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Praying for the unborn and their parents



Maureen Nwoye, left, a member of St. Joseph, Richmond, leads a decade of the rosary during 40 Days for Life's presence in front of the Planned Parenthood clinic on Hamilton St., Friday morning, Oct. 29. Above: Bishop Barry C. Knestout was among the more than 100 people who withstood heavy rains to pray at the site. (Photos/Brian T. Olszewski)

Seek help of Holy Spirit, pope says

CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In times of trouble, Christians must be like the disciples in the boat on the stormy sea, calling out to Jesus and waking him up, Pope Francis said.

“We must rouse Christ in our hearts, and only then will we be able to contemplate things with his eyes, for he sees beyond the storm,” the pope said Nov. 10 at his weekly general audience.

With an exhortation to trust Christ's presence and to learn how to invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis said he was concluding his series of audience talks about St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians. The concluding talk was the 15th in a series that began in late June.

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Record number of donors puts appeal over goal

Digital in-pew process bolstered contributions

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI
The Catholic Virginian

There was nothing “automatic” this year about reaching the \$3.749 million goal for the Annual Diocesan Appeal — the highest ever, according to Alex Previterra, director of development and operations for the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF).

To date, the appeal has raised \$4,509,799 — 120% over goal.

“Pastors were key. From the Pastors' Advisory Committee (PAC), which advises Bishop Knestout on the formation of the case statement, and their general advocacy for the people in the pews throughout the year,” he said. “We can write all the solicitation letters in the world, but if the pastors don't go for it, then it doesn't happen.”

Previtera termed the response “amazing.”

“We had 13,034 donors — the highest we've ever had. That's exciting,” he said, noting that includes 1,290 Bishop's Circle donors who

contribute \$1,000 or more. “People are reaching a little further in order to help support the appeal, which is really great.”

As it did with the way people did most things, COVID-19 changed the how the in-pew solicitation was conducted.

“This year, the in-pew was so important,” Previterra said. “People were still at home when we did the in-pew, so we designed a virtual digital in-pew process. People gave online during Mass.”

Pastors spoke about the appeal and invited those attending in person and virtually to take out their phones.

“We asked pastors and business managers to put papers on the back of pews with QR codes,” Previterra explained. “When Mass-goers scanned the code, it took them to the Faith Direct website where they could make their contribution.”

The impetus for going fully digital, he said, came, in large part, to what the CCF did in 2020

when it helped parishes establish online giving when in-person Mass attendance was not allowed and contributions to the parishes fell.

“This built upon what we did last year with offertory,” Previterra said, noting pastors had already embraced livestreaming of Masses and getting people to make their parish contributions online. “This was an extension of that process, and it worked out very well.”

This year's in-pew response, which he attributed to going digital, was the highest ever for the appeal.

“Online was really the key this year. If we hadn't done all the things we did last year with the online offertory, it would not have gone as well,” Previterra said. “A lot of people of various ages and backgrounds were able to go on it last year and make secure contributions. When it came to this year's appeal, there was more of a willingness to do that.”

Whether people responded digitally or by

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Detach from possessions, focus more on Christ



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

With Thanksgiving and Christmas approaching, references to “supply chain” have become a topic of news and conversations as people express frustration that gifts they wanted to purchase might be out of stock or no longer available.

While it is understandable that we want our gifts to be special and meaningful for the recipient, there is concern that we could be disappointed this year. If we are unable to find that particular gift, what we were told as children, that “It’s the thought that counts,” might have to suffice.

If the gifts we want to give are hard to find this year, possibly this could be an opportunity to reflect upon whether we might be “possessed by our possessions” or, if not possessed, at least preoccupied with protecting them or holding on to them.

We can ask ourselves, beyond our basic needs, what is essential to our lives? Every time I move, I have to decide to keep what is import-

ant and to let go of things that aren’t — things that have been collected over time but add unnecessarily to the volume of things that have to be packed or moved.

Like many people, when I pack for a trip, I can easily overpack. The last time I flew, I had to pay extra because my suitcase was six pounds over the 50-pound limit. Why? Because I packed items I thought I had to have with me but which, I learned, I didn’t really need to bring.

One of the problems with material possessions is that, over time, they deteriorate, break or are no longer useful, e.g., eight-track tape players and computer floppy disks. Our attitudes toward goods change over time, too. As teens, we may have longed for a really nice car, something sporty to show off with friends. As we get older, priorities change, and possibly we just want something practical that will get us from place to place without breaking down.

The Church encourages us to pray for a sense of detachment from things, not because we shouldn’t have them and enjoy them, but to direct our focus more and more on Christ. As St. Paul wrote to the Philippians:

“I know indeed how to live in humble

circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need” (4:12).

In that same letter, Paul states, “Life is Christ” (1:21). What he has or doesn’t have materially is of little concern because he has Christ. We do, too. No matter how much we value our possessions, no matter what price a collector or appraiser might place upon them, they are really just more stuff. But unlike earthly possessions that are subject to the volatility of a supply chain, life in Christ is always available to everyone who seeks it.

As we go from store to store or, more likely, website to website, seeking the ideal gifts for friends and family members, let us keep the perspective of St. Paul. Pope Francis, speaking at World Youth Day in 2013, put it another way:

“Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want to have more, never satisfied. ‘Put on Christ’ in your life, place your trust in him, and you will never be disappointed!”

Remembering All Souls

Right: Bishop Barry C. Knestout greets worshippers following an All Souls’ Mass, Saturday, Nov. 6, at Mount Calvary Cemetery, Richmond. Below: Due to limited space inside the chapel, worshippers, participated in the All Souls’ Mass at Holy Cross Cemetery, Richmond, Sunday, Nov. 7, outside. In the coming years, the bishop hopes to celebrate All Souls’ Masses at other Catholic cemeteries in the diocese. (Photos/Michael Mickle)



Diocese in compliance with Charter

The Diocese of Richmond continues to remain in compliance with the U.S. bishops’ “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young Adults.”

That determination is the result of an on-site audit conducted by StoneBridge Business Partners done Oct. 6-8. The audit period was July 1, 2018 through Sept. 30, 2021.

In a Nov. 1 letter to Bishop Barry C. Knestout, the auditors stated, “The conclusions reached as to the compliance of your diocese are based upon inquiry, observation and the review of specifically requested documentation furnished to StoneBridge Business Partners during the course of this audit.”

Nazia Shafi, director of the diocesan Office of Safe Environment, called the auditors’ report “uplifting.”

“They were impressed with the initiatives by the bishop. They watched the video of his Mass of Atonement and had positive things to say about the Independent Reconciliation Program (IRP) and the listening sessions he conducted,” she said.

Shafi said the auditors saw that diocesan policies had been updated to be in line with the charter and that, despite COVID, background training continued.

“They were impressed with the annual report we did last April,” she said. “One of the auditors told me he had been doing this for 10 years and had never seen an annual report like ours. He asked for extra copies.”

Shafi said the audit recognized the good work the Safe Environment Office has undertaken.

“They liked that the bishop is totally engaged in our work,” she said. “They saw that we’re doing our best in protecting children and young adults.”

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Doctor continues to answer Haitians' call for help

Salem parishioner's outreach spans more than 25 years, includes 50 trips

KAREN ADAMS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

For the people of Haiti, the “lambi,” or conch shell, is a symbol of hope and freedom whose call has brought them together for generations. Sometimes it echoes in the hearts of people far away, who are spiritually called to help.

One of those who heard that call is Tom Fame, a physician who has been helping the people of Central Haiti for more than 25 years.

A parishioner at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem, Fame has written two books about his experiences in Haiti: “The Lambi’s Call: A Haitian Journey” (2008) and “The Lambi’s Call: Breaking the Chains” (2020).

In his books, Fame explains that the lambi was blown during the Haitian slave revolt by a freed man to announce his escape to freedom in the mountains. The lambi’s call, the sound of hope in the future, still brings Haitians together today.

Despite enduring a history of slavery, violent political regimes, oppression and extreme poverty – along with natural disasters and widespread disease – the people of Haiti often inspire others with their kindness, generosity and deep Catholic faith.

Life-changing improvements

Fame first visited Haiti in 1995 as part of a medical mission from Roanoke, never suspecting that the people he met would influence him so deeply and become such a big part of his life. He has traveled to Haiti more than 50 times and has led numerous groups to the remote areas of Lascahobas and mountainous Cabestor in the Petit Fond Valley of the Central Plateau. His wife, Leah, and daughters, Ryann, Rachel and Michelle, have accompanied him at various times.

In 1996, the Salem parish established a twinning relationship with the small rural parish of Sacre Coeur in Cabestor, part of St. Gabriel Parish in Lascahobas, and focused first on building a school there. Over time, everything grew.

Fame learned to speak Haitian Creole and went on to earn a master’s degree in public health from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in order to better converse with and serve the Haitian people.

His commitment has resulted in life-changing improvements: three primary schools, a health clinic and birth center, a clean-water distribution system, job training and opportunities, and most of all, deep bonds of friendship and mutual respect.

The three schools, which offer an education for many families for the first time, are Sacre Coeur



Dr. Tom Fame, a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem, leads a community meeting in Cabestor, Haiti, in 2014. He has made more than 50 trips to the country since 1995. (Photo/Hector Clervoi)

School in Cabestor, St. Joseph School in Roche-Milat, and St. Michael School in Mon Michel – all part of the Sacre Coeur Parish in the Petit Fond Valley. Fame also counts among his many Haitian friends the three pastors with whom he has worked in the Central Plateau: Fathers Polinice Daisma, Hermann Heriveaux and Rene Blot.

Learning to trust

Now, 25 years later, he reflects on his “Haitian journey” in his second book.

“The first book is a love story, and the second book is about teaching independence,” he said. “This book is written as an adventure story that doubles as a guide to community mission work in another culture.”

As a longtime allergy and immunology specialist, as well as a secular Franciscan, Fame knows the meaning of service.

“Having a Franciscan detachment from material goods helped me to trust that we would have what we needed to complete things – and we did,” Fame said. “Haitians live this way every day. They taught me to trust.”

He formed his own company, Trust Publisher, to produce the books. All proceeds from book sales are donated to The Haiti Project at his parish.

The late Bishop Walter F. Sullivan established Haiti as an official outreach ministry of the Diocese of Richmond in 1984. Since then, the ministry has grown to include twinning relationships, or partnerships, of diocesan parishes with Haitian entities. Today, more than 50 parishes in the diocese are twinned with parishes or organizations in Haiti.

“Tom has done so much for the people of Central Haiti and for the Haitian community in Roa-

noke,” said Adele DellaValle-Rauth, emeritus coordinator of the Haiti Twinning Ministry. She and her late husband, Bob, helped to establish the program; she also wrote the forewords to both of Fame’s books.

“Tom has chosen a twin that’s so hard to get to – he walks the mountains to get there,” she said. “You have to give yourself, and he’s done that. If you want to learn how to truly walk with a people, that book is a primer.”

“As Bishop Sullivan always said, we were simply to be partners with the people of Haiti, to have an equal relationship with them,” DellaValle-Rauth said.

Fame’s dedication has helped to raise awareness in the Roanoke Valley and beyond, DellaValle-Rauth said, “His work has helped open people’s eyes to another reality.”

Building relationships

Soon after Jean Denton and her family moved to the Roanoke Valley in 1998, she contacted Fame to support the Haiti Ministry. She had visited the country once before in her work as a Catholic journalist in Texas and was deeply moved by the experience and wanted to help. She joined Fame’s trip the next year.

“I had the same spiritual experience of meeting Jesus in the people of Haiti, people in great need and of great faith,” she said. Over the years, she returned with members of her family, including her husband, Tommy, and two of her children, Libby and Luke.

“The emphasis is on relationships, and has been from the beginning – with Bishop Sullivan, and Adele and Bob, and now Tom,” she said. “Change comes slowly, and it requires small steps at a time. Tom understood that when you minister to a country you look at both relationships and sustainability.”

The best way to get things built

in Haiti is to provide resources for local people to build structures – such as schools – themselves, Denton noted. “Tom said, ‘They know how to build things in Haiti. They know how to make the cinder blocks and how to get the water from the river.’ He understood the terrain and the poverty, and also the great human power there.”

Providing financial support for local labor has enabled those builders to use their income to send their children to the very schools they created.

“They took enormous pride in what they had built with their partner in Salem, Virginia,” Denton said. “It’s about dignity.”

‘Faith in action’

Hector Clervoi, who moved to Roanoke from northern Haiti in 2004, met Fame soon after arriving and has since traveled back with him.

Going to the Central Plateau with Fame several times was a great experience, Clervoi said.

“It was my pleasure to go and help build a school there,” he explained. “A lot of people, and even the government in Haiti, they don’t always go all the way up in the mountains to see how the people live there. But Tom walks three hours to climb up there to make sure they have clean water, a school and a clinic.”

Clervoi added that Fame also knows well the Haitian community in Virginia and serves people in that way.

“Tom is always finding a way to help people from Haiti,” he said.

Father Ken Shuping, former pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, said it’s been exciting to see the work in Haiti grow.

“Tom has a gift for listening to the people of Haiti and finding

See Outreach, Page 4

Relationship with Lord key to jubilarian's happiness

Father Gordon grateful for 40 years of parishioners' love, support

JANNA REYNOLDS
The Catholic Virginian

What is the key to remaining happy in a 40-year vocation to the priesthood?

"First and foremost, my relationship with the Lord for sure," said Father James Gordon, pastor of St. Ann, Ashland. "Without that, none of it makes any sense."

The priest grew up in North Springfield, Virginia, and attended St. Michael Church in Annandale. Beginning in third grade, he was a student at St. Michael School.

Because the Richmond Diocese served all of Virginia at that time, Father Gordon attended high school at St. John Vianney Minor Seminary in Richmond.

"Back then, they would do workshops for seventh and eighth graders, and I can't say for sure that I knew I was going to be a priest, but I did feel at an early age kind of a call to want to explore it," he recalled.

That call became stronger at St. John Vianney, Father Gordon said, as he found the priests working at the seminary to be "very inspiring."

"My father died when I was a sophomore in high school, and I felt lucky to have father figures in my life because of the priests that were there," he added. "Certainly, by the time I was in college, maybe even more so, I felt a personal call from the Lord and a deepening of my faith and my vocation."

Father Gordon graduated from St. John Vianney in 1973 and decided to continue his formation.

'Thrilling moments'

Because Msgr. Thomas Shreve, then-rector of the high school seminary, had a friend who was working at Gannon College (now Gannon University) in Erie, Pennsylvania, Father Gordon and four of his classmates had the opportunity

to receive their college formation at St. Mark Seminary and Gannon College in Erie. Before that, seminarians for the Diocese of Richmond attended either St. Meinrad in Indiana or St. Mary in Baltimore for college seminary.

After graduating from St. Mark and Gannon, Father Gordon enrolled at The Catholic University of America in Washington and finished his theology studies there in 1980.

Father Gordon was ordained a priest on Nov. 21, 1981, by Bishop Walter F. Sullivan. His first assignment was at Church of the Epiphany, Richmond, which had been newly established.

He next served as parochial vicar at St. Mary, Richmond (1985-1986), and administrator of Prince of Peace, Chesapeake (1986-1987), before enrolling at George Mason University and earning a doctorate in clinical psychology in 1995.

The priest's vocation next took him to Portsmouth, where he served as administrator of St. Mary (1995-1996) and pastor of Church of the Holy Angels (1996-1997).

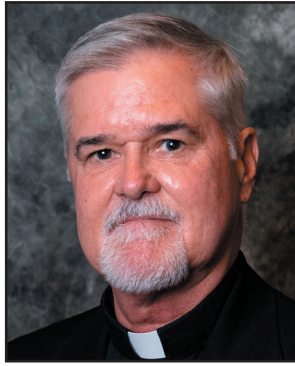
One of the "thrilling moments" of Father Gordon's priesthood was serving as the founding pastor of St. Stephen, Martyr, Chesapeake, from 1997-2005.

"There was really a sense of the spread of the Gospel and the spread of the Church," he said, adding that the process wasn't focused on the building itself; it was focused on the ministries.

Masses were held in schools and even at a local funeral home on Saturday nights.

"I think it brings you very much

in touch with the heart of the Gospel, evangelization," Father Gordon explained. "It's the call to be disciples."



Father James Gordon

'Helping the helpers'

After leaving St. Stephen, Martyr, the priest was a psychologist at St. Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland, from 2005-2009. He worked with priests and men and women religious who came for help for "all different kinds of reasons – everything

from depression and anxiety to addictions, interpersonal problems."

"Really the ministry was about helping people return to a full and happy ministry to serve the Church, so it's a different kind of ministry because you're helping the helpers in a sense. So it's very rewarding," he said.

Father Gordon was pastor of St. Therese, Chesapeake, from 2009-2011 and then returned to Church of the Epiphany as pastor until 2013.

"That was another special moment for me, to return to the parish that gave me my start," he said. "And actually, the first baptism I did as pastor there was the child of someone I had baptized like 30 years before. It was really quite something."

The priest then served as director of clinical services at St. Luke Institute until he was named pastor of St. Ann, Ashland, in August 2020 in the midst of COVID-19.

"I really felt for the people of St. Ann's because my predecessor, Father Chris Haydinger, had been here for over 15 years, and they didn't really get the chance to say bye to him," Father Gordon said, adding that he appreciated the parishioners there for making him feel welcome in the transition even though that process "probably was difficult in

some ways."

In times of struggle, whether in his personal life or within the Church, Father Gordon has found comfort in the communities with which he has been involved, including staff at St. Luke and all the parishes in which he has served.

"All the parishioners, they're very supportive of priests, and I've always felt appreciated and loved, and I'm very grateful for that," he said.

Parishioners of St. Ann will help Father Gordon celebrate his 40th anniversary the weekend of Christ the King with "something simple" – cake after each Mass with the primary reception taking place after the 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday.

Remarkable people

Reflecting on his vocation of four decades, Father Gordon highlighted the great impact of the religious women he has known on his life and the diocese.

"I'd love to acknowledge the religious sisters that I've worked with over the years and known, in particular the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia... One of them, Sister Anita, actually taught me all the way back at St. John Vianney High School," he said. "So in my own life they've just been an important presence."

He also mentioned the Daughters of Charity, with whom he worked in the Tidewater area, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters from Philadelphia, who taught him in grade school.

His appreciation also includes the lay faithful.

"My vocation has brought me in contact, I think, with some remarkable people of faith in terms of the laypeople that I've worked with as well," said Father Gordon. "I'm just very humbled by people's commitment to their faith and putting it into action."

Outreach

Continued from Page 3

what their concerns are," he said. "And he has shown all of us how to care for our brothers and sisters all over the world."

"Tom has really put his faith into action," added Msgr. Tom Miller, former pastor of St. Andrew, Roanoke, calling Fame's work "no small achievement."

Continuing to answer the call

The lambi still calls Fame, as he works now to ensure sustainability. One development is that some of the students who attended the schools he helped build are now returning to serve their community in health care, education and businesses.

"Seeing the community grow has been inspiring," he said.

Some of those he helped to train have become local experts in building, agriculture and education, and are working independently and teaching others.

There are still deep-rooted problems throughout Haiti that cannot easily be solved, Fame said, but these stories of independence and growth give him hope.

He explained that, as part of the universal Church, all Catholics can help impoverished countries like Haiti, even without visiting, simply by praying.

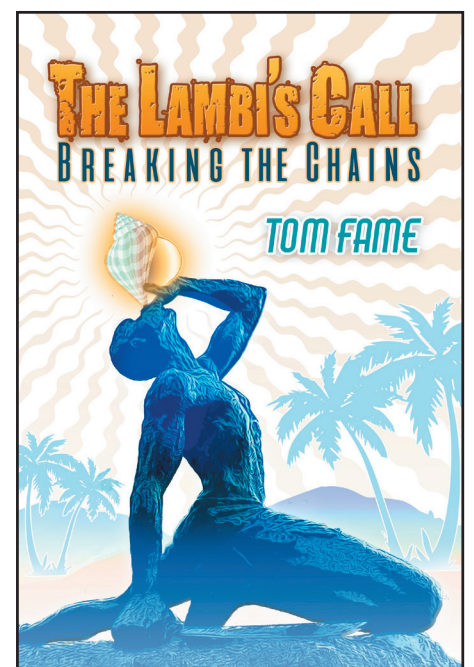
He quotes Brother Franklin Armand, founder of the Haitian order Little Brothers of the Incarnation: "Some foreigners wear themselves out working to free us from our poverty and hunger, so much so that they no longer have time for prayer. Now, as you know, it is precisely prayer and union with

God which have kept us alive in the midst of all our poverty."

Fame also writes that God can use everyone to help the world: "God chooses broken and flawed people like myself to carry out his work. In that way, He accomplishes two things – the poor are served, and the sinner is saved through conversion. Some people are just born with faith and a trust they possess without question. I had to go to Haiti. I had to learn that I could not proceed without relying on prayer and faith. Haiti teaches you to rely on faith."

"This work has given me a bigger purpose," he said. "It's a calling."

Editor's note: For more information or to order books, email TLFame@comcast.net or visit haiti.olphsalem.org.



This is the cover of Dr. Tom Fame's second book about his experiences in Haiti. (Photo provided)

Parishioners give 'best to God' in restoring church

St. Andrew, Roanoke, completes seven-year, \$7.7 million project

JOSEPH STANIUNAS
Special to The Catholic Virginian

Like anyone at Mass, the interior of St. Andrew in Roanoke has been wearing a mask, as water leaks, peeling paint and candle smoke marred the decorative details on the walls and ceiling of the historic American Gothic structure.

Now, the layer of dust, grime and soot accumulated over 45 years is gone.

"It's just beautiful. The whole inside is brightened up," parishioner Rena Dombrosky said just before daily Mass one day last month.

"It's a beautiful church in the first place, and it's just renewed and looks so much better than it was," said parishioner Butch Steahley outside the nearly 120-year-old building. "It's got some age on it, so this has tremendously improved it."

The inside work was the third and final step in a seven-year restoration project that included replacing the steeples and the slate roof and repairing the exterior brickwork. The total cost was about \$7.7 million — all paid with donations from parishioners and others in the area.

"They're wonderful," said Father Kevin Segerblom, pastor. "The people are just very generous."

And patient.

From just after Easter this year to mid-August, steel scaffolding ran from the floor to the ceiling, about 65 feet high, so "artisans could touch every surface of the interior of the church without having to get on a ladder," Father Segerblom said. "Michelangelo would have wept tears of joy and gratitude had he had scaffolding like this."

The painter of the Sistine Chapel might have loved it, but parishioners had to work their way around poles and braces to find a pew at Mass and a path to Communion.

"If this place had been shut down, we could have been done it in half the length of time," said facilities maintenance coordinator Wayne Gould. "But it's a working church, and even during the interior renovation we designed the scaffolding so you could have church."

The point man for the restoration, Gould said he expected to just do maintenance when he was hired several years ago. But he and other parish leaders came to realize that the landmark yellow brick church overlooking downtown Roanoke was in trouble.

Living off water and mortar, termites infested the steeple towers. To stop leaks, the roof slates had been caulked together; they work best when they shift in response to heating and cooling. The lightning protection system was outdated, and the last time the interior had been cleaned and painted was 1975.

"We didn't change a lot," Gould said. "We put some 'wow' factors in there in a couple of places."

For example, the lower walls were redone to imitate marble. A new baptismal font, made in Italy, is ready to be put in place this week. It has a stainless-steel liner inside the marble to prevent leaks. Water also damaged the blue dome painted with stars under the apse, but now those details pop.

Restoration projects sometimes turn up messages from the past. Gould said they did find that one worker had signed a roof slate. A man also put his name and the date on some stone carvings at the top of the church. Gould said he's left a little memento that some future restorer



Left: This is how the interior of the church at St. Andrew, Roanoke, looked prior to a restoration project that took seven years and cost \$7.7 million. (Photo provided)
Below: How the nearly 120-year-old church looks after the work was completed. Bishop Barry C. Knestout will rededicate the church on the Feast of St. Andrew, Tuesday, Nov. 30. (Photo/Joseph Staniunas)



may find: four 2021 coins that he glued to the back of a brass plate above a decorative pendant.

That might be the only spare change that didn't make it into the fundraising campaign, set up and managed by Lynch Development Associates in New York.

"It was too large a campaign to do ourselves," said Father Segerblom. "We probably could have done it, but it was a massive undertaking, so we knew we would be more successful if we brought in a professional fundraising company. Their approach to it was one we really agreed with, and we got working."

"I was always surprised at what came in after the campaigns," Gould said.

He had a breakfast meeting recently with a friend he'd done business with for 40 years, who said he had done a great job at St. Andrew and then asked what else he needed. Gould mentioned the new font and a new reconciliation room; his friend wrote a check for \$50,000.

"This is a guy who goes to a different church because of location, but he just relishes when he comes here, like this is where he wants to be," he said.

Historic building tax credits will help with the cost of the restoration.

A non-Catholic, Gould says he understands the reasons the people support these projects.

Beautiful liturgies are celebrated in lots of places, Father Segerblom said, including St. Patrick in Scott County, a "beautiful little log cabin" where he was pastor before coming to St. Andrew.

"We should give our very best to God," he

said. "A place where we worship God, where we as Catholics recognize Christ is present in the sacramental liturgy of the Eucharist, where heaven and Earth meet, we should be our very best, the best that we're about to manage."

Gould also learned last month that St. Andrew will be receiving a top award from the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation for showing good stewardship in preserving an iconic landmark.

"Good architecture is living art," Father Segerblom said. "Sacred architecture moves people to think about, to want to worship, God, to think of heavenly things as well as being grateful for the things that we have here on Earth."

The priest is looking forward to Nov. 30, the feast of St. Andrew, when Bishop Barry C. Knestout will preside at a rededication ceremony.

"The first time that I processed in the church after all the work was done was just a marvelous feeling," Father Segerblom recalled. "I thought, 'This generation has been asked to do this major restoration work. Our turn came, and we've done it, and it looks gorgeous.'"

Anyone coming to that celebration, though, will still need a mask.

Correction

In the Nov. 1 Catholic Virginian photo from the St. Bede, Williamsburg, pet blessing, it should have stated that Deacon Francis Roettinger was blessing Baxter.

Repair what is broken by focusing on future

Mark Pattison's article, "How to bridge Church's racial divide" (Catholic Virginian, Oct. 18), articulately describes our shameful history of slavery. While his narrative about reparations is fairly balanced, his solutions are limited.

House bills, discussions and apologies for the past simply kick the can down the road.

The article says "63% of Blacks favored education and job training as a form of reparations" and continues with "Reparations mean repair – healing what has been broken." Why not repair what is broken by focusing on the future instead of the past, as the majority of Blacks have requested?

A high school in Louisiana struggled with constant violence impacting the learning environment and often landing the students in jail. Seeing how consequences didn't work, a group of dads got together and began volunteering to simply be present on campus throughout the day and develop friendly, caring relationships with the students.

They made "Dads on Duty" T-shirts and gently mentored those who crossed their paths. The violent behavior dropped dramatically in a few weeks as the young men and women began actively seeking out the visible role models who encouraged and joked around with them.

The article also mentions the Sisters of the Sacred Heart – also in Louisiana – who "have begun efforts to make amends for their role in slavery." Sounds like wonderful networking potential!

Our government should decide how much to allocate and put it toward programs that actually improve the lives of those who need the most help. We can't change the past, but we certainly have the power to create a positive future for the descendants of the enslaved.

– **Cecilia Thomas**
Mechanicsville

CV has succumbed to 'racial divide nonsense'

How sad that The Catholic Virginian as well as the Church leadership has succumbed to the manufactured racial divide nonsense brought to us by politicians who have used it — and continue to do so — to further their own ends.

Real racial progress had been made, despite the obstacles put in place by

Democrats (the original and continuing slave holders) subsequent to the Civil War, until the so-called War on Poverty, which was passed for votes (per LBJ) and effectively destroyed the Black community, compounded by the corruption of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Please do some homework and check into the works of Shelby Steele, Jason Riley and Thomas Sowell, among others.

– **P. A. Melita**
Charlottesville

We're failing to see vocations before us

On Sunday, Oct. 24, as I listened to the reading from Mark's Gospel about the healing of Bartimaeus, I was inspired to write. Perhaps because it was vision that was restored to Bartimaeus, a series of mental pictures flipped through my mind:

Sacred Heart, NY: An elderly pastor citing his sixth Mass for the weekend, imploring us to pray for vocations and making the point that "the faithful" are being denied desired access to the sacraments by the death of priests.

Williamsburg, VA: Two local churches blessed with wonderful and talented deacons assisting at Mass and in our church ministries.

Trinity Church, CA: An incredibly thought-provoking homily about the bravery of Mary in accepting God's offer, a homily made more compelling by the passion of the Episcopal minister in her chasuble and surplice.

I have often shared frustration of others at the critical but constrained roles for women and married men in our Church, but not until that Sunday had it struck me as a potential moral failing if we Catholics are allowing access to the sacraments and priestly ministry to be limited by a failure to see the vocations right before us — not only among our already serving religious, but also in the "missing" young Catholics who have sought fuller vocations in other Christian faiths.

Perhaps the original apostles were all male. They were also Jewish, mostly fishermen, and none, to my knowledge, had any physical disability. Like Bartimaeus, do we need Jesus to cure our "blindness" so that we see the much greater apostolic work which could be accomplished if we only "saw" all those vocations right before us?

– **Virginia Carey**
Richmond

Columnist's answer was incomplete

While Father Doyle's answers to the question of women's ordination (Catholic Virginian, Oct. 4) is certainly correct, I fear it leaves the impression that the Church's refusal to ordain women as priests is simply historical and leaves out the underlying and critical theological reasons.

The priest stands sacramentally "in persona Christi" — in the very person of Christ — not merely in his name. St. Thomas Aquinas in his "Summa Theologica IV" points to the need for the priest to have a "natural resemblance" to Christ, who was a man, a requirement clearly understood since the earliest Church.

Christ's gender is not simply an accident of the Incarnation, like his hair or eye color. Additionally, the Church is the bride of Christ, a relationship in which gender clearly matters. Without these theological foundations, the Church would have little basis in insisting she has no authority to ordain women.

– **Ralph Shawver**
North Tazewell

As Body of Christ, bring Jesus to the world

The Catholic Virginian (Nov. 1) reported that a large percentage of Catholics do not believe Jesus really present in the Eucharist so that we may bring Jesus really present to the world.

We become the Body of Christ we receive to bring, in compassion and love, Jesus to the suffering and hurts of life in the world. "As often as you did it for one of my least brothers (sisters), you did it for me" (Mt 25:40).

There is a real connection in seeing Jesus present and in bringing Jesus to the world. As St. Augustine said centuries ago, "Become what you receive." Becoming the Body of Christ is not just a head trip in which we believe, but it is to be lived in activity from the heart. It means real action bringing Jesus to the world.

If we are not the active, dynamic Body of Christ to the world, then perhaps our belief in the real presence in the Eucharist is not what it should be.

– **Father Louis R. Benoit**
Roanoke

Reasons to have faith in the real presence

Thank you to The Catholic Virginian (Nov. 1) for reporting the concern of

bishops about doubt among professed Catholics in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Since I did not see any reasons offered to have faith in the real presence, I offer some here:

First, the Gospels say that Jesus said so at the Last Supper, that he offered Mass again with the disciples on the way to Emmaus; and we have numerous witnesses through the centuries to the theological truth of the Gospels, including that of frequent appearances of Mary, the martyrs, saints, theologians, medical professionals and many scientists. We believe in obedience to God's revelation and command, not because of any emotion or manipulations of our own.

Secondly, the fruits, gifts and works of the Spirit show that Christ is in those who receive in faith his body and blood at Mass.

Thirdly, Jesus' presence is consistent with the mystery of our own life, which we often take for granted. When we eat, drink or oil our skin, it becomes us because it does our will. In the same way, we know that Jesus is present in the Eucharist because it achieves his will through us.

Our intent at Mass has such power because we are made in the image of God, and God is our life.

– **Joseph D. Rudmin**
Harrisonburg

Understanding real presence

Dr. Scott Hahn does a far better job of explaining the bread and wine's transubstantiation at Mass — and the Last Supper — to the body and blood of Jesus than any priest or CCD teacher I've had in 61 years.

He delves into the Old and New Testament as well as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas in free YouTube videos.

If the bishops want a good place to start, I suggest his lectures become part of

the confirmation classes. Before age 7 we believe because we're told to, by 13 we rightly question everything.

If we are not teaching the biblical basis from Old Testament to New Testament of why it becomes the body and blood then we've denied our 7,000-year history and all God the Father's prep work before sending his Son to fulfill the law.

– **Steve Restaino**
Chesapeake

Readers shouldn't question Father Doyle's spirituality

I lead a very busy life, so sometimes I do not have the time to read The Catholic Virginian from front to back. But I always make sure I take time to read Father Doyle's "Questions and Answers" column.

I have learned more Catholic theology and spirituality from him than I have from all the other sources made available to me. So it saddened me to see letters to the editor questioning his spirituality.

The Book of Proverbs (24:16) tells us, "Even a good man sins seven times," which means none of us are perfect and all of us "fall short of the glory of God." Once we do fall short, the test, it seems to me, is what we do next. Do we try to justify our mistake, or do we behave in a penitent manner?

The issue in question was a letter to Father Doyle regarding a "disruptive woman at Mass." He says in a subsequent column he regretted his response, that he was sorry, and he added words of comfort to his apology.

What more could a decent human being do? It seems to me his apology should be sufficient and that there would be no need to attack his integrity.

Perhaps those letter writers should look within and try to determine the cause of such anger toward a pious and caring priest.

– **Joseph Swonk**
Dunnsville

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Why ministry to married couples must radically change

Authors: Stem fallen away youth issue by strengthening marriages

CHRISTINA LEE KNAUSS
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — With marriage and Church attendance on a steep decline overall in the United States, Catholic parishes need to make some radical changes in the way they approach marriage ministry and teach the faithful about relationships.

That's the message of the new book "Endgame: The Church's Strategic Move to Save Faith and Family in America," released in September and co-written by J.P. De Gance, a Catholic, and John Van Epp, a Protestant, who have both worked extensively in marriage and relationship education.

De Gance, a Catholic father of eight, had a successful career in the political sphere before founding Communio, a nonprofit that consults with churches to equip them with strategies and technologies to build up faith and the family.

While "Endgame" is written for both Catholics and Protestants, De Gance hopes the book will motivate both clergy and laity to take a stark look at how the Church has traditionally prepared Catholics for marriage and ministered to married couples — and why that needs to change.

"The average priest and Church doctrine overall will tell you marriage is the foundation for society, but that doctrine is not translating into practical pastoral ministry," De Gance said. "Eighty-two percent of Catholic parishes report spending zero dollars on marriage ministry.

"We say marriage is the most important thing, but we are running a faith formation playbook from the 1950s that doesn't reflect that."

Recent census data show marriage rates at an all-time low, with only 33 out of every 1,000 unmarried adults getting married in 2019.

De Gance said the drop off in Catholic sacramental marriages — from around 400,000 in 1970 to 137,000 in 2019 — offers a stark picture

"We say marriage is the most important thing, but we are running a faith formation playbook from the 1950s that doesn't reflect that."

— J.P. DE GANCE

of where marriage stands in the Church and why ministry needs to change.

A decline in marriage affects everything from the well-being of children to the economic well-being of a community, with recent statistics from Pew showing that single people and unmarried couples are among the most economically disadvantaged.

In "Endgame," De Gance and Van Epp suggest that churches need to look at where they allocate ministry resources. Most churches, for instance, have a youth ministry but don't offer much when it comes to teaching relationship skills to single people and married couples.

"The Catholic Church keeps looking at the falling away of youth as the problem that needs to be solved, but the only way to solve that problem is to strengthen marriage," De Gance told Catholic News Service. "The collapse of faith among youth is the smoke, but the fire is the collapse of marriage itself."

One of the main problems is that churches overall, not just Catholics, only minister to engaged couples or to those in crisis — or all too often don't offer any type of specialized marriage

ministry at all. He stressed that the key to effective marriage ministry is to offer it for all couples at all stages of their relationships.

"The biggest obstacle to marriage ministry is a perception that it is only for those people who have problems," De Gance said. "If you have a great car, you don't wait until the smoke comes out of the engine to get it serviced.

"Similarly, if you have a great marriage, you should want to keep investing in the relationship and building the skills that make it great. That kind of approach is going to make a great marriage even better."

De Gance suggests that Catholic parishes should make marriage ministry a priority, even if it means sometimes making a difficult decision to reallocate resources from other ministries.

He also stresses the importance of programs that teach relationship skills to single people so they will be able to make better dating decisions and discern whether or not a romantic partner is future marriage material.

The book offers an account of what well-planned marriage ministry can do not only for churches, but for a community as a whole.

Between 2015 and 2018, De Gance worked with the Philanthropy Roundtable to launch a Church-based marriage program in Duval County, Florida, which includes the city of Jacksonville, to teach marriage and relationship skills to struggling couples.

Through targeted marketing, the program reached out to both church members and the non-churched. Over three years, the divorce rate in Jacksonville dropped 24% and church attendance in the area increased.

"Endgame" echoes concerns about dating and relationship ministries in an article prepared in spring by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

See Marriages, Page 14



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Marriage includes right to sexual relations



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Q. I have been married for 21 years to a wonderful man. We had a Catholic wedding, even though I was not Catholic at the time. We now have two daughters and a happy family life together, which includes regular Mass attendance.

Three years ago, I decided to convert to Catholicism; in the course of my instructional program, I learned the Church's view that a sexual union is a big part of marriage and is the unique connection of man and wife in the eyes of God.

Here's the problem. We have a totally celibate marriage. With the exception of trying to conceive five years after we were married, we have had no sexual intercourse whatsoever.

This is not mutual. I would welcome a sexual union with my husband; I have begged and pleaded with him, but he's just not interested. I had to threaten him with divorce to get him to have sex with me when we were trying to conceive.

At the time we were married, I knew that the relationship would be a celibate one, since my husband told me so. I didn't think it would be such a big deal, since I loved him so much — and still do.

But I was wrong. I spoke with a

priest in our parish about all this, and he told me that, since we had children, clearly we had consummated the marriage and I should just deal with it. What do you say? (Brooklyn, New York)

A. I say that you should speak with your diocese and seek a referral to a canon lawyer. The Catholic view of marriage has always been that it includes the right to have sexual relations with one's spouse.

What you need to ask is whether your marriage in the Church was even a valid one to begin with; though you agreed to celibacy at the outset, this seems to have been imposed by your husband as a condition for the marriage — which, I would think, calls into question the validity of the contract itself.

Then, having consulted with the canonist, bring that information back to your husband. I am not advocating the end of your marriage — especially since you love your husband and have two children — but perhaps you can persuade your husband to grant what is legitimately yours.

Perhaps you and your husband could seek marriage therapy to discuss his insistence on a celibate marriage.

Q. In his homily last week, our pastor stressed how important it is for teenagers to be vaccinated

for COVID-19. From the pulpit, he praised a group of teenagers who are actively encouraging others their age to be vaccinated, and he said that those who decide not to get the vaccine are being complacent.

This upset a lot of parents in our congregation, who claimed that it was divisive. Is each parish autonomous in its stance on vaccines, or is it supposed to follow a centrally coordinated message dispersed among all archdioceses? (Atlanta)

A. Certainly many Catholic leaders — beginning with Pope Francis — have urged people to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

In a video message produced in August 2021, the pope praised the work of researchers in producing safe and effective vaccines and said that getting the vaccine is an "act of love." Doing so, he explained, "is a simple yet profound way to care for one another, especially the most vulnerable."

To answer your direct question, I am not aware of any "centrally coordinated message dispersed among all archdioceses" in this regard, though it seems clear that many Church leaders are strongly encouraging vaccination.

But as to recommending it for teenagers, we should defer to the will of parents since no one cares about their children more than a parent does. If a pulpit appeal urges teenag-

ers to avail themselves of the vaccine, it should include the proviso that parents deserve the final say.

Q. I am thinking of getting a tattoo on my arm of my late daughter's handwriting. Is there anything in Catholic teaching against this? (I want to do this for my 75th birthday which is coming up soon.) (Louisville, Kentucky)

A. There is nothing in Catholic teaching that prohibits getting a tattoo.

Some point to a passage in Leviticus 19:28 that says, "Do not lacerate your bodies for the dead, and do not tattoo yourselves."


But in its context, that was a Jewish ceremonial prohibition that may have dealt with expressing devotion to a false god; two verses earlier Leviticus had warned, "Do not eat anything with the blood still in it."

Tattoos that are sexually explicit or satanic would naturally be immoral, as would a minor's choice to disobey a parent by getting a tattoo.

But a tattoo itself, even though it is permanent, violates no moral principle, and I see no problem with the questioner's getting a tattoo of her daughter's handwriting as a permanent memory.

It would be wise, though, for anyone considering a tattoo to ask: Will I still want this on my body 10 years from now?

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




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Emulate what Native Americans taught 400 years ago



IN LIGHT OF FAITH

BARBARA HUGHES

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, I did a little research about the first Thanksgiving, which took place exactly 400 years ago. According to letters written by pilgrims to their relatives in England, it's clear that Thanksgiving Day is about more than giving thanks for blessings received.

It's also about celebrating friendships between people with very different cultures who were able to come together for the common good — a lesson that our world is desperately in need of today.

In a letter written in 1621 from Lizzy to her Aunt Constance, the young pilgrim described how a native named Samoset arrived in their camp. Although the pilgrims were initially frightened, the native surprised them by speaking English, which he had learned while fishing with Englishmen further North.

Samoset not only welcomed the immigrants, but he returned the next day with another native named Tisquantum who, according to Lizzy, spoke even finer English. According to this young pilgrim, these men were a great blessing.

She explained that they taught the pilgrims how to fish, where to

find the best places to plant crops and introduced them to a new type of corn. Lizzy closed her letter writing, "I fear that we would not have survived here were it not for the help of Tisquantum and others."

Another account describes how Samoset was sent to the English by a Wampanoag chief to find out why the "coat-men" came and to see if they intended to live among them in peace.

It seems we have much to learn from these Native Americans. Not only did they learn the language of the foreigners, but they sent an emissary to determine if the newcomers intended to live in peace. The natives could have attacked them just as easily, but they chose to listen before resorting to violence, and as a result, an alliance was created that we celebrate to this day.

I find it ironic that modern civilization prides itself on its advancements but can't seem to appreciate and learn from people who are different. The polarization that is dividing our world, our country and even our Church continues to deepen.

When people with differing political and religious ideologies lash out against the other, the Body of Christ continues to bleed from self-inflicted wounds, which is anathema to everything that Christ taught.

As Christians, we believe in a God who was humble enough to



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bridge the divide between heaven and earth, between humanity and divinity. Our God donned a human nature, lived among us and spoke a universal language of love, which he taught to everyone, regardless of race, color or creed.

However, for us to be able to access this language, we need to look beyond the confines of our own narrow hearts, beyond the security of power and possessions, the safety of our own intelligence and the false peace acquired through military strength. To learn how to do this, we need to look at Jesus who was equal to the Father yet became poor so that we might become rich.

Jesus told us that the poor are blessed and that the peacemakers would inherit the Earth. He said that the pure of heart would see God, and that those who mourn would laugh. So, what does that say about us when we resort to disparaging those who are different?

Though the Wampanoags presumably had not heard about Jesus, they seemed to understand his teachings better than many of us who profess to be Christians. It

may seem like a conundrum, but perhaps no more so than the fact that the God chose lowly shepherds to be the first to worship his son and that Jesus chose a Samaritan woman to announce to the people of her village that she had seen the Messiah.

Indeed, God's ways are not our ways, which is why God continues to choose the most unlikely to mirror the face of God.

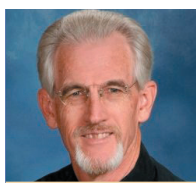
When we consider how God measures success and goodness, blessings and woes, let us seek to discover God in the poor and marginalized. As we gather during this holiday season, may we thank God for the least among us who teach us lessons that can only be learned when we recognize the person of Christ in them.

The real story behind the first Thanksgiving is that knowingly or unknowingly, the early pilgrims experienced the presence of God in their new neighbors, whose hospitality transcended human grievances, showing by example what it means to build the kingdom of God on Earth.

This Thanksgiving, as we offer prayers of gratitude, let us ask God to help us shed the blinders of prejudice, ignorance and greed so that peace may reign in our hearts and in the world!

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

How to make Christ the 'Almighty' in your life



BELIEVE AS YOU PRAY

DEACON CHRISTOPHER COLVILLE

Richard Rohr, in his book "The Universal Christ," reminds us that Christ isn't Jesus' last name. Jesus, the man, existed some 2,000 years ago, and in this human Jesus resides the Christ who has existed from all eternity.

Our celebration of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, celebrates the human Jesus and the eternal Christ that resides within him. The reading from Revelation gives us three titles, or identities, for Our Lord Jesus Christ: "the Alpha and the Omega (the first and the last), the one who is, and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." These are great ways to think about Christ and his relationship with the universal Church.

However, Christ came not only for humanity as a whole, but he also came for each of us. We are called to have a personal relationship with him. How do these identities of the Christ relate

to our individual lives?

What would it mean for us to say Christ is our Alpha and Omega? If we look at that on a daily basis, it would mean Christ is there at the beginning and the end of our day. One way we can do this is through prayer, whether formal, such as the Liturgy of the Hours, or informal. It can help us begin and end our days with Christ, it can help us be present to God throughout

**Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe
Dn 7:13-14; Rev 1:5-8;
Jn 18:33b-37**

the day. A few weeks ago on the 31st Sunday, the second reading was Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It was taken from the prayer the Jewish people pray every morning and evening.

There are other ways we can begin or end our day with Christ in addition to prayer. A person getting up early or staying up late to care for family members or others may not have time to stop and pray, but God is present in their service to others.

Closing the day in reflection of how we were present to Christ during the day certainly would help us end our day with Christ. The Jesuits use a technique called the "Examen" to do this.

What would it mean to say Christ is the Almighty of our lives? Would it mean that our relationship with God is the top priority, it comes

first in our lives? If we look at the readings that lead up to our feast, would it mean to give up something important like Bartimaeus who threw off his cloak or the widow who served God's messenger first?

They gave up something to serve God and were rewarded with something far greater. Do things supplant the Lord's presence in our lives so he is no longer our Almighty?

Is Christ our yesterday, our today and our tomorrow? Another way of asking this is: Are we for Christ each and every day? The answers to the questions about Christ being our Alpha and Omega and our Almighty probably helps answer this question for us.

Some Christian traditions like to focus on the questions of being saved and accepting Jesus as our savior. We must accept Jesus' invitation — we must be for Christ every day. If we aren't for Christ today, yesterday meant nothing; if we aren't for Christ tomorrow, then today means nothing.

The end of the Church year is an excellent time to check on our lives. Is Christ the Alpha and Omega of our days and the Almighty of our lives? Are we for Christ today, were we yesterday and will we be tomorrow?

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

Vatican finance reform is long, slow process

Monitored transactions, standardized budgeting continue

CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The day after Catholics around the world heard the Gospel story of the widow's mite, Vatican media published a long interview with the bishop who heads the Vatican's investment office.

Bishop Nunzio Galatino, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, said reforms are ongoing to ensure Vatican financial management — care for the widow's mite given to the pope and the Vatican — is “trustworthy and credible.”

“Certainly, there is a change of mentality at play that we are addressing under the guidance of Pope Francis,” the bishop said Nov. 8. “This type of change is always difficult to achieve quickly and together, in any sector or structure. It seems that what is being done, thanks to the procedure put in place, is going in the right direction.”

One of the most recent changes is Pope Francis' decision to give Bishop Galatino's office responsibility to manage the financial and property investments of the Vatican Secretariat of State.

That portfolio was the source of the huge financial disaster and scandal centered on a building on Sloane Avenue in London's posh Chelsea district. The Financial Times reported Nov. 8 that the Vatican is in the final stages of a deal to sell the property for the equivalent of more than \$270 million, which would mean it would lose as much as \$135 million on the property.

The Vatican City State court currently is trying 10 defendants, including Cardinal Angelo Becciu, on charges involving financial malfeasance and corruption in relation to the Sloane Avenue deal. But that isn't going well, either; in early October, the court agreed with defense lawyers that some procedures, including giving the defense access to evidence, were not properly followed by investigators for the

“Certainly, there is a change of mentality at play that we are addressing under the guidance of Pope Francis. This type of change is always difficult to achieve quickly and together, in any sector or structure. It seems that what is being done, thanks to the procedure put in place, is going in the right direction.”

— BISHOP NUNZIO GALATINO

prosecution. The court is set to reconvene Nov. 17 to determine how and when the trial will proceed.

Better money management

Bishop Galatino told Vatican Media that Pope Francis was continuing and expanding the efforts that now-retired Pope Benedict XVI made to monitor transactions and standardize budgeting procedures.

Concrete actions have been taken to handle donations and resources with responsibility and ensure the Vatican bank and other financial offices are not being used for illegal activity. But those efforts have been going on for decades.

The Vatican has an ancient bureaucracy, a global pool of donors and a penchant for thinking that the loyalty and support for the Church's mission of a bishop or cardinal means a prelate should oversee the coffers while expert liability should be hired to help him with the technical details.

The parable of the widow's mite and, especially, the story of Jesus driving the moneychangers out of the temple and occasionally spectacular shame-inducing human behavior, have made some Vatican officials skittish about talking about money.

Reluctance to speak, though, easily can become secrecy.

And efforts to end the suspicion secrecy naturally spawns goes back even further than Pope Benedict XVI.

Now you see it, now you don't

St. John Paul II in 1990 named U.S. Cardinal Edmund C. Szoka of Detroit to head the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See, the Vatican's budget management office. The Vatican was still trying to clean house and recover trust after the 1982 fraudulent bankruptcy of Banco Ambrosiano, Italy's largest private bank. While the Vatican always maintained it had done nothing wrong, the Vatican bank made what it called a \$240 million “goodwill payment” to Banco Ambrosiano's former creditors in 1984.

Cardinal Szoka, who died in 2014, arrived in the Vatican and shocked many of his fellow prelates: He held news conferences twice a year to explain the budget forecast and detail the final balances.

“I made that decision because there was a lot of curiosity and a lot of mythology about Vatican finances,” he had told Catholic News Service. “My goal was to have transparency.”

But after the U.S. cardinal retired, the Vatican gradually cut back on the amount of detail provided publicly and stopped releasing a budget forecast altogether.

‘Mission budget’

Then, in 2014, Pope Francis appointed Australian Cardinal George Pell to the newly created Secretariat for the Economy. He saw his task as consolidating the use of modern

budgeting practices, beginning with giving the pope an accurate picture of the assets and expenditures of all Vatican offices, including the Secretariat of State.

In December of that year, Cardinal Pell said in an interview that the new budgeting and reporting procedures had meant his office discovered “some hundreds of millions of euros were tucked away in particular sectional accounts and did not appear on the balance sheet.”

The Vatican press office jumped in a day later to clarify that the money did not represent “illegal, illicit or badly managed funds,” just assets being held in numerous administrative offices that were not considered part of the main institutions of the Roman Curia.

At an early November meeting with Italian journalists to promote the Italian edition of his book about his months in an Australian prison before a unanimous decision of the country's High Court cleared him on child sex abuse charges, Cardinal Pell said that if the Secretariat of State had allowed his office to monitor the account used to purchase the Sloane Avenue property, perhaps the Vatican's loss would not have been so great.

Now, he said, the Vatican at least knows “we lost a bunch of pounds with that building in London, and that's some progress.”

Bishop Galatino said 75% of the properties owned by the Vatican are “dedicated to institutional purposes or are allocated for schools, universities, convents (and) seminaries.” The small portion that is rented out on the open market is used to generate income to cover the charity and mission of the Church.

“The Holy See's budget cannot be compared to that of a company,” he said. “In fact, it is a ‘mission budget.’ Each dicastery and entity truly accomplishes a service. And each service has its costs but not necessarily revenue.”

Follow Wooden on Twitter: @Cindy_Wooden



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All Saints School addition dedicated



From left, Bishop Barry C. Knestout, Father Jim Begley, Carole Weinstein and Deacon Chris Malone listen as Marcus Weinstein speaks at the dedication of the 6,800-square-foot addition to All Saints School, Richmond, Monday, Nov. 1, the Solemnity of All Saints. Weinstein Properties donated \$1 million to the \$2.3 million project and have provided tuition assistance for at least 10 All Saints students annually since 2014.



Above: All Saints School students bow their heads in prayer during the blessing at the dedication. Right: Second grader Jacob White prays during the Mass Bishop Knestout celebrated in the gym prior to the dedication. (Photos/Brian T. Olszewski)



Court considers role of chaplains at executions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court’s consideration of spiritual advisers praying aloud with death-row inmates or placing hands on them in prayer during executions faced an uphill battle Nov. 9 as some of the justices questioned if this would open up other requests or could impose a safety risk.

“This suggests we can look forward to an unending stream of variations,” said Justice Samuel Alito, noting that last-minute pleas for stays of execution already come to the court frequently and that if the court granted this request, it could open the floodgates for others.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, along that same line, noted that if one state allows a certain action in the execution chamber, wouldn’t inmates in other states request the same treatment? Kavanaugh also indicated during the nearly two hours of arguments that the state had a compelling interest in providing the least possible risk in the execution chamber, but Justice Amy Coney Barrett questioned whether there could ever be a situation completely without any risk in a prison.

The case before the court involved John Ramirez, 37, who was sentenced to death for the murder of a convenience store clerk in 2004. He had asked that his Southern Baptist pastor be able to lay hands on him and pray aloud with him during his execution. When the Texas prison system rejected this, Ramirez challenged it in court, saying the state was violating his religious beliefs.

Help

Continued from Page 1

The Letter to the Galatians, he said, should generate enthusiasm in Christians for following “the way of freedom, to ‘walk according to the Spirit.’”

Christian freedom has nothing to do with “debauchery” or a sense of being completely self-sufficient and not needing God’s help, he said. Instead, St. Paul taught that freedom exists under “love’s shadow” and is exercised in acts of charity and service.

Christian freedom is not freedom from the law, the pope said, but rather is the fulfillment of it.

But, he said, “the temptation always is to turn back. One definition of Christians in the Scriptures is that we Christians are not people who go backward, who turn back. It’s a good definition. The temptation is to turn back to feel more secure, to turn to the law alone, disregarding the new life in the Spirit.”

“This is what Paul teaches us: The true law finds its fullness in the life of the Spirit that Jesus gave us, and this life in the Spirit

can be lived only in freedom, Christian freedom,” Pope Francis said.

In addition to calling on Jesus when in the midst of a storm, the pope encouraged Christians to invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit regularly.

“Someone may say, ‘Father, how do you invoke the Holy Spirit, because I know how to pray to the Father, with the Our Father; I know how to pray to Our Lady with the Hail Mary; I know how to pray to Jesus with the Prayer to the Holy Wounds, but what about the Spirit? What is the prayer of the Holy Spirit?’”

“Prayer to the Holy Spirit is spontaneous; it must come from your heart. In moments of difficulty you must ask, ‘Holy Spirit, come,’” he said. “You must say it in your own language, in your own words. ‘Come, because I am in difficulty; come because I am in darkness, in the dark; come because I do not know what to do; come because I am about to fall.’”

“This prayer will help us walk in the Spirit, in freedom and in joy,” the pope said, “because when the Holy Spirit comes, there is joy, true joy.”

Appeal

Continued from Page 1

filling out the donor card, Previtera said the appeal is a communal effort.

“The pastors talk to people and emphasize the local impact of the appeal, as well as the diocesan impact it has,” he said. “The appeal is meant to fund ministries that are larger than any one parish. One parish can’t fund seminarians or retired priests or the Fuel and Hunger Fund. People are willing to support them.”

Planning is underway for the 2022 appeal. Buoyed by this year’s success, e.g., average gift of \$346 — highest ever in the appeal — and 100 parishes surpassing their targets, Previtera said they will build upon what is working.

“We provide a solid case statement, and we’re transparent in showing how the money is used,” he said. “Combine that with the ongoing advocacy by the pastors and the generosity of parishioners, and next year’s appeal will be successful, too.”

Editor’s note: All figures are as of Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021.

Archbishop celebrates Requiem Mass for homeless who died on the streets

CHRISTINA GRAY
Catholic News Service

SAN FRANCISCO — Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone brought together San Francisco's faith, civic and social service communities at St. Mary Cathedral for a special Mass he commissioned to pray for the souls of homeless people who died on the city's streets.

The "Requiem Mass for the Homeless" Nov. 6 featured the sacred music of Frank La Rocca, composer-in-residence of the Benedict XVI Institute for Sacred Music and Divine Worship in San Francisco.

The Mass was part of the "Year for the Homeless" launched in February by the institute and supported by the archdiocese. The yearlong observance has included calling people to prayer and fundraising activities on behalf of the homeless.

The Mass, the archbishop said, was an "act of mercy and devotion."

The grandeur of the cathedral, together with the written-for-the-occasion music was, he said, an appropriate way to "accompany our beloved deceased homeless on their way to heaven."

"Beauty is called for, for beauty has the power to heal, unite and manifest the presence of God," he said, and dignifies the human condition. "Those that are suffering the consequence of homelessness, poverty and marginalization deserve nothing less."

Seven priests joined the archbishop on the altar at the Mass, including Franciscan Father David Gaa, provincial minister of the Franciscan Friars of the Santa Barbara province.

Father Gaa oversees Franciscan ministry at St. Boniface Parish in the city's Tenderloin neighborhood and at the St. Anthony Foundation that serves it.

In his homily, Archbishop Cordileone said people without a permanent home remind society that all people are on a pilgrimage to their home with God.

"This not our true home. We are moving toward our final destiny our permanent home, which lies beyond this home," he said.

The archbishop also described St. Francis of Assisi's conversion of heart.

Having grown up in wealth, Francis was "especially repulsed" by lepers until the day he encountered a man suffering a particularly acute case, he said. The saint was moved to dismount his horse to offer him alms, and when the man stretched out his hand to receive it, St. Francis kissed it.

"Francis discovered that the object of his fear was not a mon-

ster, but a man," the archbishop said, and the saint spent the rest of his life in service to the poor and marginalized.

St. Francis was not an activist in the modern way, Archbishop Cordileone explained. He didn't rail at the social conventions that separated lepers from non-lepers and instead, he recognized their humanity, he said.

"He embraced them, kissed them, looked them in the eye," he said, an acknowledgment that they were first and foremost "children of God."

The archbishop referenced the often-quoted Gospel passage Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus talks to his followers about their judgment before God, citing in particular the passage: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Archbishop Cordileone distinguished between giving to get something in return, and giving out of love.

"Give to give," he said. "This is where we find our Lord hiding. Hiding in the humanity of those who are suffering, who others find repulsive."

Jesus has a proclivity for "hiding" behind the appearance of something "simple and humble," the archbishop said.

"He does that on the street, and he also does that from the altar, hiding behind a simple piece of bread and a humble cup of wine," he said.

The archbishop compared homeless people to all of humanity in speaking of the meaning of the word "tabernacle," defined literally as a tent, or a temporary shelter.

"The tent is something that has made itself very familiar to us recently even to us city dwellers," he said. As a "makeshift dwelling, that signals impermanence and instability" it's a reminder to us "how transitory life in this world is."

The Mass introduced a painting commissioned by the archbishop, titled "Patron Saints of the Homeless."

Set up as a shrine in the sanctuary, the painting by Bernadette Carstensen acknowledges the special ministry to poor and marginalized people of St. Teresa of Kolkata, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Benedict Labre and St. Francis of Assisi.

A printed keepsake of the work was offered to the several hundred people in attendance at the Mass. On the back was a "Litany to the Patron Saints of the Homeless," written by the Benedict XVI Institute's poet-in-residence, James Matthew Wilson.

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Don't wait for Christ; he's already here

MIKE NELSON
Catholic News Service

Waiting has always been a central theme of Advent. But for whom do we wait? The Messiah?

Is Our Lord Jesus not already here?

Before his death in 1968, Trappist monk Father Thomas Merton — in several of his spiritual writings — suggested that the purpose of Advent is not a matter of waiting for the Lord, but rather of recognizing his presence among us here and now.

"The fact remains that our task is to seek and find Christ in our world as it is and not as it might be," Merton wrote in his essay, "Advent: Hope or Delusion?"

"The fact that the world is other than it might be," he continued, "does not alter the truth that Christ is present in it and that his plan is neither frustrated nor changed: Indeed, all will be done according to his will. Our Advent is the celebration of this hope."

What is "uncertain" Merton added, "is not the 'coming' of Christ but our own reception of him, our own response to him, our own readiness and capacity to 'go forth to meet him.'"

Indeed, Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus is present "where two or three are gathered together in my name" (18:20). Thus, we who call ourselves Jesus' disciples are called to see Christ in one another, and to love them, as difficult as that may sometimes be — a reality Merton addressed in "No Man is an Island."

"In Advent we celebrate the coming and indeed the presence of Christ in our world."

- Thomas Merton

"If we wait for some people to become agreeable or attractive before we begin to love them," he wrote, "we will never begin."

Thus, we need not wait for Advent or Christmas or any season or event of the liturgical year to heed Christ's call to "love one another" (Jn 13:34). The responsorial psalm for the First Sunday of Advent offers us guidance:

"Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior, and for you I wait all the day" (Ps 25:4-5).

This follows the day's first reading from the prophet Jeremiah, six centuries before the coming of Christ, when "waiting for the Messiah" was truly a reality:

"The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will

raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land" (Jer 33:14-15).

"In Advent," Merton wrote in "Hope or Delusion," "we celebrate the coming and indeed the presence of Christ in our world."

But, he added, that celebration must be tempered by the realization that the world in which Christ dwells is less than perfect.

"We witness to his presence even in the midst of all its inscrutable problems and tragedies," Merton said. "Our Advent faith is not an escape from the world to a misty realm of slo-gans and comforts which declare our problems to be unreal, our tragedies inexistent."

Which is why, in a particular way, Christ is most present to those who need him the most.

"Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited," Merton wrote in "Raids on the Unspeakable."

"But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world."

So wait no more.

Catholic journalist Mike Nelson writes from Southern California.

Consider the act of waiting as a gift

SHEMAIAH GONZALEZ
Catholic News Service

We know Advent is a season of waiting but what if you feel like you've been waiting for a long time? We've been waiting for the pandemic to be over. We've been waiting to "go back to normal."

But ultimately, and for 2,000 years, we've been waiting for Christ to return. To reconcile all things. To make everything right.

What if we reframed the act of waiting — as a gift?

There is a refining that happens when we wait. A transformation of our spirit. When we wait, we prepare. We gain experience. And there is a hope, that in that transformation, God's will becomes our will.

We have been given this opportunity as a gift, a gift for the past two years — and now as we wait during Advent and ultimately as we wait for Christ's second coming.

Writer and theologian G.K. Chesterton appreciated how waiting could be a gift. To Chesterton, waiting opened possibility:

"Around every corner is another gift waiting to surprise us, and it will surprise us if we can achieve control over our natural tendencies to make comparisons (to things that are better rather than things that are worse), to take things for granted ... and to feel entitled!"

Have we grown so entitled that we no longer see the gift of waiting and of life ready to surprise us? Chesterton's words ring true as we have compared now, to B.C., "before COVID-19."

We reflect longingly back to 2019 as our glory days. We don't appreciate now for what it is. Now is good. It can be beautiful if we let it surprise us.

When I was younger, I always thought I would be happy when I graduated from college, when I found a husband, when I had my own home.

These are good and happy events, and it is

"Around every corner is another gift waiting to surprise us."

- G.K. Chesterton

good to have goals to work toward, but I needed to learn to be content and happy in the moment each day. When we learn this, God's will takes over our desires.

Advent is the season of waiting. G.K. Chesterton wrote, "The aim of life is appreciation; There is no sense in not appreciating things; and there is no sense in having more of them if you have less appreciation of them."

I think of this year's supply chain shortages. Some say these issues threaten Christmas celebrations. Do they really? Or do they refine us? Do they remind us what Christmas is truly about? Like Chesterton writes, why do we need more if we don't even appreciate what we already have?

It is not about the gifts and wondering if the cargo ships will be unloaded on time, if the semitrucks will deliver all the gifts you wanted to make Christmas perfect. It can be about being more thoughtful about what we consume and how much of it.

Do we buy and consume with intentionality? Has Christmas become more about the gifts and less about Jesus?

Waiting is the gift. It is a time to change our hearts. While waiting, God can take something that is difficult and use it to shape us into the person he created us to be. And we can get to know him better.

In St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, he writes, "I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me" (Phil 4:12-13).

Waiting helps us understand what it is like to be content with what we have. It means learning to appreciate what we do have instead of stewing over what we do not.

It will never be 2019 again. Do we want things and comfortability? Or do we want Jesus? Do we want the saving transforming grace of our relationship with the Savior?

This makes me think of the words of one of Chesterton's contemporaries, C. S. Lewis, who wrote:

"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

I love the tension of being content in our circumstance but not so easily pleased that we fail to recognize the glory that God is offering us. Isn't this what we do when we fail to see waiting as a gift?

What are we waiting for? Christmas? A turkey, tree and a holiday movie? Are we waiting for another new normal? Or the pandemic to be over?

Or are we waiting for Christ? To finally be reconciled to our God? To know fully this God who we worship? And then too, we will be fully known.

I am content to wait for Jesus.

Gonzalez is a freelance writer. Her website is www.shemaiahgonzalez.com.

Editor's note: Look for more Advent reflections at www.catholicvirginian.org.

OPPORTUNITIES

The St. Pius X Catholic Church Director of Music is responsible for the design, facilitation and implementation of the parish's liturgical music ministry in a manner that promotes "full, conscious, and active participation," called for by the liturgical rites in the Roman Catholic tradition. In collaboration with the pastor, staff members and parishioners, the Director is charged with integrating music ministry into the overall parish mission.

The Director recruits, trains, directs and oversees the choir and cantors and serves as the keyboardist. The parish's repertoire consists of liturgical music drawn primarily from Breaking Bread (OCP) and Gather (GIA).

This position is regular, part-time, 20 hours a week, with the possibility of being 25 hours a week. The Director's specific schedule is negotiable, but will include leading choir rehearsals, the Saturday/Sunday liturgies, and weddings, as well as ideally funerals and attending the weekly parish staff meeting. The position is available beginning Monday, Nov. 22, 2021.

To apply, please send a cover letter, résumé and completed diocesan application to Father Sean Prince, Pastor, St. Pius X Catholic Church, 7800 Halprin Drive, Norfolk, VA 23518 or send the materials via email to pastor@spxnorfolk.org.

Full-Time Director of Music: St. Jerome Catholic Church, Newport News, is a diverse, engaged parish in need of a full-time director of music.

The right individual will have a master's degree in music (or equivalent education/experience), knowledge of the Roman Catholic Liturgy and at least three to five years' related experience. The position includes planning and directing a comprehensive musical program for the parish, with an adult and youth choir. The individual would also be responsible for planning, rehearsing and coordinating music for weddings, funerals and faith formation events.

Position would be 35 hours per week and compensation would be according to diocesan scale. Please send a résumé to stjerome@stjeromennva.org.

All Saints Catholic School, a JK-grade 8 regional school located in the Northside of Richmond, Virginia, is seeking After-School Program staff and regular class substitutes. After-School Program staff are sought from 2:45 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Substitutes needed for all subjects and grades JK-8. Please contact Principal Eliott at gelliott@allsaintsric.org to apply.

SHORTTAKES

Church of the Redeemer's 40th Annual Craft Bazaar, Saturday, Nov. 20, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., 8275 Meadowbridge Road, Mechanicsville, across from Memorial Regional Medical Center. 120+ craft vendors, bake sale, Santa Claus, Santa Shop, \$1 donation/door prize, and raffle including a gift card tree, TV, Nintendo switch and more. Bring a can of non-perishable food for a bonus door prize ticket! Also serving breakfast and lunch. Join us for a day of fun, food and prizes! For more information visit <http://www.churchredeemer.org/craft>.

St. Jude Catholic Church, Franklin, is hosting a special program for the First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 28, 10:30 a.m., in the church. The choir will close the Mass with a couple of songs on the bells with a guest appearance by the Joy Bringers from Wakefield. For further information call 757-569-9600 or 757-742-6094.

The Bishop Keane Institute has rescheduled the postponed session with Father Ricky Manalo for 7:30 p.m., on Friday, Dec. 3, at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 2150 Cunningham Drive, Hampton. Father Manalo, a popular composer, theologian and author, will speak on the topic "Onsite and Online: Catholic Worship and Technology in a 2.5 World." For more information and to purchase tickets, go to <http://www.keaneinstitute.org/>, or call 757-826-0393, ext. 214.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha annual "Run/Walk with the Son for Haiti 5K" to raise funds to support the schools in their Haitian twin parish of St. Michel in Boucan-Carre, Saturday, Dec. 4, at 3800 Big Bethel Road, Tabb. Race starts at 8:30 a.m. Race day registration, 7:30 - 8:15 a.m. Registration and additional information available at stkaterirun.com. You may also participate virtually and run/walk any time, any place, between Nov. 24 - Dec. 2, 2021. Registration and results submission at raceentry.com. Special raffle: Four nights in a soundfront Outer Banks 4- BR condo. Tickets \$10 of 3 for \$20.

The St. Bede Music Ministry will present an Advent Festival of Lessons and Carols on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 7-8 p.m. at the church, 3686 Ironbound Road, Williamsburg. Join the Senior Choristers, St. Dunstan Ringers, and St. Cecilia Choir of St. Bede in this beautiful candlelit service of choral music, Scripture readings and traditional congregational hymns of the season. This liturgy will not be livestreamed. Bring a friend and attend in person. For more information, please call 757-229-3631 or visit www.bede.va.org/concerts.

Archbishop: Proclaim Christ in response to 'wokeness'

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — The Catholic Church must proclaim Jesus Christ "boldly" and "creatively" in the face of new secular movements that promote "social justice," "wokeness" and "intersectionality," among other beliefs, as the answer to all of society's ills, Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez said Nov. 4.

"We need to tell our story of salvation in a new way, with charity and confidence, without fear," he said. "This is the Church's mission in every age and every cultural moment." Archbishop Gomez made the comments in a videotaped address for the upcoming 23rd Catholic and Public Life Congress in Madrid, which organizers said will focus on political correctness and "the dangers of this mega-ideology," such as preventing debate and limiting freedoms.

He spoke on "the rise of new secular ideologies and movements for social change in the United States and the implications for the Catholic Church." The Church needs to understand these movements "as pseudo-religions, and even replacements and rivals to traditional Christian beliefs," he said, because "they claim to offer what religion provides. With the breakdown of the Judeo-Christian worldview and the rise of secularism, political belief systems based on social justice or personal identity have come to fill the space that Christian belief and practice once occupied," he said.

"We all know that while there are unique conditions in the United States, similar broad patterns of aggressive secularization have long been at work in Spain and elsewhere in Europe," he said.

Marriages

Continued from Page 7

The article suggests that parishes must offer ministries not only to engaged couples but also to support newlyweds in the early stages of their marriage.

Ministry to struggling couples is especially important at a time when many parishes also are struggling to get people back into the pews after the pandemic forced many churches to close in 2020.

De Gance cited surveys which show that attendance at Mass is still off by as much as 40% in some

parishes nationwide.

In "Endgame," the authors offer examples of many studies that show that strong families and church attendance go hand in hand.

"A parish needs to add value through its ministry to the hurting," he said. "Pope Francis talks about the parish being a hospital for hurting people, and at a time when there is so much nihilism and illness in relationships, it's important to help people to form meaningful, Godly relationships and marriages."



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Fiesta de todos los Santos. El Papa en el Ángelus: “No hay santidad sin alegría”

No hay santidad “sin alegría”, pero tampoco “sin profecía”. Son “dos aspectos del estilo de la vida de los santos”, que muestran el “camino que lleva al Reino de Dios y a la felicidad”. La alegría, porque de otro modo la fe se convierte “en un ejercicio riguroso y opresivo, y corre el riesgo de enfermarse de tristeza”. Mientras que el mensaje “contracorriente de Jesús”, nos dice que la “verdadera plenitud de la vida se alcanza siguiéndole”: vaciándose de uno mismo para “dejar espacio a Dios”.

La alegría del cristiano “no es la emoción de un momento o simple optimismo humano”, sino “la certeza de poder afrontar cada situación bajo la mirada amorosa de Dios, con la valentía y la fuerza que proceden de Él”: lo aseguró el Papa Francisco antes de rezar el Ángelus en el día en que la Iglesia celebra a Todos los Santos.

Ser santos es recorrer el camino de las Bienaventuranzas

El Santo Padre se centró en dos aspectos del estilo de vida de los santos: la alegría y la profecía. Antes de ello, el puntapié inicial de la reflexión del Pontífice fue hacer presente el “mensaje programático de Jesús” que resuena en la Liturgia de hoy, a saber, “las Bienaventuranzas”, que nos muestran “el camino que lleva al Reino de Dios y a la felicidad:

“El camino de la humildad, de la compasión, de la mansedumbre, de la justicia y de la paz. Ser santos es recorrer este camino”.

“Somos santos porque Dios viene a habitar nuestra vida”

Hablando en primer lugar de la alegría, el Santo Padre señaló que Jesús comienza con la palabra «Bienaventurados» (Mt 5, 3). Se trata del “anuncio principal, el de una felicidad inaudita”, pues “la santidad no es un programa de vida hecho solo de esfuerzos y renunciaciones, sino que es ante todo el gozoso descubrimiento de ser hijos amados por Dios”. Es la vivencia de los santos que, “incluso en medio de muchas tribulaciones, vivieron esa alegría y la testimoniaron”:



El Papa Francisco saluda a la multitud mientras dirige el Ángelus desde la ventana de su estudio con vista a la Plaza de San Pedro en el Vaticano el 1 de noviembre de 2021, la fiesta de Todos los Santos. (Foto del CNS / Los medios del Vaticano)

No es una conquista humana, es un don que recibimos: somos santos porque Dios, que es el Santo, viene a habitar nuestra vida. ¡Por eso somos bienaventurados! La alegría del cristiano, por tanto, no es la emoción de un momento o simple optimismo humano, sino la certeza de poder afrontar cada situación bajo la mirada amorosa de Dios, con la valentía y la fuerza que proceden de Él.

“¡No hay santidad sin alegría!”

Sucede que, tal como explicó en Santo Padre, “sin alegría, la fe se convierte en un ejercicio riguroso y opresivo, y corre el riesgo de enfermarse de tristeza”. “Un padre del desierto – recordó – decía que la tristeza es ‘un gusano del corazón’, que corroe la vida”.

Interroguémonos sobre esto: ¿somos cristianos alegres? ¿Transmitimos alegría o somos personas aburridas y tristes con cara de funeral? Recordemos: ¡no hay santidad sin alegría!

Un mensaje “a contracorriente”

Pasando al aspecto de la profecía, el Sumo Pontífice reiteró que “las Bienaventuranzas están dirigidas a los pobres, a los afligidos, a los hambrientos de justi-

cia”. “Es un mensaje a contracorriente”, afirmó.

El mundo, de hecho, dice que para ser feliz tienes que ser rico, poderoso, siempre joven y fuerte, tener fama y éxito. Jesús abate estos criterios y hace un anuncio profético: la verdadera plenitud de vida se alcanza siguiéndole, practicando su Palabra. Y esto significa ser pobres por dentro, vaciarse de uno mismo para dejar espacio a Dios.

La profecía de una humanidad nueva

Lo apenas dicho porque, “quien se cree rico, exitoso y seguro, lo basa todo en sí mismo y se cierra a Dios y a sus hermanos”; mientras que “quien es consciente de ser pobre y de no bastarse a sí mismo permanece abierto a Dios y al prójimo”; y así, este último, “encuentra la alegría”:

Las Bienaventuranzas, pues, son la profecía de una humanidad nueva, de un modo nuevo de vivir: hacerse pequeño y encomendarse a Dios, en lugar de destacar sobre los demás; ser manso, en vez de tratar de imponerse; practicar la misericordia, antes que pensar solo en sí mismo; trabajar por la justicia y por la paz, en vez de alimentar, incluso con la connivencia, injusticias y desigualdades.

María nos de el “ánimo bienaventurado” que ha magnificado al Señor

De este modo la “santidad”, es “acoger y poner en práctica, con la ayuda de Dios, esta profecía que revoluciona el mundo”, subrayó Francisco, que inmediatamente invitó a hacernos una serie de preguntas:

¿Doy testimonio de la profecía de Jesús? ¿Manifiesto el espíritu profético que recibí en el Bautismo? ¿O me adapto a las comodidades de la vida y a mi pereza, pensando que todo va bien si me va bien a mí? ¿Llevo al mundo la alegre novedad de la profecía de Jesús o las habituales quejas por lo que no va bien?

Que la Santísima Virgen – concluyó el Papa antes del rezo mariano – nos dé algo de su ánimo, de ese ánimo bienaventurado que ha magnificado con alegría al Señor, que “derriba a los potentados de sus tornos y exalta a los humildes” (cf. Lc 1,52).

Obispos americanos: respetemos la dignidad de los que emigran

La migración hacia Centroamérica, México y Estados Unidos es un derecho: este es el llamamiento lanzado por los participantes en el VII Encuentro de Obispos celebrado en Valle de Ángeles, Honduras, del 25 al 28 de octubre

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

Tal como informa Prensa Celam la solicitud expresada por los asistentes al VII Encuentro de Obispos celebrado en Valle de Ángeles, Honduras, del 25 al 28 de octubre, en que han manifestado claramente:

“Demandamos la aplicación de políticas migratorias que respeten la dignidad de las personas, el derecho a la protección internacional y la no separación de las familias por parte de los gobiernos de Centroamérica, México y Estados Unidos”

Acudieron a este encuentro los secretarios ejecutivos de pastoral de movilidad, los laicos que trabajan en las fronteras del sur de México y Centroamérica, un delegado de la Sección Migrantes y Refugiados del Vaticano y un grupo de obispos estadounidenses. Todos coinciden en su preocupación por que la migración sea un derecho y no la consecuencia de la presión que ejercen diversos factores como la pobreza, la violencia y que terminan convirtiéndola en una obligación.

No a los mecanismos de devolución exprés

Tomando como punto de referencia que Cen-

troamérica, México y Estados Unidos son territorios de origen, tránsito, destino y retorno de migrantes; se mostraron contrarios a los mecanismos de devolución exprés que resultan como efecto de la aplicación del Título 42 y la política “Quédate en México”, implementada por la administración del presidente Joe Biden. En este sentido urgieron a los gobiernos de Centroamérica y México a dar una respuesta humanitaria, rápida y digna a la emergencia provocada por estas medidas que solo apuntan a la contención y criminalización de la población migrante.

Además reiteraron su compromiso para promover la incidencia con los gobiernos de la región; particularmente con los de México y Estados Unidos, para que aborden las causas estructurales de la migración. Labor que se extiende hasta las personas que por su condición se constituyen en testigos del trato y respuesta que dan los Estados a quienes se ven obligados a migrar de manera forzada, enfrentando graves riesgos durante la ruta, sin olvidar a las personas que son deportadas durante su proceso de reintegración.

“Como Iglesia nos comprometemos a fortalecer nuestras articulaciones regionales para acompañar y asistir a las personas migrantes en coherencia con el llamado del Papa Francisco para construir un nosotros cada vez más grande”

Testigos de dolor

Entre las denuncias que hace la Iglesia de Centroamérica y México frente a la situación de la población migrante, está la violencia estructural que obliga a los ciudadanos centroamericanos a huir cada día de sus países, agobiados por las condiciones económicas y de inseguridad. Además de la corrupción generalizada y la impunidad que debilita las posibilidades de construir proyectos de vida estables en su países de origen.

Una responsabilidad que ha de ser compartida entre los gobiernos de los países de Centroamérica y Estados Unidos; respecto al diseño de políticas económicas implementadas que con el tiempo han contribuido al debilitamiento de los Estados; afectando a las personas obligadas a migrar en busca de mejores condiciones de vida.

En busca de respuestas

La Iglesia señala que la migración es una crisis compleja y de tipo regional que requiere una respuesta inmediata y que demanda un trabajo articulado desde los Estados y la sociedad civil, pues a causa de la pandemia, el cierre de fronteras y el efecto de fenómenos naturales como los huracanes, hizo más aguda la presencia en las rutas migratorias de poblaciones vulnerables como es el caso de los niños no acompañados, las mujeres embarazadas y la conformación de grupos familiares con características monoparentales.

Film hopes to push Gil Hodges into Hall of Fame

MARK PATTISON
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Repeat after me: Gil Hodges is not in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. A lot of people think he's in already.

And a lot of the people who know that he's not in the Hall think he should be there.

One of them, not surprisingly, is his son, Gil Jr.

"I was talking to MLB (Network) this morning, and they thought he was in already. 'He's not in?'" Hodges Jr. told Catholic News Service in a Nov. 9 phone interview from his home in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

"I run into people every week that talk about him, and they talk about him as if they had dinner with him last month," he said. "I find it just amazing that one individual in such a short span of time could have such an impact. And I think a lot of that is praise to him.

"Not only for his athletic prowess, but also because of his integrity and his character. His belief in God, his faith, his country, his family. I think that just shows that good people can leave indelible marks."

A new film, "Soul of a Champion: The Gil Hodges Story," made its online debut at gilhodgesfilm.com Nov. 8, mere weeks before the Hall of Fame's "Golden Days Era" committee considers the on- and off-field attributes of Hodges and a fistful of other players from the post-World War II years. Hodges needs 75% — 12 of 16 — of the committee members' votes to be enshrined.

Hodges has already been marked on 3,010 ballots during his Hall eligibility — more than any other player not already in Cooperstown.

Spirit Juice Productions made "Soul of a Champion" with Catholic Athletes for Christ, for whom Spirit Juice had done several film and video productions previously.

"I had never heard of Gil," said Rob Kaczmark, a co-director and co-producer of the

film. After being briefed on Hodges, he said, Kaczmark thought, "Wow, this sounds like an incredible story to tell, for something to happen. I'm excited to see him push the needle a little to get him into the Hall of Fame."

For the uninitiated, Hodges was the first baseman for the Dodgers, both in Brooklyn, New York, and Los Angeles. He was an eight-time All-Star, a three-time Gold Glove winner and won the World Series with the Dodgers in both Brooklyn and L.A.

Hodges wound up his career playing with the expansion New York Mets in 1962 and '63. He was traded to the expansion Washington Senators, retired as a player and took over the team as manager. As a manager, he was traded back to the Mets — for a player — and piloted the "Miracle Mets" to their 1969 World Series win over the heavily favored Baltimore Orioles.

He died after playing a round of golf on Easter in 1972 with some Mets coaches. "I heard it on the radio after leaving Mass, in the car," Hodges Jr. told CNS.

At the funeral Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians Church in Brooklyn, sportscaster Howard Cosell sought out young Hodges Jr., then 22, and took him to a limousine parked outside. In the back seat was Gil's Brooklyn teammate Jackie Robinson, who was weeping inconsolably.

"Next to my son's death," Robinson told Hodges Jr., "this is the worst day of my life."

Baseball-Reference's webpage for each major league player offers a "similarity score," ranking other players' whose careers came closest in terms of performance. In Hodges' case, 1960s Detroit Tigers first baseman Norm Cash comes closest. Cash had 373 home runs to Hodges' 370. And Cash has never been seriously considered as Hall of Fame material.

But two Hall criteria often overlooked — except when it comes to the game's cheaters — are sportsmanship and character. And that is where Hodges may have the edge that puts him over the top.

"I heard players refer to him as a saint," said longtime Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully in "Soul of a Champion." "He never missed Mass. Road trips were no excuse," said Scully, himself a Catholic. His priorities were "God, family and country, and those didn't get altered."

Scully told of Hodges declining a steak dinner served on a flight after playing both games of a rare Friday doubleheader. Indicating that he was some 20,000 feet in the air, Hodges said, "I'm too close to the Boss."

Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda, another Catholic interviewed for the movie before he died, was known to cuss up a blue streak at times. "I wish I could be like him," Lasorda said of Hodges. "This guy did nothing wrong, and he's not in the Hall of Fame!"

Hodges' integrity might have helped the Mets win the World Series. In Game 5, the Mets were down 3-0 when Cleon Jones led off the bottom of the sixth inning. A Dave McNally fastball was way off target. Jones skipped out of the way of the errant pitch, which skittered into the Mets' dugout. Hodges emerged holding a baseball and showed home-plate umpire Lou DiMuro a scuff mark, indicating it was shoe polish from Jones' cleats. DiMuro ruled Jones had been hit by the pitch, and the next batter, Donn Clendenon, blasted a home run to bring the score to 3-2.

On Jones' next trip to the plate in the eighth, he hit a long double and scored the go-ahead run on a Ron Swoboda double. Jones also caught the final out in the ninth inning to secure the Mets' improbable 5-3 win.

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