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Historic murals being restored in Pocahontas church Painstaking process will renew treasured pieces of parish history

JOSEPH STANIUNAS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

Many Catholic families preserve religious heirlooms — a christening gown, a mother’s rosary beads, a well-worn breviary. For Vince Shumate and other members at St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Pocahontas, about 115 miles west of Roanoke, their family treasures are on the ceilings and in the sanctuary of their white, wood-frame church. The 10 original oil paintings adorning the church are over a hundred years old and are being restored and preserved with a \$26,000 grant from the Diocese of Richmond.

“I really never thought it would happen in my lifetime,” Shumate said. “Everybody up there is just so appreciative and so glad this is happening.”

Most of the 8 feet by 12 feet canvas murals show scenes from the life of Christ; one focuses on the parish’s patron saint. All date to 1919 and are the work of Theodore Brasch of Cincinnati, who was a friend of the pastor at the time.

A picture of the Last Supper covers the wall behind the altar. Another painting depicts Christ asking the children to come to him. One is a representation of the temptation of Christ in the desert.

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Chris Norton and Judy Dotzel of Trinity Artisans remove coal dust, candle soot and other sediments that have collected on one of the murals at St. Elizabeth Church, Pocahontas. Using solvent-soaked cotton balls, they can clean about a square foot of canvas in an hour. (Photo/Jay Paul)

Pope emphasizes mercy in World Day of the Sick message

JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Although scientists have made great strides in the field of medicine, genuine care and listening to those who suffer must always be at the forefront of any therapy, Pope Francis said.

“Patients are always more important than their diseases, and for this reason, no therapeutic approach can disregard listening to the patient, his or her history, anxieties and fears,” the pope wrote in his message for the 2022 World Day of the Sick, which the Catholic Church marks Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Care that respects each patient’s “dignity and frailties” is especially

needed when “healing is not possible,” he added.

“It is always possible to console; it is always possible to make people sense a closeness that is more interested in the person than in his or her pathology. For this reason, I would hope that the training provided to health workers might enable them to develop a capacity for listening and relating to others,” Pope Francis wrote in his message, which was released by the Vatican Jan. 4.

Reflecting on Christ’s call in Luke 6:36 to “be merciful,” Pope Francis focused on the need to accompany those who suffer “on a path of charity.”

Mercy, he said, “expresses God’s very nature” in that he “cares for us

with the strength of a father and the tenderness of a mother.”

Jesus is the “supreme witness” of God’s merciful love for the sick, not only in healing them but also in making care for the sick “paramount in the mission of the apostles,” the pope said.

Many people who are ill, especially during the current pandemic, “spent the last part of their earthly life in solitude, in an intensive care unit, assisted by generous health care workers, yet far from their loved ones and the most important people in their lives,” he noted.

“This helps us to see how important is the presence at our side of witnesses to God’s charity, who, following the example of Jesus, the

very mercy of the Father, pour the balm of consolation and the wine of hope on the wounds of the sick,” the pope wrote.

Pope Francis thanked health care workers who went out of their way to care for the sick as a mission “carried out with love and competence, (that) transcends the bounds of your profession.”

“Your hands, which touch the suffering flesh of Christ, can be a sign of the merciful hands of the father,” he said. “Be mindful of the great dignity of your profession, as well as the responsibility that it entails.”

The pope also highlighted the importance of Catholic health care

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Let Church be 'light for unity, beacon for hope'



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

In early December, I had the opportunity to give a reflection at the annual conference of leadership from Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Methodist (LARCUM) Churches in Virginia.

Since 2006, our diocese and the Diocese of Arlington have had a covenant agreement with these denominations as we continue to discern ways in which we may make real Jesus' instruction at the Last Supper: "... so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (Jn 17:21).

Our LARCUM covenant's references to that passage and to Ephesians 4:4-6, that we are "one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all," bear witness that union with God through Jesus Christ is the desired destination of our journey.

My reflection focused upon Matthew 2:1-12, the Gospel we heard on Jan. 2, the Epiphany of the Lord. The second verse of that reading — "We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him" — is the theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Jan. 18-25.

Just as the Magi accompanied each other in their search for our Savior, so do we of different faith traditions walk together toward the Lord. Through LARCUM, we pray together and affirm our desire as Christians to seek ways to better express unity with one another.

That unity is important because our culture is fraught with division, especially in politics, economics and education. The concern that individuals, organizations and demographic groups are moving further apart instead of growing closer together is a valid one. Some might disagree, but one need only look at what is happening each day in our country.

More than ever, it is important for Christians of all faith traditions to make a commitment of listening to one another and accompanying one another. In a nation where polarization has almost become a way of life, our efforts to seek Christian unity appear countercultural. As Simeon, after blessing the Holy Family in the temple, said to our Blessed Mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted..." (Lk 2:34).

The actions of the Magi reveal that they believed Jesus to be the fulfillment of their hopes, and therefore, their journey was oriented to finding him. Although they sought Jesus as the destination of their journey, not all was revealed to them. They learned, as we learn, that making the journey of following him requires trust in God amid all that is unknown.

That the Magi made this journey together rather than each king travelling on his own is significant. It serves as a model for us in our quest for Church unity. Just as Pope Francis has invited Catholics to engage in synodality (synod is a Greek word that literally means "on the same path"), that same practice applies in seeking the unity of Christians.

In 1964, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council issued their Decree on Ecumenism. As Pope Francis did nearly 57 years later, they emphasized our call to walk together toward God:

"Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in the triune God, one and three in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope which does not play us false.

"In these days when cooperation in social matters is so widespread, all men without exception are called to work together, with much greater reason all those who believe in God, but most of all, all Christians in that they bear the name of Christ" (12).

Near the end of the prayer for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we are invited to pray, "Help your Church, merciful One, to be a light for unity within itself and a beacon of hope for all humanity."

May those words be our guide as we join with others, open and ready to seek ways for appropriate unity in the truth centered on Christ.

Dublin archbishop sees 'radical change' for Church

SARAH MAC DONALD
Catholic News Service

DUBLIN — After a year at the head of the Archdiocese of Dublin, Archbishop Dermot Farrell said, "Radical change is coming in the Church," which will see a renewal of energy and new forms of ministry.

"With a powerful commitment from clergy and lay faithful, across the full range of the life and ministry of parish communities, we are going to experience a renewal of energy and the adoption of new forms of outreach and ministry," the 67-year-old archbishop told Catholic News Service. He also said he believes change is already happening in the Church's structures all over the Western world.

"Pope Francis is offering us a way of being Church, the synodal pathway, of walking together more closely and being a Church that is hope-filled, despite many challenges."

The leader of the largest Irish diocese, with more than 1 million Catholics and 207 parishes, invited the faithful to "walk this jour-

ney together with me — and walk it with hope: a hope that frees us to undertake radical change, a hope that inspires us to be ambitious and a hope encourages us to be brave."

In November, the archdiocese published its "Building Hope Task Force Report," a strategic plan for pastoral renewal amid major challenges such as a collapse in revenue and priest numbers.

"As a diocese, we need to take stock of how well we are prepared to serve the mission of the Church," the archbishop said. "Of course, we confront immense challenges. Certain forms of Church life may be dying out. Once we accept this, it does not mean resignation or powerlessness, but new responsibilities for the mission."

He stressed that there is "no pre-packaged plan to address the reality in which we find ourselves."

Of the 312 priests who currently hold parish appointments in the Archdiocese of Dublin, 139 are over 70 years of age, and 116

of the 312 priests are on loan to the archdiocese. There are currently just two students in formation for priesthood. In 2016, the last year for which data are available, 1.1 million of Dublin's population of 1.57 million identified as Catholic.

The "Building Hope Task Force Report" talks about reimagining diocesan and parish structures and argues that hope inspires people to be ambitious and undertake radical change.

"We are not helpless in the face of the future," Archbishop Farrell said. "The changes that will occur we will do together as a diocese. Our parish structures need to be fit for purpose into the future. Renewal needs to be rooted in reflection, prayer and conversion, if it is to inspire and support a living faith."

He described his first year as archbishop as "a hope-filled time" because of the archdiocese's renewal journey, Pope Francis' announcement of the synodal way, and because "we believe that our Church is already being changed

according to the plan of God."

"We need to open up a new chapter in the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Change is never easy, and there will be conflicts, disagreements and tensions. These matters will not be resolved by argument or weight of numbers."

He said the two most important communities in handing on the faith were the family and the parish. "My years of experience at parish and diocesan level underpin the value of family. There is a huge role for re-evangelization in our parishes, especially among young people and families."

As to the many alienated from the Church due to abuse scandals and disillusionment with Church leadership, he said: "We have to be able as a Church to atone and to ensure that nothing we ever do stands in the way of a relationship that an individual person of faith has with God. As archbishop of Dublin, I am here to play my part in healing the hurts of the past and to constantly reach out and welcome people."

The Beatitudes.

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St. Vincent de Paul ministry rises to new level

Council executive director works to extend outreach throughout diocese

BRIAN T. OLSZEWSKI
The Catholic Virginian

Dan and Holly Kearns were looking to get involved in their parish. It was two weeks after they and their three daughters had moved from Florida to Glen Allen in early 2016, and they were interested in the Appalachian twinning ministry at St. Michael the Archangel.

They went to the church the night the ministry was scheduled to meet, but no one was there. As they wandered among the meeting rooms, they met Deacon Andy Cirimo, who invited the couple to join his wife, Nancy, and him as they were in a discussion with others about forming a St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) conference in the parish.

In what Kearns describes as “the Holy Spirit at work,” he recalled Deacon Cirimo asking, “What are you looking for?”

“I told him, ‘We want to get involved. We want to help people directly,’” he said.

The couple listened to what the group was undertaking, and Kearns told the deacon, “This is perfect.”

Key is spiritual growth

A certified public accountant, Kearns came to Virginia to continue working for the United Way as chief financial officer and chief operating officer, something he’d been doing for five years. But as a Vincentian, Kearns wanted to do something else.

“I had been doing fundraising; I’m a finance guy. ‘I don’t want to be in charge of workers,’” he recalled telling Deacon Cirimo. “Let me go out and help people. That’s what I’m missing at United Way. I don’t help people directly.”

In fall 2016, the SVDP conference at St. Michael the Archangel became only the second one in the diocese whose patron is St. Vincent de Paul. Kearns was elected president; Deacon Cirimo served as spiritual advisor.

During its first five years, the conference built its outreach upon what Kearns termed an “intentional spiritual element.”

“We start with the spiritual. A lot of people come to us and are like, ‘We just want to help people,’” he said. “Helping people is awesome, and we welcome that, but this is what goes along with it. By the way, if you’re not interested in the spiritual part, you’re missing the benefit of being a Vincentian.”

The first part of any SVDP conference mission statement, according to Kearns, is “the spiritual growth of our members in service to others. There is a large spiritual component to this.”

‘Incubator for programming’

As the St. Michael the Archangel



Dan Kearns, executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) District Council since July, oversees eight SVDP conferences and two youth conferences in the Diocese of Richmond. A member of St. Michael the Archangel, Glen Allen, he is pictured with, from left, his daughters, Emily, 17, Shannon, 16, and Abigail, 11, and his wife, Holly. (Family photo)

conference grew from 20 members to more than 50, so, too, did the ability to reach friends in need. A concern among Vincentians doing home visits was the number of friends who would resort to “payday loans” when they ran out of money. Rather than help them, the loans, with their quickly compounding interest, put borrowers in deeper financial straits.

“When Village Bank agreed to work with us in 2020, one of our donors underwrote the \$20,000 collateral needed to help launch it,” Kearns said, noting that the conference has done six loans and that it continues to help people through the program. (See <https://bit.ly/SVDPMiniLoanProgram>).

Calling his conference “an incubator for programming,” Kearns has reached out to other conferences in an effort to share best practices and to foster collaboration on annual events like the Walk for the Poor.

As other parishes learned about SVDP and the work of its conferences, discussions began about the possibility of a forming a district council — a structure recognized by the national office of the SVDP that would further facilitate the Vincentians’ outreach to those in need.

An anonymous supporter of SVDP approached Kearns and asked how much money was needed to fund an executive director position. They determined at least \$60,000 would be needed. The donor put up \$10,000, and then COVID hit.

In early 2021, the donor asked Kearns about the job, and told him he would work to fund it under one condition: “It has to be you.”

“This man told me, ‘If I get involved, I really get involved.’ He started calling friends. The second gift bumped it to over \$20,000, and before we knew it, he had raised about \$35,000,” Kearns recalled.

“Eventually we got it to \$70,000.”

Seeing God at work

The New Jersey native described his 11 years of work with United Way as “a great experience,” but he welcomed the opportunity to apply that experience to SVDP.

“It’s like starting a business. It’s a desire for what you’re selling. From a Catholic point of view, it’s people saying we need to help the poor more,” he said. “Is there a customer base? Yes. Unfortunately, it never goes away.”

Kearns’ enthusiasm for the outreach is fueled, in part, by the feedback he receives.

“Someone asked me how long it takes for us to get back to someone. We do it right. We take a phone call and within three to four days people will have their electric bill paid,” he said. “People say, ‘That’s unheard of.’ I know, but we also have amazing volunteers, so those are the things that are really, really encouraging about this work.”

He noted that it is the spirituality that drives Vincentians —

the name by which members are known.

“When I hear people talk about their spiritual life being changed by being a Vincentian, that is really encouraging,” he said. “Where we were first concerned was with people getting burned out., Wwe see the other side of this: how all this can happen, and they see God at work and see it in their own lives. And what’s great is to see people who are joining a ministry that had never been in ministry before.”

Youth, young adults are welcome

As executive director, Kearns hopes to see more conferences established in parishes in order to extend the outreach of SVDP.

“Our biggest challenge is to get through to pastors and other parish leaders. They think, ‘We’re doing that.’ You’re not. This is different. You’re helping the poor and that’s awesome, but you’re not doing this, and we’d like to help you,” he said. “We’re trying to figure out a way to get in that door just to be heard.”

One of the ways in which Kearns hopes to engage parishes is that St. Vincent de Paul is attractive to young adults.

“We’re always glad to have the usual people who step forward, but now we’re starting to get younger people to come out. I see people in their 20s joining us,” he said.

To that end, he is encouraging the establishment of “young Vincentians” conferences in parishes that work with an established SVDP conference. There is one at St. Michael the Archangel and another in development at Holy Spirit, Virginia Beach.

Kearns is also reaching out to the Catholic high schools in the diocese, already having met with administration at Blessed Sacrament Huguenot School where Holly Kearns teaches.

“How do we grow Vincentians? How do we get youth to understand what being a Vincentian is about?”

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Two-item wish list

As do most non-profits, the St. Vincent de Paul District Council in the Diocese of Richmond has a wish list — albeit a short one.

“We are hoping someone is willing to donate a small box truck,” said Dan Kearns, the council’s executive director. “It would be used by conferences throughout the diocese for picking up donations of furniture and then delivering it when there is a need among our friends.” (Vincentians refer to the people they serve as “friends,” not clients.)

The council is also in need of warehouse space in which to store the items people donate.

“Right now, there are people who want to donate items to us, but we don’t have a place to store them,” Kearns said. “If someone is willing to donate warehouse space in the Richmond area to us, we can certainly use it. It would be a blessing for our ministry.”

Editor’s note: Kearns can be reached at dkearns@svdp-rvacouncil.org.

Norfolk Knights' holiday outreach



Knights of Columbus Norfolk Council 367 distributed 42 Thanksgiving turkey baskets and 59 Christmas ham baskets as part of its holiday outreach. The USS Vicksburg (CG-69) donated 2,300 pounds of canned goods for the baskets and other charities. Packing the items, from left, are Grand Knight Ed Nettleton, Patricia Brennan, Past Grand Knight Bob Place (sitting), Kent Rhodes and Bob Stilson. (Submitted photo)

Immigrant helps Church agency welcome refugees

SAM LUCERO
Catholic News Service

ALLOUEZ, Wis. — Sayed Wardak, 32, spent five years as a translator for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan. In 2016, after nearly a year of hiding from the Taliban and in fear for his life, Wardak and his wife, Sairah, immigrated to the United States.

Knowing firsthand the perils of life in Afghanistan, and the challenges of resettling in a new country, Wardak now assists newly arrived Afghan refugees as an employee of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Green Bay.

Wardak serves part time as an interpreter. He helps refugees who speak Dari, the most widely spoken language in Afghanistan and translates Dari into English for other Catholic Charities staff members.

“I take people to the doctor, show them how to find a grocery store, help get their driving license, find jobs and legal documentation,” he told The Compass, newspaper of the Diocese of Green Bay.

When Wardak arrived in the U.S., he had limited help in making the transition into American society. Today, his work making that transition easier for fellow Afghans “means a lot to me,” he said.

“I know the first stuff is hard when you get to a new country,” he explained. “You don’t know the culture, you don’t know the people, you don’t know the grocery store. That was hard for me to figure out for myself. Now I know ... and that’s why I want to pass it on.”

Born and raised in Afghanistan’s Baghlan province, Wardak attended the Afghan Technical Vocational Institute in Kabul to learn English. He graduated in 2011 and was hired as an interpreter for the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division, serving in the Kandahar province.

His work with the U.S. military

led to death threats from the Taliban.

“They wrote letters and they gave me a phone call when I was in the American base. They called and said, ‘If you don’t quit your job, you will be hurt,’” he said, of the Taliban members. “I said, ‘Even if I quit, they are not going to leave me alone.’ That’s what’s happening right now in Afghanistan. People are not in the Army anymore, but they are still individually finding them and killing them.”

Wardak said that’s why he went into hiding.

“I was at the Army base for three years,” he said. “I was going out, but I was far away from my hometown. Every six months, I had 15 days vacation, but I was not taking it.”

He and his wife, who married in 2014, were granted special immigration visas. They paid for their flight to the U.S. and began a new life in Green Bay, living for about a month with a cousin who now lives in Chicago.

Catholic Charities was one of the first places Wardak turned to for assistance.

“When I came here to the United States, I found out about Catholic Charities from one of my friends living in a different state. He said, ‘You go to this place, they will help you out,’” he said.

To help get settled, each refugee receives money, provided by the Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, for rent, food and items not covered by donations, said Tara DeGrave, Catholic Charities associate director.

When Afghan refugees began arriving in Green Bay following the U.S. military’s withdrawal from Afghanistan in August, Catholic Charities contacted Wardak. He worked first as a volunteer before

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Sayed Wardak, a former interpreter for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan, meets with Afghan refugees at the Diocese of Green Bay central offices in Allouez, Wis. Wardak was hired as an interpreter by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Green Bay to assist newly arrived Afghan refugees. (CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass)

Even in difficult year, there was much to celebrate

JANNA REYNOLDS
The Catholic Virginian

Although 2021 was a difficult year due in large part to the ongoing pandemic, the Diocese of Richmond had many moments of grace to celebrate.

One of the greatest blessings that has endured is the generosity of the faithful. During #iGiveCatholic, the Diocese of Richmond placed fifth among 42 participating dioceses and archdioceses in the United States. The Annual Diocesan Appeal had its first in-pew weekend during Feb. 20-21. The 2021 appeal saw a record number of donors surpass the \$3.749 million goal – the highest ever set. Ultimately, over \$4.5 million was raised.

End of bicentennial year

The bicentennial year was officially concluded during the weekend of Jan. 16-17. Parishes across the diocese recognized this event in their weekend Masses. At 9 a.m. Mass on Jan. 31, Bishop Knestout blessed three plaques that commemorate the regional Masses that were celebrated in each of the diocese's vicariates. A statue of St. Vincent de Paul was installed in front of the Pastoral Center and blessed and dedicated by the bishop on Jan. 12.

Serving the faithful

Two Pastoral Center offices were restructured to better serve the needs of the faithful. Effective Jan. 26, the Office for Evangelization was restructured to support youth, young adult and campus ministries, and the newly restructured ministries of marriage and family life. A new stand-alone Office of Social Ministries and Respect Life was established. The Office of Christian Formation was restructured to include Hispanic Christian Formation. The Office of Christian Formation also launched a small groups resources webpage called "Where Two or Three are Gathered," and on Sept. 18 held its first Heralds of Faith event for catechists at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke.

The Office of Safe Environment hosted a livestreamed Rosary for the Protection of Children and Families at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on April 14.

The office also announced updates to the Safe Environment Regulations on Oct. 25 to strengthen the protection of children, young adults and the vulnerable.

Bishop Knestout celebrated Masses for Hope and Healing at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, on Sept. 17 and at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Norfolk, on Nov. 10. The third Mass for Hope and Healing will be celebrated on Feb. 15, 2022, at St. Thomas Aquinas, Charlottesville.

Ethnic diversity

The Diocese of Richmond participated in several endeavors to celebrate people of different ethnic backgrounds.

A special Mass was held at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on April 24 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Christianization of the Philippines. Bishop Knestout presided at the livestreamed event.

During Black History Month, the diocese cosponsored "Sharing Our Story: An Enduring Faith" with the Tolton Spirituality

Center in Chicago and several other dioceses. Deacon Charles Williams, director of the diocesan Office for Black Catholics, gave the opening and welcome on Feb. 5.

Bishop Knestout participated in the USCCB's Journeying Together initiative, a series of monthly online dialogue sessions in which bishops answered questions from the faithful. As a member of the USCCB's Subcommittee on African American Affairs, Bishop Knestout participated in the session that focused on the African American family.

The diocesan Office for Black Catholics held "Our Church, Our Story," a conference centered on the importance of Black representation and inclusivity in the Church during the weekend of Nov 5-7. The conference included sessions about increasing Black representation, youth empowerment, racism in the Catholic Church, and the Catholic experience in Africa. More than

St. Gerard, Roanoke, celebrated its 75th anniversary on Oct. 16. St. Gerard is the only Black Catholic parish in southwest Virginia.

On April 17, Bishop Knestout blessed the new parish center at St. Therese, Farmville, which had been under construction since 2017.

St. John the Evangelist, Waynesboro, was dedicated on July 4. The construction of the church building had been ongoing since 2014. Parishioners said that the Holy Spirit was present in the \$12.5 million project.

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, West Point, raised \$386,000 in a capital campaign called "Our Hope, Our Home, Our Lady" to repair and preserve the parish.

The Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Norfolk, was rededicated on Sept. 26. Nearly 400 people attended the Mass during which Bishop Knestout rededicated the sanctuary and blessed the altar.



Bishop Barry C. Knestout and Father Thomas B. Lawrence III distribute Communion at the Mass during which the latter was ordained a priest, Saturday, June 5, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond. (Photo/Mark Gormus)

100 people attended in person and virtually.

Ordinations

Dillon Bruce was ordained a transitional deacon on May 22. Mass attendance at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was by reservation only due COVID-19.

Thomas B. Lawrence III was ordained a priest for the diocese on June 5 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. He celebrated his first Mass the following day at St. Bridget, Richmond. He was assigned to serve at St. Joseph, Hampton, and St. Mary Star of the Sea, Fort Monroe.

Fifteen men were ordained to the permanent diaconate at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on Sept. 25. More than 700 people were in attendance, including 36 priests and 48 deacons.

Parishes

Parishes had an exciting year with anniversaries, the construction of new buildings and repairs on existing structures.

On Nov. 30, St. Andrew, Roanoke, was re-dedicated by Bishop Knestout. The church had undergone a seven-year restoration project that cost \$7.7 million, which was all paid for by donations from parishioners and others in the area.

Catholic schools

Diocese of Richmond Catholic schools had many successes to celebrate in 2021.

On Jan. 17, St. Joseph School, Petersburg, the oldest continually operating school in the diocese, marked its 145th anniversary. Students of St. Joseph School were highlighted by Channel 12 News for their "Acts of Kindness" series on March 24.

On Feb. 24, a team of middle school STREAM students at St. Gregory the Great Catholic School, Virginia Beach, were named the winners of a contest sponsored by VDOT on Feb. 24. The contest sought names for the Tunnel Boring Machine that will be used in the HRBT expansion project. The winners, who proposed

Coercion destroys free will, ethical consent

GUEST COMMENTARY

DR. JOHN W. SEEDS

The Commonwealth of Virginia Legal Code requires informed consent for medical treatment. Ethical informed consent requires free will. Coercion by whatever means destroys free will so ethical informed consent is impossible.

Consent may be coerced by administrative mandate such as mandated vaccination for COVID-19 for state workers, mandates by private business that force employees to be vaccinated or lose his or her job, or travel or entry mandates that force a traveler to be vaccinated to fly or travel to a given destination. These mandates all constitute coercion that eliminates free will and destroys ethical consent.

Government might make such mandates legal, but government cannot make them ethical. The justification for such mandates generally rests on the goal of promoting the common good. However, the evidence for benefit and the evidence of harm if the mandate is not imposed must be considered.

In the case of COVID injections, the evidence for good is poor. Data are incomplete as the injections have not been subject to long-term safety testing, and the short-term

results show high rates of breakthrough infection after injection and rapid degradation of measured immunity.

The evidence for harm is evident with thousands of deaths in the U.S. within 72 hours of injection reported on the CDC's own website and tens of thousands of adverse reactions. Published analysis of Medicare and Veterans Administration data show many more deaths.

There is no information yet on long-term risks, as these injections have not yet completed long-term safety testing. The sacrifice of the citizen's right to free will is not justified.

Another potential coercion of free will and consent is seen with assisted suicide. Severe pain or suffering with terminal illness or treatment with mind-altering pain relief drugs destroy free will and therefore ethical consent. Again, government might make assisted suicide legal, but it cannot make it ethical.

Everyone has compassion for the pain or the injury of spirit that accompanies many terminal illnesses. It is precisely this pain and suffering that prevents ethical informed consent.

Alternative powerful pain relief and spiritual support are available, and while some argue that assisted suicide allows for a "dignified death," the use of modern pain relief also can allow for a dignified death.

I have cared for patients dying with severe pain. I cared for a 36-year-old woman dying of widespread breast cancer — including bone spread that caused her constant severe pain. The medications given to her provided substantial relief.

She could not have given free informed consent for assisted suicide. Surrogate decision makers can be authorized by the patient, but these decision makers are also coerced by their witness of the patient's suffering.

Our Catholic faith teaches that it is a mortal sin to deliberately take a human life, including your own. It is an intrinsic evil. Rare circumstances where you are acting in self-defense or to save the life of another might justify a killing, but the death of the individual cannot be the primary goal.

Assisted suicide must be seen as an intrinsic evil, and the person assisting is cooperating with intrinsic evil no matter the technical process used. Assisted suicide endangers the eternal soul of at least two individuals.

Government might make it legal, but it cannot make assisted suicide ethical or moral.

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

Coming together requires meeting in unity of faith

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity" (Ps 133).

Of course, "unity" does not mean "sameness." For a bunch of people to be doing all the same things and thinking all the same thoughts strikes me as cultish and creepy. Unity requires some things to be the same, while allowing diversity in others, so that "the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it" (Vatican II, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*).

So we have things that ought to be the same and things that ought to be diverse, which begs the question: "Which things are which?"

Presumably the Ephesians had a similar question, as St. Paul sent them a short list of things that we are all united in. One body (the Church), one Spirit (the Holy Spirit), one Lord, one Faith (every doctrine the Church teaches as necessary for salvation), one baptism, one God and Father of all.

As we are called to walk together, a revital-

izing of those things that unite us seems in order. Do we submit to the authority of the Church? Do we know and believe every doctrine the Church teaches, and order our lives, actions and words accordingly?

Do we pray regularly and generously, for love of God, even when it is not pleasant or easy? Do we allow that prayer to deepen, and obey when God calls us to act or change?

Coming together does not require sameness, but it does require a common meeting place: in "the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph 4).

— Amanda Olmsted
Hampton

Pope, bishops should demand 'clean' vaccines

As a Catholic, I was initially wary of the COVID mRNA shots due to the use of aborted fetus cell lines to either produce the vaccines or test the vaccines. The Holy Father said the sin of abortion that created these cell lines was enough removed that all Catholics should have no issue with receiv-

ing the shots.

My response to that is why haven't our hierarchy demanded that the pharmaceutical companies produce clean vaccines to begin with? This is not a question of technology. The ability to produce vaccines without aborted fetus cell lines existed before the use of these lines came into vogue.

As a mother and a human being, why do we have to choose? Our pope and our bishops should demand that vaccines for all diseases as well as the shots for COVID be clean.

My other question with the COVID shots specifically is the way these shots override the natural immune response in our bodies. Unlike previous vaccines, now the spike protein is artificially produced to fight the virus while other components to a natural immune response are inhibited to a degree. This seems to override God's design for our immune system.

These current shots do not work like vaccines used to. The polio vaccine never resulted in someone still getting polio a few months later and then

passing polio onto others. The solution is now to take more shots for a virus that is 99% survivable. Who is really bene-

fitting? Who is liable for ill effects?

— Amanda Keller
Richmond

CV letters policy

The Catholic Virginian welcomes signed letters to the editor that can be considered for publication *and/or* posting on The Catholic Virginian website. Submissions should be no more than 270 words and include the writer's name, address or email, and phone number as all submissions are acknowledged. At the editor's discretion, submitter's name may be withheld from publication/posting. Letters should address topics reported in The CV or other topics relevant to Catholics. Personal attacks are not published. Letters may be edited for style, length or content. Opinions expressed by letter writers do not necessarily reflect those of The Catholic Virginian or the Diocese of Richmond.

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Murals

Continued from Page 1

“All of these paintings are originals,” said Judy Dotzel of Trinity Artisans, a family business in Mountain Top, Pennsylvania, that has the contract to restore Brasch’s work. “His portraits are beautiful; the drapery is beautiful. He would have had models come in and pose and sketch them and get the right look, the right positions. He was skilled in all areas: the water, the sky, the portraits. They’re stunning.”

Diocesan archivist Edie Jeter first saw the art about seven years ago during a tour of parishes as part of her work as vice chancellor. She started looking for experts that would assess the work that needed to be done and the estimated cost.

“Most of the people who are doing restoration like to do that in their own studios,” she said, which would mean removing canvasses nailed to plaster walls. “We’re not trained to do that. We don’t know what to be looking for. We needed someone to come in and tell us exactly what needed to be done.”

Trinity Artisans was willing to do the evaluation on-site.

Dotzel and fellow restorer Chris Norton came to Pocahontas in July, talked to parish members, and even cleaned a couple of small spots on a mural at the front of the church.

“It caught my eye because it was like a beam of light came through the roof,” Shumate recalled, “and all she did was take dirt off of it.”

Dotzel and Norton returned in October to start taking the dirt off all of the paintings.

“They love their church. They’re very protective over it, and I think they felt kind of threatened if the murals had to be taken out of the church,” Dotzel said.

“We believe they made the right choice in not doing that,” Norton added.

For two to three weeks at a time, Dotzel and Norton commute from 40 minutes away in Tazewell and climb onto scaffolds provided by Earl Thompson, a painter from nearby Princeton, West Virginia, who put a fresh coat on the church interior a few months ago.

Daubing the canvas with cotton balls dipped in any of a dozen solvents, they wipe away the coal dust, candle soot and other sediments that have collected on Brasch’s work. On a good day, they can clean about a square foot of canvas in an hour.

But cleaning isn’t all they’ve had to do.

They discovered that some artist about 40 years ago had re-painted part of one canvas, right over the original. All that paint and the underlying grime had to be removed before that



The 10 murals that adorn the ceiling and sanctuary of St. Elizabeth Church, Pocahontas, are being restored and preserved thanks to a \$26,000 grant from the Diocese of Richmond. The work is being done by Trinity Artisans and is expected to be completed in the spring of this year. (Photo/Jay Paul)

section could be touched up.

Murals in the sanctuary had been painted outside the canvas edges onto the plaster wall, which had developed cracks and other damage. The restorers had to replaster those sections and, working from photos, recreate the borders of the paintings.

One mural on the ceiling did have to be removed because the canvas had come loose in the middle, showing bubbles and cracks. Shumate said it took four people to take it down and place it on a table in the back of the church for repairs.

Overall, Dotzel said the work is going well.

She and Norton returned to Pennsylvania the week before Christmas and plan to come back in February to complete the restoration, probably by later that month or in early March. Until then, parishioners will continue to celebrate Mass in the church basement as they prepare to mark the church’s 125th anniversary.

A longtime parishioner and member of the church maintenance committee, Shumate said about 20 people show up for Mass most Sundays; sometimes they can’t help but wonder how much longer it will be until they can gaze at their prized artwork.

“At one time, Pocahontas was a booming little town,” he said.

All the immigrants from the east coast – mostly Hungarian, who came to mine Pocahontas #3 coal and who brought their faith and their families with them – are long gone. Many of the buildings in the town’s commercial district are abandoned and neglected.

“Right now, it’s dead,” he said. “And we always wonder, we hope we don’t get closed down.”

Jeter said the bishop’s signature on the restoration contract is a sign that he’s also planning and hoping to keep the church going.

“To bring these murals back with such vibrant color, it just speaks a lot to all of us that there are things in our families that we would want to do this as well,” she said. “We would want to save those things that are important to our families.”

Coming back in the middle of winter to finish the work is fine with Dotzel and Norton.

Back home “we measure snow in feet, not inches,” Norton said.

They’ve been engaged for a while, but the pandemic has delayed their wedding plans. They’ve been talking about possibly getting married at St. Elizabeth. If they do, they can probably count on a good number of guests at the reception who are grateful for the work they did to preserve the parish’s Catholic heritage.

2021

Continued from Page 5

the name “Mary” for Hampton native Mary Jackson, a mathematician and aerospace engineer at NASA, were featured in the HRBT Expansion Magazine.

In March, students at Star of the Sea School, Virginia Beach, asked family and friends to sponsor acts of kindness in a non-traditional fundraiser during Lent. The 1,506 acts of kindness helped students explore the meaning of stewardship and generated over \$24,000 for the school.

St. Vincent de Paul Virtual Academy, which offers a full-time, online learning environment for students in grades 8-12, was launched on March

11. The academy operates under the guidance of Peninsula Catholic High School in Newport News, but it is managed by the Office of Catholic Schools.

Bishop Knestout celebrated Mass at All Saints School, Richmond, on All Saints Day, Nov. 1, and blessed additional classrooms that were constructed through \$1.3 million raised by the school’s “The Future is Now” campaign and a \$1 million contribution from Marcus Weinstein and his wife, Carole, in 2019.

The St. Bridget Catholic School robotics team, “Clueless,” won the state championship on Dec. 3 and will compete in the FIRST LEGO League World Championship in Houston in April 2022.

Ministry

Continued from Page 3

he said. “It’s about spirituality, service and leadership. Young Vincentians can be middle school and high school. We have them do service projects, and we will teach them about being a leader in a non-profit, faith-based organization along with the spirituality that they’ll learn in being a Vincentian.”

Kearns hopes that Vincentian outreach will extend into the southwestern part of the diocese.

“If we can’t grow in an area, can we do what we refer to as ‘mission work’ there? That’s a new idea as far as doing one-off

projects with resources that are already in place,” he said. “It’s about how do we reach the underserved in our diocese.”

Kearns said that when he is given the opportunity to talk to people about SVPD, his message is simple.

“It’s about the spiritual growth of members who serve others. We help the poor,” he said. “How many times do Catholics hear, ‘Reach out the poor more’? Well, here we are.”

Editor’s note: Kearns can be reached at dkearns@svdp-rvacouncil.org.

Church uses different words for one sacrament



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
FATHER KENNETH DOYLE
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Q. While I know that only confession will reconcile me with God, I am confused about the terminology used in my parish. (We are a rural parish in Virginia and have very few opportunities for confession, but there is always the chance to make a private appointment for confession.)

Any scheduled confessions are announced as reconciliation, and I am not clear as to what to expect when I go. Sometimes there is a reconciliation service followed by confessions; other times there are only confessions.

Does the Church no longer recognize a difference between the reconciliation service (which was to prepare us for confession) and the sacrament of confession (which is private). In other words, is there still a sacrament of confession or is it now called the sacrament of reconciliation? (Courtland)

A. Generally, the sacrament of penance can be called confession or reconciliation, and the three terms are used interchangeably. In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Nos. 1423-24) lists several names by which the same sacrament can be designated.

These include: the sacrament of conversion, the sacrament of penance, the sacrament of confession, the sacrament of forgiveness and the sacrament of reconciliation.

The catechism notes that “the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament” (No. 1424).

Sometimes parishes offer reconciliation services that include prayers and scriptural readings on forgiveness, as well as a homily on the same topic. It would be good for a local church to mention in advance what the format will be for the sacrament — in particular so that parishioners can know how much time to allow.

Q. When I was an evangelical, the standard take on Mary’s virginity was that she remained a virgin until after the birth of Jesus, but afterward went on to have normal marital relations with Joseph, which produced up to six more children.

These ideas were based on passages like Matthew 1:25 (“He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus”) and Matthew 13:55 (“Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us?”).

Now, as a Catholic, I am told that Joseph was significantly older than Mary, was a widower with adult children from his first marriage and that Jesus’ “brothers and sisters” were more like stepbrothers and stepsisters.

Could not Mary still have attained “Queen of Heaven and Earth” status without being a perpetual virgin? (Indiana)

A. As to your specific question, whether Mary could be thought of as queen of heaven and earth without having been a perpetual virgin, the answer, of course, is yes. But that is not the issue here.

The teaching of Mary’s perpetual virginity is one of the longest defined dogmas of the Church. It was taught by the earliest Church fathers, including Tertullian, St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and it was officially declared a dogma at the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople in 553.

As to the scriptural passages to which you refer, I would make two points. First, the footnote in the New American Bible explains Matthew 1:25: “The Greek word translated ‘until’ does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus’ birth, nor does it exclude it.”

As to your other scriptural reference, the words here in their original language do not mean simply biological brothers or sisters but could apply to other relatives such as stepbrothers or stepsisters or cousins.

There is one tradition that says that Joseph was a widower who married the Virgin Mary later in life after already having a family with his first wife. One is free to believe that, but this is why I would have my doubts. From the cross, Jesus entrusted Mary’s care to the apostle John.

If Jesus had had surviving siblings, that would most likely not have happened. Normal Jewish practice

would have Jesus’ siblings at the cross, and the eldest surviving son would be entrusted with the care of his mother.

Q. I am an 88-year-old Korean War veteran with a question that is not earth-shattering but one that bothers me almost every day. I talk and pray to God, to Jesus and to the Blessed Virgin Mary out loud — every morning and at night before I go to bed. (I live alone.)

But there are also times when I pray silently — just in my head — especially if I wake up during the night. So what I need to know is whether those prayers — the silent ones — are heard. (Georgia)

A. Please relax and be at peace. The Lord (and Mary, too) hears all our prayers, including the silent ones. In fact, the Bible speaks directly to that. The Letter to the Hebrews says: “The word of God is living and effective ... penetrating even between soul and spirit ... able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart” (4:12).

Even when we are burdened and find prayer difficult, the Lord is there to help us. Paul’s Letter to the Romans says that the Spirit “comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (8:26).

So God can hear our thoughts just as easily as he can hear our words. This may serve as a helpful reminder; even our thoughts should be kind and prayerful, too.

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



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- Funeral and burial options, including “green burial”
- Parish service needs
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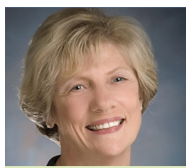
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God's grace, human effort can change hearts



IN LIGHT OF FAITH
BARBARA HUGHES

When comparing the history of the United States of America with most countries, our nation has a relatively short timeline. Although it is regarded as a model for democracy, segments of Americans have struggled throughout the years for rights that should not be taken for granted under the Constitution, which is prefaced by the Preamble that states:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness."

It seems to me that the reason equality has not been realized by all is that throughout our history, the tendency to misconstrue what constitutes a person has kept us from realizing what should be self-evident.

For centuries, people whose skin color was and is not white have been perceived as less than human. When it came to voting rights, both women and Blacks were considered intellectually inferior to their white male counterparts, who denied for centuries their voice in a government that boasted it is "of the people, by the people and for the people."

Over time, many such erroneous perceptions were corrected by law — though not fully embraced in practice — even as another distur-

tion of what constitutes equal rights for all was promulgated when abortion was legalized. With a solitary verdict, justices of the Supreme Court decided that the rights of an infant in utero (referred to as a fetus to avoid any hint of its humanity) were inconsequential compared to the will of the woman in whose body it was conceived.

With protestors on both sides of the abortion issue, decisions once again are pending before the Supreme Court. Although the decision of the justices will not overturn *Roe v. Wade*, favorable rulings toward the laws in Texas and Mississippi will make abortions less available, thereby lessening the number of infant lives lost in abortion clinics.

The current ruling regarding the law in Texas will not be decided until April, but given the resistance on the side of abortion advocates, I suspect that if *Roe v. Wade* is eventually overturned, pro-abortion activists will not go quietly into the night.

We only have to look at current racial inequality, the rise of white supremacy and neo-Nazism, and efforts to disenfranchise voters who are on the margins of society to understand that changing hearts is far more difficult than changing laws.

While a segment of the population may celebrate the change of laws that aim to end discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, religion or viability before birth, there will be an opposite and seemingly equal number of people who will take to the streets protesting such laws. This is not meant to suggest that legal recourse in righting such wrongs is futile or not to be pursued, but it should remind us of the limitations that human effort alone can affect.

When it comes to changing hearts, human

effort can bring about comprehensive and inclusive change only through the power of God's grace. Therefore, we need both. The partnership instituted by God with humanity is evidenced throughout Scripture.

Although God doesn't need our help, the fact that he has given us free will should convince any believer that we image our Creator best when our will is united with the will of God. We are able to do this only when we unite our works with his grace through prayer and, yes, through fasting.

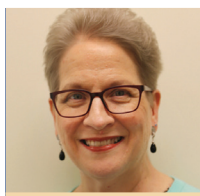
Before Jesus began his public ministry, he entered the desert to spend time in fasting and prayer. When the apostles were unable to cast out demons in a man's son, Jesus reminded them that some demons can only be cast out through prayer.

Another important leverage is fasting. One of the people who heads up the "Right to Life" effort in our parish suggested that along with prayer, we commit to a simple fast every Monday from now until the Supreme Court hands down its decision. He explained that a simple fast means abstaining from alcohol and dessert; we could also abstain from meat. It's really a very small sacrifice, and yet when our self-discipline is united with and done in communion with Jesus on the cross, the effects can be monumental.

We may never know how our prayers and sacrifices affect the decision of those considering abortions, but if we believe in the power of the cross, then we can be confident that prayer and fasting in union with the Body of Christ can change hearts and minds, one decision and one miracle at a time.

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

Outpouring of Spirit in generosity benefits all



BELIEVE AS YOU PRAY
MELANIE CODDINGTON

Though the Christmas season has ended, we hear its echo on this Sunday. Isaiah 62:1-5 gets a reprise, having recently appeared in the Christmas vigil lineup; and Psalm 96, of Christmas mid-night fame, returns with a new refrain and different selection of verses.

As we now enter Ordinary Time, we keep the wonder of Incarnation alive in our hearts.

Marriage imagery in the Isaiah reading makes it a good match for John 2:1-11 — the wedding at Cana. The latter was once featured among the readings for Epiphany, describing as it does a clear manifestation of divine glory. One can imagine this story of wine — and grace — in abundance simply brimming over into Ordinary Time.

Isaiah offers a word of promise sometime after Cyrus of Persia's release of the exiles as the restoration of Jerusalem gets underway. Discouraged by the endless heaps of rubble, and disappointed in the slow progress of rebuilding, the people hang on the prophet's hopeful words.

He reminds them of God's regard, employ-

ing the glorious images of a royal wedding. Calling their beloved city "glorious crown" and "royal diadem" held by God, the prophet speaks of marriage between God and God's people in which the old designations of "forsaken" and "desolate" give way to new names reflecting God's delight and desire for intimacy.

How fitting that this Sunday's psalm calls forth a "new song" from our people in response to this reversal of fortune! How fitting that the Gospel reading tells of stone water jars, prescribed for ceremonial washings, now filled to overflowing with the wine of the Messiah's wedding feast! Even St. Paul chimes in with his take on the outpouring of the Spirit, in generosity and diversity, amid the community, for the benefit of all.

The first line of today's Gospel, "There was a wedding at Cana, and the mother of Jesus was there," sets the scene simply yet evokes a vivid picture. Of course, she's there! One of the GO TO people at this family event, she bears or shares responsibility for hospitality, paying attention to the guests, the food and, yes, the wine.

In her culture, hospitality is more than a virtue; it's a necessity for survival and a deep-rooted cultural obsession. Before the bridegroom or the head waiter become aware of it, Mary knows: They have no wine. The last drop has been poured, and it's only a matter of time before the celebration grinds to a halt and the disgrace of meager hospitality falls

upon her family.

In this emergency, Mary does the unthinkable. She crosses the cultural boundary between Jewish women and their grown-up sons and calls upon Jesus for help in the "domestic sphere." He knows well the social implications of her statement, "They have no wine," yet he resists her prodding.

Having left her world behind at puberty, he has every cultural right to say, "Woman, how does your concern affect me?" The tag line, "My hour has not yet come," has an ominous ring to it, foreshadowing the "hour" of his passion and death.

Singularly focused on the situation at hand, Mary ignores his protest and instructs the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." In prompting her son to handle a crisis, she motivates the miracle that launches his ministry.

Jesus takes charge and tells the servants what to do: "Fill the jars with water... draw some out and take it to the head waiter." An air of surprise sweeps through the gathering, not because of the miracle (only the servants and disciples witness that), but because the new wine is so delicious, and there's so much of it!

The head waiter, eager to avoid responsibility for a social blunder, gives the bridegroom "credit" for this surprise — for holding back the best wine until now.

Thus, Jesus sets the stage for his mission with this glorious sign of God's overflowing grace.

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

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 62:1-5;

Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10;

1 Cor 12:4-11;

Jn 2:1-11

OPPORTUNITIES

The Diocese of Richmond is seeking an associate director, Office of Social Ministries and Respect Life. The associate director provides a wide range of coordination support relating to social ministries, Respect Life, pro-life initiatives and prison ministry.

The associate director works in unison with the office director to set and effectively communicate a comprehensive vision for social ministries and Respect Life across the diocese.

Provides training for parish staffs and ministry leaders and fosters collaboration through the vicariates and deaneries.

Master's degree in theology, pastoral ministry or a related field is preferred. Minimum of three years of professional experience in ministry is required, preferably in an area of Catholic Social Teaching in a parish setting. Knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching tenets and ability to develop and implement programs to support various communities is required.

Must demonstrate sensitivity to the service population's cultural and socioeconomic characteristics, decision-making, problem-solving skills, the ability to work in a fast-paced, changing environment and meet deadlines. Interpersonal skills in communication, collaboration, group process, and the ability to maintain confidentiality are required. Must be a practicing Catholic in good standing with an understanding of Catholic Church teaching and Church structure.

Regular office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday through Friday). Occasional evening and/or weekend work is required in the Pastoral Center or off-site at an event as needed. Interested candidates should send a cover letter, résumé and completed diocesan application (available on the diocesan website) to Kelly Shumate, HR Coordinator, at jobs@richmond-diocese.org.

Cluster Parishes of Portsmouth and Chesapeake are looking for an energetic person to assume the full-time position of coordinator of religious education as well as youth ministries for a well-established and active program for children, junior high school and high school students. Applicant must be a practicing Catholic and possess a love for and knowledge of the Catholic faith, as well as a strong commitment to the faith development of children and young people. Professional work ethic and excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, are essential. Bachelor's degree in related field preferable. Children and/or youth ministry programming experience desired.

Primary responsibilities: Organize sacrament preparation for first reconciliation, first Eucharist and confirmation. Facilitate catechists in the instruction of the Catholic faith for

children and youth programs. Organize and manage the annual Vacation Bible School. Maintain the integrity and files for the Safe Environment Program. Coordination with diocese, pastor and other staff members regularly. Work variable hours, including weekends, nights and holidays, to meet the needs of the children and youth programs.

If you are interested and have further questions, please contact Father Tony Morris at pastor@clusterparishes.com or call 757-484-7335.

Star of the Sea Parish, Virginia Beach, is seeking a full time (36 hours/week) music coordinator to begin Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022. The music coordinator will collaborate with the pastor and other staff members in implementing and providing music for all parish liturgies and other parish celebrations.

Responsibilities: The music coordinator must work well with others in order to plan, evaluate and set objectives, with the specific focus on music. They must serve as a professional resource to the staff and parish in the area of music. In addition, they will:

- recruit and schedule musicians for all Sunday and other major liturgical celebrations.
- plan and organize appropriate music for Sunday and seasonal liturgical celebrations with the pastor and those involved with the liturgy.
- recruit, train and support the instrumentalists, choir members and cantors, while scheduling and holding rehearsals.
- provide assistance for parishioners needing music for weddings and funerals. They will develop and maintain a list of instrumentalists, organists and cantors available to assist with those liturgies.
- help prepare the budget, work within it and monitor the authorized expenses to ensure keeping in line with it.
- maintain a level of knowledge and skills required for the ministry through music lessons, reading and attending workshops and conventions. They also participate in regional, diocesan and national professional organizations, as approved and appropriate.
- maintain office hours Tuesday through Friday. Their hours include times for weekend Masses, funerals, weddings, sacramental celebrations, and for choir, cantor and instrumental practices.

Qualifications: Must be a Roman Catholic participating in regular worship, a master's degree in music is preferred or equivalent education and experience, and a developed skill in at least one musical instrument. Must demonstrate good organizational skills and volunteer leadership skills, and have a knowledge of computer skills especially with music software. Contact Father Steve DeLeon at frsteve@staroftheseaparish.com to apply.

SHORTTAKES

You are invited to "The Rehearsal," a worship and praise fellowship to include all Christian denominations on the Peninsula. Musicians, singers, prayer warriors and poets are welcome.

Come and bring instruments and voices of all kinds. Feel free to bring snacks and non-alcoholic beverages to share with others. Second Saturday of every month, Feb. 12, 12:30-3 p.m., St. Olaf Catholic Church, 104 Norge Lane, Williamsburg, and fourth Sunday of every month, beginning Jan. 23, 5-7 p.m., St. Clare of Assisi Retreat Center, 620 Buckroe Ave., Hampton.

For more information email: contact@awakeningthedomesticchurch.com

All are welcome to join **Deacon Charles Williams of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart** on a **pilgrimage to the Holy Land** from May 2-11, 2022, for the most deeply moving spiritual experience of your lifetime. A ten-day tour for \$3,599 including airfare, first class

hotels, tours, breakfast and dinner, Mass every day in Holy Places and much more.

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

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church, in the Highland Park area of Richmond, will celebrate its centennial in 2023. Bishop Knestout will celebrate Mass on Nov. 20, 2022, and kick off the celebration, which will continue through Nov. 19, 2023. In between, you will have plenty of opportunities to share the history of the parish and recognize the people involved over the past century. If your family has ties to St. Elizabeth Parish, St. Elizabeth Catholic School, St Joseph Parish and Van De Vyver School, then you are who we are celebrating. Join us! Register online at https://bit.ly/STECC_Bulletin or contact the parish office by emailing Mary Rose Purcell at mpurcell@stelizcc.org or by calling 804-329-4599. If no one answers, leave a message with your information.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for January 16, 2022

John 2:1-11

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C: The wedding wine of Cana. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

| | | |
|-----------|---------------|------------|
| WEDDING | CANA | MOTHER |
| JESUS | DISCIPLES | WOMAN |
| CONCERN | MY HOUR | WHATEVER |
| SIX | STONE | WATER JARS |
| THIRTY | FILL THE JARS | FILLED |
| THE BRIM | DRAW | BRIDEGROOM |
| GOOD WINE | REVEALED | GLORY |

WATER JARS

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

Listo el nuevo rito litúrgico para instituir a catequistas

Publicado el texto del ritual que entrará en vigor a partir del 1 de enero de 2022. Para el Prefecto del Culto Divino es “una nueva oportunidad para llegar a una visión orgánica de las distintas realidades ministeriales”. En una carta adjunta aclara la naturaleza del ministerio “que corresponde a los laicos” y los requisitos para llevarlo a cabo.

SALVATORE CERNUZIO - CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

“Accipe hoc fidei nostræ signum, cāthedram veritātis et caritātis Christi, eúmque vita, móribus et verbo annúntia”

(Recibe este signo de nuestra fe, cátedra de la verdad y del amor de Cristo, y proclámalo con tu vida, tus comportamientos y con la palabra).

A partir del 1 de enero de 2022, ésta será una de las fórmulas latinas con las que un hombre o una mujer - laicos de profunda fe y madurez humana y con la debida formación bíblica y pastoral- serán instituidos como catequistas por su Obispo durante una celebración litúrgica. Tras instituir formalmente el ministerio del catequista con el Motu Proprio Antiquum ministerium del pasado 10 de mayo, el Papa aprobó y publicó una Editio typica que introduce un específico Rito de Institución de los Catequistas. Se trata de un texto básico que luego será traducido y adaptado por las distintas Conferencias Episcopales del mundo.

El rito podrá realizarse durante una misa o una celebración de la Palabra de Dios y tendrá un esquema preciso: exhortación, invitación a la oración, texto de bendición y entrega del crucifijo.

Monseñor Arthur Roche, Prefecto de la Congregación para el Culto Divino y la Disciplina de los Sacramentos, en una carta que acompaña la publicación de la Editio typica, dirigida a los presidentes de las Conferencias Episcopales, propone algunas notas sobre el ministerio del catequista. En primer lugar, se aclara la naturaleza



istock

de este ministerio, como un “servicio estable prestado a la Iglesia local” y, sobre todo, como un “ministerio laical que tiene como fundamento la condición común de ser bautizados”, por tanto, “esencialmente distinto” del ministerio ordenado. “En virtud del Bautismo”, los catequistas están llamados a ser “corresponsables en la Iglesia local para el anuncio y la transmisión de la fe, desempeñando esta función en colaboración con los ministros ordenados y bajo su guía”.

“En la gran variedad de formas - dice Roche - se pueden distinguir dos tipologías principales”: los catequistas con la tarea específica de la catequesis, y otros que participan en las diferentes formas de apostolado, como dirigir la oración de la comunidad; asistir a los enfermos; celebrar funerales; formar a otros catequistas; coordinar iniciativas pastorales; ayudar a los pobres.

La carta del Prefecto especifica que, dado que este ministerio tiene “un fuerte valor vocacional que requiere el debido discernimiento por parte del Obispo”, no se debe instituir a todos los que son llamados “catequistas” o que realizan un servicio de colaboración pastoral. En particular, no deben ser instituidos: los candidatos al diacona-

do y al sacerdocio; los religiosos y religiosas, independientemente de que pertenezcan a Institutos cuyo carisma sea la catequesis; los profesores de religión en las escuelas y los que prestan un servicio dirigido exclusivamente a los miembros de un movimiento eclesial, a quienes esta “valiosa” función es confiada por los responsables de cada movimiento eclesial y no por el Obispo.

En cuanto a los acompañantes de la iniciación de niños y adultos, tampoco tienen que ser necesariamente instituidos en el ministerio específico, sino que deben recibir al comienzo de cada año catequético “un mandato eclesial público con el cual se les confía esta función indispensable”.

La carta específica que es tarea de cada Conferencia Episcopal aclarar el perfil, el papel y las formas más coherentes para el ejercicio del ministerio de los Catequistas. El Derecho Canónico prevé la posibilidad de confiar a un laico “una participación en el ejercicio de la pastoral en una parroquia”, pero es necesario “formar a la comunidad para que no vea en el catequista un sustituto” del sacerdote o del diácono, sino un fiel laico que colabora con los ministros ordenados “para que su atención pastoral llegue a todos”.

Desde el escritorio de Daniel Villar:

¡Feliz año nuevo hermanos y hermanas en la fe! En nombre de la Oficina de Ministerios Étnicos, le deseamos un 2022 lleno de bendiciones, amistad, y amor de familia. Este año nuevo nos da la oportunidad de renovarnos en espíritu y verdad como parte de las múltiples ocasiones en que nos da Dios para regresar a Él, estar con Él, y hacer su voluntad en Cristo según la inspiración del Espíritu Santo.

Estas ocasiones se presentarán de muchas formas, con muchas personas, y en muchos lugares, pero siempre con la meta de la sinodalidad. En el momento de reflexión para el inicio



del proceso sinodal, el papa Francisco nos pide que “Vivamos este Sínodo en el espíritu de la oración que Jesús elevó al Padre con vehemencia por los suyos: «Que todos sean uno» (Jn 17,21). Estamos llamados a la unidad, a la comunión, a la fraternidad que nace de sentirnos abrazados por el amor divino, que es único. Todos, sin distinciones, y en particular nosotros Pastores, como escribía san Cipriano: «Debemos mantener y defender firmemente esta unidad, sobre todo los obispos, que somos los que presidimos en la Iglesia, a fin de probar que el mismo episcopado es también uno e

indiviso» (De Ecclesiae catholicae unitate, 5). Por eso, caminamos juntos en el único Pueblo de Dios, para hacer experiencia de una Iglesia que recibe y vive el don de la unidad, y que se abre a la voz del Espíritu.”

¡Oremos para que el Sínodo nos ayude a ser una Iglesia más unida cada día!

¡Que Dios le bendiga!
Ad Jesum Per Mariam,
Daniel Villar

Director Interino
Oficina de Ministerios Étnicos

Wearing mask at Mass a 'sacrifice pleasing to God'

ROME (CNS) — Wearing a high-filtering mask over one's nose and mouth at Mass "is a small sacrifice we can bring to the altar as an offering pleasing to God for the good of all his children," said Father Roberto Colombo, a geneticist and member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Father Colombo, a member of the Italian government's National Bioethics Committee, said wearing a mask at church is "a sign of pastoral charity" and a measure necessary for keeping churches open.

Writing Jan. 2 in *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper of the Italian bishops' conference, Father Colombo said the rules for public liturgies worked out

by the government and Church authorities in May 2020 — after almost two months with no public celebrations of Mass — accomplished the goal of safeguarding people's health without placing undue burdens on parishes or individuals.

The priest said the situation also was helped by the fact that, according to government statistics Jan. 3, more than 89% of Italians over the age of 12 had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and close to 86% of the population was fully vaccinated.

The high vaccination rate, Father Colombo said, is especially important because it means that

"the elderly and people who are frailer also can participate in community celebrations safely" since the vaccines "reduce the probability of contracting COVID-19 in its most serious symptomatic forms."

"In addition to a civic sense of responsibility for the common good, in our Christian communities there is also pastoral charity, which asks everyone — ministers and faithful — to be particularly attentive in wearing a mask correctly," he said. "Of course, it can be uncomfortable, especially for the elderly, but it is a small sacrifice that we can bring to the altar as an offering pleasing to God for the good of all his children."

Mercy

Continued from Page 1

institutions, which help to meet the needs of those unable to obtain medical treatment due to poverty or social exclusion.

"At a time when the culture of waste is widespread and life is not always acknowledged as worthy of being welcomed and lived, these structures, like 'houses of mercy,' can be exemplary in protecting and caring for all life, even the most fragile, from its beginning until its natural end," he said.

Pope Francis said pastoral ministry in health care provides an "indispensable service" and that all Christians are called to offer "God's closeness" to the sick and the suffering.

"I would like to remind everyone that closeness to the sick and their pastoral care is not only the task of certain specifically designated ministers; visiting the sick is an invitation that Christ addresses to all his disciples," the pope said.

"How many sick and elderly people are living at home and waiting for a visit! The ministry of consolation is a task for every baptized person, mindful of the word of Jesus; 'I was sick, and you visited me,'" he said.

Immigrant

Continued from Page 4

being hired.

Karmen Lemke, Catholic Charities director, said having Wardak as an interpreter has been invaluable.

"We are grateful to be working with Sayed, who, for many years, was a client of our refugee program," she said. "Sayed's story is one that we wish to emulate for our newest arrivals — a story of challenges, but now his success in our community."

The agency has welcomed 96 Afghan refugees to Green Bay. They include single men, couples and many large families. About 30 more are ex-

pected by mid-January, Lemke said.

Wardak said adjusting to a new culture and a new home was difficult, but he is happy to enjoy a new life without fear of persecution. Since his arrival, he and Sairah have welcomed two sons, ages 2 and 15 months, and recently purchased a home. He works full time at a local cheese factory. On Dec. 21, Wardak became a U.S. citizen. His wife gained her citizenship in October.

"I am so happy I am part of America right now," he said. "I can vote, I can select my own president. ... I am safe." He said he can also drive late at night without being afraid, but he still wor-

ries about his siblings in Afghanistan.

Wardak has two sisters and two brothers living in Afghanistan. "I don't know how to figure some way out to get them to the United States," he said. "I don't know what to do."

Wardak knows that the influx of Afghan refugees may raise questions for some people, but he encouraged them to open and accepting.

"The new arrivals, refugees from Afghanistan, they are all nice people," he said. "They've been through a lot of stuff. The culture and everything is different here. I just tell the people who are reading the news to be understanding."

SAVE THE DATE | JANUARY 27, 2022

Saint Francis Home Annual Benefit Dinner

THE COMMONWEALTH CLUB

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT CHRISTY HEINEN:
CHEINEN@SAINTFRANCISHOME.ORG | 804.237.5602

For 45 years, an Annual Benefit Dinner was held to raise funds to support the care of the elderly residents of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Since the Little Sisters' departure from Richmond, Saint Francis Home is the only remaining faith-based assisted living community in the area dedicated to exclusively serving older adults of limited means. Past attendees of this annual event encouraged Saint Francis Home to continue this longstanding Richmond tradition that provides support for Richmond's low-income elderly. We hope we can count on your support to make this year's event a success!

