of law — all fundamental values of the Council of Europe, can be useful to face this global challenge," he said.

When people think of themselves as "the lord of the universe and not as its responsible stewards," then they will find ways to "justify any kind of waste, both environmental and human, and treat other people and nature as mere objects," Pope Francis said.

People should consume what they need to live, "not live to consume," especially the kind of unbridled consumption seen today, he said.

Archbishop says vaccinated, unvaccinated must dialogue

JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — While men and women have a responsibility to be vaccinated against COVID-19, they also have a responsibility to engage in dialogue with those who are hesitant, rather than trying to force them, said Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia.

During a briefing with journalists at the Vatican press office Sept. 28, Archbishop Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, said that while the academy has "always recommended the need for responsibility regarding vaccines, we never spoke of obligation."

"We spoke of responsibility to oneself and of responsibility toward those who, for example, cannot receive the vaccine," Archbishop Paglia said. "I hope that within the Church — where we are used to debating each other — we can debate about this without excluding one another."

Archbishop Paglia, along with David Barbe, president of the World Medical Association, and Maria Chiara Carrozza, president of the Italian National Research Council, presented the discussions taking place during the Pontifical Academy for Life's plenary assembly.

The Sept. 27-29 meeting reflected on the theme, "Public health in a global perspective: pandemic, bioethics and the future." Archbishop Paglia explained that the assembly was not about the pandemic, but "about what we have learned from the pandemic and what guidelines we should follow and practice for a new future."

Addressing the issue of vaccine hesitancy, the Italian archbishop said that "what is happening is use-

ful for a wider reflection to understand how we must live our lives in a better way."

Acknowledging the divisiveness of the issue, even within families, Archbishop Paglia said that dialogue, not confrontation, was necessary to allay fears and doubts concerning the vaccine.

Carrozza emphasized the need for not only effective scientific communication, education and formation, but more importantly, for efforts to rebuild trust.

"Conflicts are born on the one hand from ignorance, from not understanding the effects of the vaccine," she said. But they also come from "the lack of trust in the authorities, in the government, in those who propose it and then, from suspicions of what could be behind it, as if it were a plot."

Barbe noted that even before the pandemic, the "anti-vax' sentiment or movement has been rising in almost all countries," and there are added suspicions about the COVID-19 vaccine because of how seemingly fast it was developed and distributed.

"Most vaccines, historically, have taken many years to develop," he explained. "Our newer technologies have allowed us to develop it more rapidly. But some of those new technologies also involve mRNA and that made additional people suspicious."

He also said that changing recommendations — such as vaccine mandates, the wearing of masks in public spaces or social distancing regulations — were misinterpreted by some as "uncertainty or lack of consistency in our message" rather than the evolving understanding of COVID-19.

Mass of Hope and Healing



Joined by more than 20 priests from the Western Vicariate, Bishop Barry C. Knestout presided at the first of three Masses of Hope and Healing, Friday, Sept. 17, at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke. The Masses are part of the bishop's ongoing pastoral commitment to assist victim survivors in healing from sexual abuse. In his homily, he stated, "We seek grace to move forward, with renewed hope, renewed will, and a deeper commitment to authentic expressions of love and healing." (Photo/Vy Barto)

OPPORTUNITIES

Peninsula Catholic High School, Newport News, seeks a full-time events and alumni relations coordinator to assist the director of development and marketing with fundraising, events coordination, donor and alumni relations. This position includes planning and executing events, donor cultivation, alumni relations, communication with stakeholders, procurement, volunteer coordination and database management. Strong written and verbal communication, public speaking and interpersonal skills essential for this position. Minimum three years of prior development and events experience. Proficiency with DonorPerfect, Google Documents and Microsoft Suite a plus. Occasional weekend and evening hours are required. Please send a cover letter, résumé and diocesan application to the director of development and marketing, Robin Thomas, rthomas@peninsulacatholic.org. Applications for employment can be downloaded from the Diocese of Richmond's website (Human Resources Tab).

Knights of Columbus: The Abbate Agency is hiring. Lead a life of service to Catholic families in your community! Join us for a virtual job fair on Thursday, Oct. 7, 7 p.m. or submit your resume now online. More information, including registration for the virtual job fair, is available at abbatekofc.com/career-opportunities, email abbateagency@mail2@kofc.org or call 866-868-1492.

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Norfolk, is seeking a part-time (20 hours per week) coordinator of youth ministry to work in forming young disciples of Jesus Christ. The youth minister would be working with high school (LifeTeen) and middle school youth ministry (Edge), as well as confirmation preparation.

Basic Qualifications: Practicing Catholic in good standing, able to participate in the sacramental life of the Church, with a ready and proficient knowledge of the faith; grounded in sound Catholic doctrine, faithful to the teaching authority of the Church; passion for evangelizing and guiding/mentoring youth; valid driver's license and must be willing to have a criminal background check and be VIRTUS certified; willing to work a flexible schedule including evenings and weekends, and occasional overnight trips to chaperone diocesan events; proficient in the use of technology and social media, e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.; bachelor's or master's degrees in religious studies or theology from a Catholic institution or certification in youth ministry. Candidates should send a cover letter, application and résumé to Alfie Martinez-Coyle at PA2@blessedsacrament.com

SHORTAKES

The 40 Days for Life Fall 2021 Campaign continues through Oct. 31. Christians throughout Richmond and beyond are praying at Planned Parenthood, 201 N. Hamilton Street, Richmond, Monday-Saturday, from as early as 7 a.m. to as late as 7 p.m. More information is available at <https://www.40daysforlife.com/en/Richmond>.

America Needs Fatima Rosary Rally will be Saturday, Oct. 16, noon-2 p.m., at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, 8200 Woodman Road, Richmond, overlooking Woodman Road. Bring a chair and dress for the weather. Contact Marie Pruessmann for more information 804 935-0302 or email stedimar@yahoo.com.

Public Square Rosary Rally, Saturday, Oct. 16, noon, on the steps of St Peter Pro Cathedral Church at 800 E Grace Street, Richmond. This rosary, sponsored by American Needs Fatima, will be one of over 20,000 rallies to take place across the U.S. on this date. Please join us in offering reparation for the sins and offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to fervently pray for the conversion of the U.S. Contact Kathy Butner at kathybutner@hotmail.com with questions.

The Blessed Sacrament Golf Classic will be held on Oct. 22, at Sewells Point Golf Course. This year the parish celebrates 100 years of faith and service in Norfolk. Proceeds from this event benefit the parish's ministries and outreach programs such as the Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team, youth mission trips and work camps and the new Centennial Community Garden. Check in starts at 11 a.m. for a Florida Best Ball format starting at noon. Participation includes a cart, range balls, complementary beverages, a cookout dinner and awards. Please see the website at www.blessedsacrament.com/golftour nament or call 757-550-4793 for more information regarding player registration, sponsorships, donations and volunteer opportunities.

The St. Jude Women's Guild invites all women to join them for a day of reflection on Saturday, Oct. 23, 10:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., St. Jude Catholic Church, 1937 Davis Highway, Mineral. "Autumn Grandeur of God's Handiwork in Creation and Our Hearts as Well" is the theme. The retreat will be led by Sister of St. Joseph Sally Russell. The cost is \$15 per per-

son and includes lunch. Registration forms are available at louisacatholics.org — click on Women's Guild. If you have any questions, please email lcladiesguild@gmail.com or call Connie Fuller at 804-513-4396. Registration deadline: Friday, Oct. 15.

All are welcome to join Deacon Charles Williams of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from May 2-11, 2022, for the most deeply moving spiritual experience of your lifetime. A ten-day tour for \$3,599 including airfare, first class hotels, tours, breakfast and dinner, Mass every day in Holy Places and much more.

For further information please contact Alba Kim at tours@albastours.com or (804) 298-4035. *Reservations are available now. Spaces are limited. **COVID-19 policies available upon request.

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church, in the Highland Park area of Richmond, will celebrate its Centennial in 2023. Bishop Knestout will celebrate Mass on Nov. 20, 2022,

and kick off the celebration, which will continue through Nov. 19, 2023. In between, you will have plenty of opportunities to share the history of the parish and recognize the people involved over the past century. If your family has ties to St. Elizabeth Parish, St. Elizabeth Catholic School, St Joseph Parish and Van De Vyver School, then you are who we are celebrating. Join us! Register online at https://bit.ly/STECC_Bulletin or contact the parish office by emailing Mary Rose Purcell at mpurcell@stelizcc.org or by calling 804-329-4599. If no one answers, leave a message with your information.

Correction

Due to incorrect information provided to The Catholic Virginian, one of Maj. Gen. Scott West's deceased friends was incorrectly listed as Major Clifford Potter in the Sept. 20 story, "Prayerful memorials mark 9/11 anniversary." The name of the deceased is Major Clifford L. Patterson Jr.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for October 10, 2021

Mark 10: 17-30

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B: The young man who went away sad. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

A MAN	KNELT	ETERNAL LIFE
GOOD	ALONE	STEAL
FALSE	DEFRAUD	HONOR
OBSERVED	LOVED HIM	TREASURE
HEAVEN	ENTER	CAMEL
NEEDLE	SAVED	ALL THINGS
POSSIBLE	GOSPEL	AGE TO COME

QUESTIONS

K D E A L L T H I N G S
 F N U S T E A L E M A C
 A H E A V E N A P V M A
 L W K L R G A D E H A G
 S I L Y T F P D N R N E
 E L L A L R E T N E O T
 G L J L O V E D H I M O
 O O D F R H C A C O H C
 O J S E L B I S S O P O
 D F S P E N O L A U Y M
 D B M M E N H O N O R E
 O E F I L L A N R E T E

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If you enjoy the Scripture Search and/or the crossword puzzle, please let us know. Email akrebs@catholicvirginian.org or call 804-359-5654.

El Papa a la hora del Ángelus: “¿Quieres sobresalir? Sirve”

Al comentar la liturgia del día antes de rezar el Ángelus dominical, el Papa Francisco recordó que el valor de una persona no depende del papel que desempeña, de su éxito, su trabajo o su dinero. “La grandeza y el éxito, a los ojos de Dios, tienen otro nivel: se miden por el servicio”. E invocó a María, humilde sierva del Señor, para que “nos ayude a comprender que servir no nos disminuye, sino que nos hace crecer. Y que hay más alegría en dar que en recibir”

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

Puntualmente a mediodía Francisco se asomó a la ventana de su estudio frente a la Plaza de San Pedro para la acostumbrada cita del Ángelus dominical.

Al comentar el Evangelio del día en que San Marcos relata que, de camino a Jerusalén, los discípulos de Jesús discutían sobre quién “era el más grande entre ellos”, el Papa explicó que él les habló de forma contundente. Algo que – dijo – también se aplica a nosotros hoy:

“Si uno quiere ser el primero, sea el último de todos y el servidor de todos”

El Santo Padre afirmó que “con esta frase lapidaria, el Señor inaugura una inversión: da un vuelco a los criterios que marcan lo que realmente cuenta”.

“El valor de una persona ya no depende del papel que desempeña, del éxito que tiene, del trabajo que hace, del dinero que tiene en el banco; no, la grandeza y el éxito, a los ojos de Dios, tienen otro nivel: se miden por el servicio. No por lo que se tiene, sino por lo que se da. ¿Quieres sobresalir? Sirve”

El Papa dijo que ‘hoy en día la palabra ‘servicio’ parece un poco descolorida, desgastada por el uso’. Pero recordó que en el Evangelio “tiene un significado preciso y concreto”.

“Servir no es una expresión de cortesía: es hacer como Jesús, que, resumiendo su vida en pocas palabras, dijo que había venido ‘no a ser servido, sino a servir’”

El camino del servicio

Por esta razón Francisco señaló que, si queremos seguir a Jesús, debemos recorrer el camino que él mismo trazó, “el camino del servicio”. Además, destacó que “nuestra fidelidad al Señor depende de nuestra voluntad de servir”. Y esto a pesar de que cueste, por “saber a cruz”.

“Pero a medida que crecemos en el cuidado y la disponibilidad hacia los demás, nos volvemos más libres por dentro, más parecidos a Jesús”

El Papa también destacó que “cuanto más servimos, más sentimos la presencia de Dios”. Sobre todo “cuando servimos a los que no tienen nada que devolvernos, los pobres, abrazando sus dificultades y necesidades con tierna compasión: ahí descubrimos que a su vez somos amados y abrazados por Dios”.

Por esta razón – prosiguió el Santo Padre – Jesús después de haber hablado de la primacía del servicio, hace un gesto para ilustrarlo: “Toma un niño y lo coloca en medio de los discípulos, en el centro, en el lugar más importante”.

La pequeñez

Francisco explicó que el niño, en el Evangelio “no simboliza tanto la inocencia como la pequeñez”. A la vez que expresó que “Jesús abraza a ese niño y dice que quien recibe a un

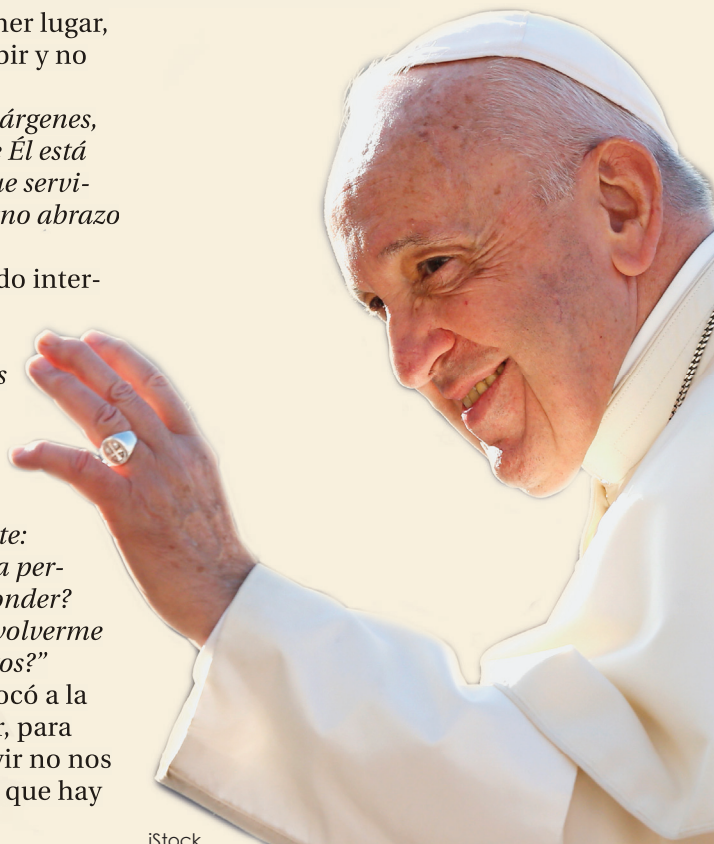
pequeño lo recibe a Él. Esto es, en primer lugar, a quién servir: a los que necesitan recibir y no tienen nada que dar”.

“Acogiendo a los que están en los márgenes, desatendidos, acogemos a Jesús, porque Él está ahí. Y en un pequeño, en un pobre al que servimos, también nosotros recibimos el tierno abrazo de Dios”

El Papa invitó a preguntarnos siendo interpelados por el Evangelio:

“Yo, que sigo a Jesús, ¿me intereso por los más abandonados? ¿O, como los discípulos aquel día, busco la gratificación personal? ¿Entiendo la vida como una competición para abrirme un hueco a costa de los demás, o creo que sobresalir es servir? Y, concretamente: ¿dedico tiempo a algún ‘pequeño’, a una persona que no tiene medios para corresponder? ¿Me ocupo de alguien que no puede devolverme el favor, o sólo de mis familiares y amigos?”

Tras estas preguntas Francisco invocó a la Virgen María, humilde sierva del Señor, para que “nos ayude a comprender que servir no nos disminuye, sino que nos hace crecer. Y que hay más alegría en dar que en recibir”.



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Diocese of Richmond

Octubre 2021

Office of the Bishop

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

La Jornada Mundial de las Misiones, la celebración eucarística anual y mundial para las Misiones de la Iglesia, será el 24 de octubre de este año. Este día importante en la vida de la Iglesia universal fortalece nuestra comprensión de nuestro llamado compartido a la misión, que se nos otorgó en el Bautismo.

El mensaje del Papa Francisco para La Jornada Mundial de las Misiones reflexiona sobre el tema: **“No podemos dejar de hablar de lo que hemos visto y oído”** (Hechos 4:20). El Santo Padre comparte su celo recordándonos que, “como cristianos, no podemos poseerlo por nosotros mismos”, ya que “recordamos agradecidamente a todas esas personas que, con su testimonio de vida, nos ayudan a renovar nuestro compromiso bautismal de ser apóstoles generosos y alegres del Evangelio”. ¡Nos invita a hablar de nuestra fe!

La Jornada Mundial de las Misiones nos brinda esa misma oportunidad. Podemos hablar de nuestra fe y responder a nuestro llamado misionero, a través de la oración, la participación en la Eucaristía y dando generosamente a la colecta de la **Sociedad para la Propagación de la Fe** en ese día especial. Sus dones apoyan y sostienen a sacerdotes, religiosos y líderes pastorales laicos en más de 1,100 diócesis misioneras en Asia, África, las Islas del Pacífico y partes de América Latina y Europa mientras proclaman el Evangelio, edifican la Iglesia, sirven a los pobres y hablan de nuestra fe compartida en todos los rincones del mundo.

“La pandemia mundial ha puesto de primer plano y amplificado el dolor, la soledad, la pobreza y las injusticias experimentadas por tantas personas”, recuerda el Papa Francisco. Este año, mientras el mundo se recupera de la pérdida y los desafíos que resultaron, respondamos con generosidad recíproca en la mayor medida que podamos.

Si no pudo apoyar a los misioneros el año pasado debido a las dificultades derivadas de la pandemia y la asamblea, le insto a que duplique su generosidad para con los más necesitados. A medida que reconstruimos nuestras vidas, ayúdenos a extender la mano en solidaridad y apoyo a la Iglesia de la Misión, y al trabajo y testimonio de los misioneros en las misiones del Papa.

Con este espíritu, ofrezco mi más sincera gratitud personal por su bondadoso corazón misionero, extendiéndome con amor durante el Mes de la Misión.

Agradecido en el Señor,

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

Para obtener más información sobre el Domingo Mundial de las Misiones, visite missio.org/resources para obtener materiales adicionales.

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Open door, open hearts

Couple's been foster parents to 100-plus babies in 43 years

KRISTI ANDERSON
Catholic News Service

ST. CLOUD, Minn. — When Travis and Rhonda Kitch met Ron and Jane Brown for the first time in 2008, they were already family.

It was the day the Browns, longtime foster parents, introduced the Kitches to their daughter, Grace, whom the Browns had cared for almost from birth.

The Kitches also had a 7-year-old son, Carson. Carson had a liver transplant as a baby, an open-heart surgery when he was 6 months old and another open-heart surgery when he was 3 years old. He also lost most of his hearing while he was ill, waiting for his liver transplant. The couple also experienced four miscarriages before beginning the adoption process in 2008.

“Our home-study paperwork wasn’t finalized when our social worker called asking if we wanted to know more about a toddler in Minnesota,” Rhonda recalled. “She indicated the child had had an open-heart surgery and a hearing loss.

“When she asked if we wanted to know more, there wasn’t any doubt that we wanted to learn more.”

Overcoming obstacles

Grace was placed with the Browns almost as soon as she was born. The Browns had been foster parents since 1978 and had seen almost everything in their years of service. But Grace had more obstacles to overcome than most of the 100-plus babies who had been placed in their care.

“We had five months to get her up to 12 pounds so she could have the surgery,” Jane recalled. “We had to wake her up to eat. We rejoiced at every ounce she gained.”

Grace’s surgery was successful and the Browns continued to nurture her until she was healthy enough to meet her forever family. Travis and Rhonda met Grace Aug. 4, 2008, when she was 17 months old.

“It was evident Grace was raised in a home filled with love,” Rhonda said. “We loved seeing the backyard where she played, the nearby park, the ease she moved throughout the home. Grace has only known love.”

“We got to learn about her routines, her favorite items and toys, see pictures of her growing up, hear all about her medical journey, and giggle about silly stories,” she said. “We were so grateful we could always ask questions about her experiences and hear stories about our sweet toddler.”

Carson met his sister who shared his “matching scar” Aug. 5, 2008, and the Browns brought Grace to the Kitch home Aug. 8 of that year — their Forever Family Day.

“Everybody’s got a perfect match,” Jane said in an interview with *The Central Minnesota Catholic*, magazine of the Diocese of St. Cloud. “These are the things we can’t explain. How amazing that (Grace) was placed with parents who had a son with hearing aids so they already knew sign language.

“You can’t take those memories away from us. To see that baby, to watch how they change and grow and start smiling at you, and bonding with you, and then to hand



Ron and Jane Brown of St. Cloud, Minn., shown in an undated photo, opened their home to more than 100 babies in 43 years of foster parenting. Ron, now 78, and Jane, now 75, retired as foster parents in June 2021, but said their door will still be open to all the families and birth parents who have remained in contact with them over the years. (CNS photo/Adrees Latif, Reuters)

them over to their adoptive parents, we can’t even explain it in words.”

Beginning of a journey

Jane is an only child and always dreamed of having a big family. The couple has four children. But, if you ask the couple, their family really includes over 100 babies and the countless birth parents, adoptive parents and their families who entered their home and their hearts through foster parenting.

The Browns decided to become foster parents through Catholic Charities in 1978. Over the years, they did work with Stearns and Morrison counties and ended their 43-year stint as foster parents as a bridge couple with Lutheran Social Service.

“Every baby was new life for us,” Jane said. “Our commitment was with the adoption program, but our first priority was always with the birth parents because they gave birth. And bless their hearts, they didn’t have to do that.

“To place a child for adoption is such a great gift, one of the greatest gifts anyone could give. Our job was to support them along the way.”

The Browns worked with the birth parents and the adoptive parents, and often-times, extended families, welcoming them all into their home.

If they wished, the birth parent or parents planned a “blessing ceremony” — where both the birth parents and the adoptive parents came together for the sake of the child. This was almost always done at the Browns’ home.

The Browns were the first foster family Jane Marrin worked with when she served as

a social worker for Catholic Charities in the 1980s and ‘90s.

“They made it easy for me as a social worker,” Marrin said. “They are one of, if not the most, faith-filled couples I have ever met. Their example of treating everyone, and I mean everyone, as Christ is unparalleled.

“The way they welcome all life and treat everyone with dignity, from the birth parents to the social workers to the adoptive parents to the pediatricians to a person they just met on the street. They built their home and their lives on those principles. It is who they are.”

‘Humbling’ experience

Now age 78 and 75, respectively, Ron and Jane Brown retired in June after 43 years of loving service. Reflecting on the myriad stories of love and loss, joy and hope, the couple said they are at peace with their decision.

“We’d love to keep doing it, but we thought it wasn’t fair to the babies if something should happen with our health,” Jane explained.

Their door will still be open to all — the families and birth parents who have remained in contact over the years, as well as the numerous international exchange students they’ve hosted and also their Cathedral High School family, particularly the hockey team.

Ron has been the assistant hockey coach at Cathedral in St. Cloud for 41 years.

“Each year we invite the team into our home for a meal,” Ron said. “It’s not about hockey. We talk about life and goals and plans for the future. It has become a tradition that we look forward to every year.”

Jane proudly sports a crooked finger, which she deems her “filming finger,” from all the years of traveling and filming the hockey games. She and Ron put together a scrapbook every year for each of the seniors.

“Cathedral is our family,” Jane said.

The Browns modestly realize their lifetime of service has made an impact on countless people over the years, but what they really hope is that everyone who has come through their door knows that each one has had an impact on them, too.

“It’s humbling really,” Ron said. “To recognize the fact that you’ve been an important part of someone’s life, even for a short time.”

“They helped us realize what is important in life,” Jane said. “While we helped them become parents, they helped us become parents. If we were to say the biggest blessing of being foster parents, it would be the lessons it taught our children. We realized what we wanted to teach our kids — to be people who give to other people.”

“Everyone needs a purpose,” Jane said. “What better purpose than to be a volunteer for something that you love or feel strongly about? You do it because you want to. Never would we look at anything we did as a sacrifice. We would do it all over again.”

Editor’s note: For information about foster care opportunities in the Diocese of Richmond, contact Commonwealth Catholic Charities at 804-285-5900.