



The Catholic Virginian

Serving the People of the Diocese of Richmond for 90 years

Vol. 98, No. 9

www.catholicvirginian.org

March 6, 2023

‘The Catholic Church is alive and well’

Diocese prepares to welcome nearly 500 ‘elect’ into the Church

KAREN ADAMS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

The spirit of joy inside Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH), Salem, warmed the hearts and faces of 75 area catechumens during the Rite of Election on Saturday, Feb. 25, as part of their journey toward initiation into the Church this Easter.

The pews were crowded with families, godparents, friends, RCIA instructors and pastors of the adults and children who represented 16 parishes across the Western Vicariate. Many of them drove hours through the icy winter rain to attend the celebratory rite, at which Bishop Barry C. Knestout welcomed the catechumens and “elected” them to be part of the Church. He also signed each parish’s Book of the Elect, in which the catechumens had written their names.

“The Holy Spirit calls and speaks to us in our hearts; our hearts were made for God,” said the bishop in his homily, addressing the catechumens. “So we may respond to God with generosity and joy.”

The Western Vicariate Rite of Election in Salem was one of three across the diocese that weekend. The Central Vicariate’s gathering was held that afternoon at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, and the Eastern Vicariate’s event was held at St. Pius X, Norfolk, the next day. All were offered in Spanish and English. In all, 495 catechumens from 73 parishes were recognized and blessed in the diocese over the weekend, and most were able to attend the rites. All the catechumens became the elect regardless of attendance.

Catechumens are those who are entering the Catholic Church and have not been baptized in another faith tradition. The Rite of Election is one of the important final steps before the elect receive their sacraments of initiation — baptism, Eucharist, and confirmation — during the Easter Vigil.

‘Something to be proud of’

Kyah Yeoman, 19, of Salem was drawn to the Catholic Church after attending the Latter Day Saints Church (Mormons) for several years. Having some Catholic relatives meant the faith was familiar to him, said the Radford University freshman. He was further influenced by his best friend, Nick Louvet, 18, who also is his godparent and an OLPH parishioner.

Over time, Yeoman said, a deep, calm feeling “pointed to Jesus,” which led him to a lot of research before deciding to enter the Church.



(Photo/Ryan Hunt)



(Photo/Alese Monahan)



(Photo/Vy Barto)

Bishop Barry C. Knestout celebrated the Rite of Election at three locations across the Diocese of Richmond, Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 25-26: (left) Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem, to serve the Western Vicariate; (top right) Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, for the Central Vicariate; (bottom right) St. Pius X, Norfolk, to welcome catechumens in the Eastern Vicariate.

“I was drawn to the Catholic Church’s several-thousand-year history, and its apostolic succession,” he said. “It’s easy to look back and trace that lineage back to the beginning of Christianity.”

But the most important thing is the actual presence of Christ in the Eucharist, he said. “It’s not a symbol; He is actually there. Nothing compares to that.”

OLPH’s RCIA coordinator, Sue Thompson, beamed at him.

“This is all God’s work, and it’s so exciting to think I had a little part in it,” she said. “It builds my own faith even more.”

Kevin Meza Garcia, 19, of Blessed Sacrament, Harrisonburg, became a member of the elect along with his brothers Avelino Marquez Garcia, 28, and Alex Meza Garcia, 17. Their parents, Manuel Meza and Maricela Garcia, were raised Catholic in Mexico, he explained afterward, but he and his brothers had not yet been baptized.

“It was exciting to be with all the people who came from far away, and to be recognized by the bishop,” he said.

One of nine children, he and his large family drove in two vehicles from Harrisonburg to OLPH that day.

“And our aunt from Mexico will be here at Easter,” he added. “It’s pretty neat that someone

from outside the country will be coming for our baptism.”

Just as he is a student at Blue Ridge Community College – he hopes to major in engineering – he is likewise a student of the Church during this process.

“When you stick with the lessons you’re learning, then you understand the Mass more,” he said. “This is something to be proud of.”

Kay Early, RCIA instructor at St. Mary the Mother of God, Wytheville, said she is likewise proud of the two catechumens in her care, Caleb Kovach, 8, and Mark Kallenborn, 10.

“They are both very engaged in the classes, and they really know their Bible stories,” she said. “And they ask good questions, like: ‘What is the difference between venial and mortal sins?’”

A convert herself, she has been teaching RCIA for about 20 years.

“I feel like this is a calling for me,” she said.

Caleb Kovach paid close attention as he sat between his father, Jacob, and Early. Later, he said, “I’m excited about being baptized at Easter, and it was special to meet the bishop in person.” He added that he enjoys learning about the Catholic Church.

“I like that they put stuff on the wall, like the Stations of Cross, so we can see the story,” he said.

See *Catechumens*, Page 13

Richmond, VA 23294
7800 Carousell Lane

The Catholic Virginian

Inside This Edition

What you need to be Catholic in the military
Page 3

Helping hope flourish in Haiti
Page 3

Is it sinful to get distracted during Mass?
Page 7

Our acts of charity demonstrate living word of God



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

When we began Lent on Ash Wednesday, we were reminded that prayer, fasting and almsgiving, the last of which is particularly associated with acts of charity, are hallmarks of this season. Each of us, in our own way, use these Lenten practices to grow deeper in our faith and closer to Christ.

The Church calls us to perform acts of charity daily, but during Lent, with its focus on Christ's ultimate act of love — offering his life to redeem us from sin — that call takes on a deeper and, hopefully, personal meaning.

In our parishes and diocese, we are blessed with multiple examples of Gospel-based charity. On Friday, March 24, I will bless the new offices of Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia in Norfolk. CCEVA is one of two Catholic Charities' agencies in our diocese, each of which is committed to serving the Hampton Roads community through mental health counseling, family counseling, pregnancy counseling and adoption services. For nearly 90 years CCEVA has exemplified how Christ calls us to serve those in need.

On Tuesday, March 28, I will bless the first St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in our diocese. It will open Saturday, April 15, in North Chesterfield. Because my father was involved in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, I learned from an early age that Vincentians were the "face of Christ" to those they serve. Through the donations it receives and sells, the thrift store will be able to help conferences throughout our diocese provide food, shelter, furnishings and other essential items to those who need them.

The work done by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul reminds us that our charity is meant to be a personal expression of love. In the personal encounter with individuals and getting to know the people who are receiving the charity that the real spiritual richness of our charity is found.

As we undertake our Annual Diocesan Appeal, you will hear and read about the ministries and outreach your contributions support. One area that speaks to our ongoing acts of charity is the Fuel and Hunger Fund. Every year the Pastors' Advisory Committee, which develops the case statement for the appeal, has recommended an increase to the amount of money designated for this fund. This year \$550,000 will be appropriated because the need for this form of support has increased.

I hear from pastors in various parts of the

diocese about parishioners who cannot afford the essentials that most of us take for granted. Our response to those in need is found in Matthew 25:31-46. It can be nothing less.

When I travel throughout our diocese and visit parishes, I am grateful to learn about the acts of charity being done. When parishes distribute food from their pantries and furnishings and clothing from their collections, when they offer meal programs and when they take the Holy Eucharist to the homebound, they have a personal encounter with those in need. They are demonstrating to those they meet that the Gospel is the living word of God.

Charity — our unconditional willingness to act for the good of others — is always a remedy to help us overcome our sin because it helps us to overcome our selfishness. God's love for us in Christ is the starting and ending point of our acts of charity.

As we prayerfully and sacrificially make our way through Lent, let us consider what Pope Francis shared with members of Pro Petri Sede ("For the See of Peter"), an association that supports the work of the Holy See, on Friday, Feb. 24: "[God's] spirit, the source of generosity, will always urge us to give to those in need, to fight poverty with what he gives us. *For the Lord gives us in abundance so that we in turn can give ourselves.*" [Emphasis added]

10 years as pope: pushing the Church



Pope Francis visits Manila, Philippines, Jan. 18, 2015.
(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – For a decade, even when discussing the internal workings of the Vatican, Pope Francis has insisted the Church is not the Church of Christ if it does not reach out, sharing the "joy of the Gospel" and placing the poor at the center of its attention.

Signals that his papacy would be different started the moment he stepped out on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on March 13, 2013: He was not wearing a red, ermine-trimmed cape, and he bowed as he asked the crowd to pray that God would bless him.

His decision not to live in the Apostolic Palace, his invitations to Vatican trash collectors, gardeners and other employees to join him for his daily morning Mass, his insistence on going to the Italian island of Lampedusa to celebrate Mass and pray for migrants who had drowned in the Mediterranean captivated the attention of the media.

But not everyone was pleased with the seeming ease with which he set aside pomp and protocol. Tensions within the Catholic community grew as he expressed openness to LGBTQ Catholics and to those living in what the Church considers irregular marriage situations.

In his first major document, the apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel," he laid out a program for his papacy, to "encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelization."

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, told CNS he believes the first 10 years of Pope Francis' pontificate have been preparation for "what's happening right now, and that's the synodal conversation."

Cardinal Tobin said, "synodality is ... an ancient way of being Church that is being recovered and lived in the circumstances in which we face ourselves today. ... That's sort of the capstone of what Pope Francis has been working for over the last decade."

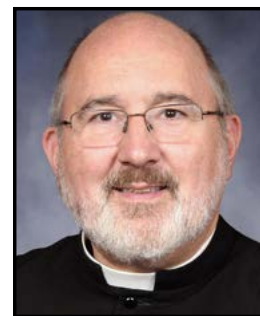
Pope Francis has been laying the foundation for the new synod process since the beginning of his pontificate, said Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago.

"I just wonder if, from the very beginning, he had in his mind that this would be the trajectory of his pontificate, and the synod on synodality I think is, in some way, the opportunity for him to pull everything together," he said.

Asked what he thought was the most significant aspect of this pontificate, the cardinal cited his predecessor, the late Cardinal Francis E. George, who participated in the 2013 conclave, and said the best description of Pope Francis was "He's free."

"He's free in the sense of wanting to listen to different voices," Cardinal Cupich said. "I think history will look back on this pontificate as historic, as pivotal in the life of the Church."

USCCB appointment



Fr. Daniel J. Mahan

WASHINGTON (OSV News) – The recently formed Institute on the Catechism will carry out the U.S. bishops' vision of the importance of "connecting evangelization and catechesis," according to Father Daniel J.

Mahan, an Indianapolis archdiocesan priest just named as the institute's director.

Father Michael J.K. Fuller, general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), appointed the Indianapolis archdiocesan priest Feb. 27 to head the institute, effective July 1. The institute is housed within the Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis at the USCCB headquarters in Washington.

This "evangelizing catechesis," a focus of the Church as a whole, aims to teach the beliefs of the Catholic faith in a "compelling and inviting" way to help young Catholics foster a "deeper relationship with the Lord and help them see their place within the body of Christ, the Church, and in turn, reach out to others to share the Good News," Father Mahan told OSV News.

Through the institute, catechetical publishers and developers of catechetical content will work directly with the USCCB's Subcommittee on the Catechism – chaired by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut – in new ways to pass on the faith using digital tools and aiming to reach a more diverse Church.

Archbishop: conscience crucial for Catholics in the military



Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio speaks at Virginia Military Institute Feb. 24 on the importance of a good conscience for those serving in the armed forces.

(Photo/Bruce Young)

JOE STANIUNAS
Special to The Catholic Virginian

Men and women going to war need lots of gear — uniforms, boots, rations. They travel in tanks, ships and planes, and train to use a variety of weapons — rifles, artillery, missiles.

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio says the faithful serving in the military also need to be armed with something else — a conscience, formed by church teaching, expert knowledge and scripture.

“No one has the authority to coerce a person into violating his

or her conscience for any reason,” he told a group at Virginia Military Institute Feb. 24.

“When we talk about being a Catholic in the military not every order obligates a soldier, sailor, Marine, airman, coastie, or guard-ian to obey. Even in a hierarchical structure such as the military, it means that the human person is not dispensed from the obligation to follow his or her conscience,” the archbishop said.

As head of the Archdiocese for the Military Services USA, Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio is re-

sponsible for the church’s ministry to Catholics serving in all branches of the armed forces at home and abroad, active duty and reserves, along with those working in Veterans Administration hospitals and members of the faithful serving in the federal government overseas. He is also the current president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

His talk was sponsored by St. Patrick Catholic Church in Lexington as part of the parish’s 150th anniversary celebration. About a hundred people came to VMI’s Memorial Hall to hear the trim man with a firm jaw and regulation haircut that day, the one-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Standing before the mural of VMI cadets fighting at the Battle of New Market in 1864 that stretches from floor to ceiling, the archbishop mentioned that he spent five days in Ukraine just after Christmas, “overwhelmed by the destruction, the loss of life but buoyed up by the spirit of the Ukrainian people.”

The mayor of Lviv, the sixth-largest city in that country, gave him a wristband that says “Unbroken” that he continues to wear.

“To me, it seems unbelievable that in 2023 there is actually a war in Europe, one country simply

invaded another,” the archbishop said.

‘Fight for faith’

The main message of his remarks was the duty of those in the military to listen to their conscience. This duty arises despite the risk of discipline or even dismissal, a dilemma service members faced when the Pentagon required those on active duty to get COVID-19 shots, starting in August 2021, he said.

“The choice was be vaccinated or be discharged,” Archbishop Broglio noted. “The choice is made for you and few waivers are granted.”

About 99% complied; more than 8,000 refused, though not all on religious grounds, and were discharged.

“The military is by definition young, fit and resilient — there is good chance that the infirmity would not be fatal for them,” the archbishop said. “However, they could transmit to others for whom it would be fatal. As a shepherd, while I urged people to be vaccinated, I was obliged to point out that the church taught that no one should be forced.”

Adding to the dilemma, he said, was “the unusual politicization of the vaccine, mask wearing and everything else. It was quite remark-

See Archbishop Broglio, Page 13

Twining helps hope flourish in Haiti despite crises

United in faith: parish to parish, diocese to diocese

WENDY KLESCH
Special to The Catholic Virginian

The moringa tree, known for its creamy-white blossoms, is resilient and drought-resistant, well-suited to the mountains of Haiti. Much like hope, it thrives in even the toughest of conditions.

And, as one might say in Haiti, “Lespwa fè viv.” Hope makes life.

Over the past few years, Haitians have weathered crisis after crisis. A devastating earthquake. Political unrest. A rise in gang violence. Inflation.

Still, hope flourishes.

“We are facing a tough time, but still, we keep moving forward,” said Bishop Désinord Jean of the Diocese of Hinche.

The Diocese of Hinche — with whom the Diocese of Richmond has shared an abiding friendship since the establishment of a parish twinning program in 1984 — lies a two-and-a-half-hour drive north of Port-au-Prince, but it, too, has been affected by the turmoil in the capital.

“When you say Port-au-Prince, you say Haiti,” Bishop Jean said. “What is happening in Port-au-Prince affects the entire country. For example, all the fuel comes from Port-au-Prince, and sometimes, when the roads are blocked, it causes shortages.”

“As for security, we are OK, thank God,” he said. “Economically, it affects us a lot. Poverty is getting worse in Haiti today.”

Despite adversity, the work of the two dioceses — separated by 1,300 miles, but united in one faith — keeps moving forward, toward new possibilities — whether working to build up a



Children at a school in Savanette, Haiti, take a little break from classes in 2018 for a snack. St. Mary, Blacksburg, has three sister parishes in Haiti, supporting schools in each of them. (Photo/Richard Neves)

diocesan healthcare system, or creating revenue from the nectar of a simple moringa flower.

A fruitful season

Around 50 parishes in the Diocese of Richmond have twinned parishes in Haiti, largely in the Diocese of Hinche, but also in La Gonâve and Cap-Haïtien.

The Diocese of Richmond’s Haiti Commission serves as an advisory board to the ministry and supports the work of committees devoted to specific issues, such as the Haiti Healthcare Support Team and the Haiti Education Support Team.

“There’s been very little travel to Haiti in the past few years, between COVID and the unrest

there,” Diane Atkins, chair of the Haiti Commission, said.

To keep the lines of communication open, the commission has turned to Zoom, holding monthly get-togethers with representatives from the Hinche Commission.

“So we do have direct contact with the leadership in Haiti, which has been helpful,” Atkins said.

“It’s not the same as meeting in person, face to face,” she said, but, in this challenging time, we are offered the chance to reflect and to re-evaluate — to find new, more sustainable ways of fostering growth.

Twin to twin, team to team, and even diocese to diocese.

See Haiti, Page 12

47 years as a Black Catholic priest in the diocese

KAREN ADAMS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

When Msgr. Walter Barrett told his mother he wanted to be a priest, she worried that he might be sent to another state or country – until he decided to be a diocesan priest and thus, he told her, he would always be within the Diocese of Richmond and therefore never too far away.

“She was reassured,” he said.

That sense of “being present” has shaped his 47 years as a priest for the diocese.

Msgr. Barrett, recently retired at 75, was just the second Black priest in the Diocese of Richmond when he was ordained in 1975, following Father Clarence Watkins. He shared his memories with a gathering of about 60 people at Our Lady of Nazareth (OLN), Roanoke, on Wednesday, Feb. 15, after a potluck dinner.

The event was a joint effort by OLN and Voices of Faith, an organization that fosters connection and understanding among various religious traditions in the Roanoke Valley. Besides local Catholics, the evening included local members of the Mormon and Muslim faiths as well.

Katie Zawacki, Voices of Faith co-founder and OLN parishioner, made the introduction: “With six Black Catholics on their way to sainthood, we thought it would be nice to hear from Msgr. Barrett what it was like to be a Black Catholic, especially here, back in the ’70s and ’80s.”

“I knew Msgr. Barrett when he was at St. Gerard’s,” she said later. “He helped Black Catholics feel seen and acknowledged.”

Life in Roanoke

Msgr. Barrett became the first Black pastor of the mostly Black parish of St. Gerard, Roanoke, from 1977 to 1985. The church had been founded in 1946 by Redemptorist priests to serve Black Catholics in Roanoke, who did not feel wel-



Msgr. Walter Barrett (left) celebrates Mass at St. Gerard, Roanoke, in 1982, with Franciscan Father James Goode (center) and the late Bishop Walter F. Sullivan, both of whom worked to appoint Msgr. Barrett pastor of the parish.

(Photo provided by St. Gerard, Roanoke)



Msgr. Walter Barrett (left) speaks to longtime St. Gerard parishioners Altermease and James Brown at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, on February 15. “He was just a very spiritual and understanding priest,” Altermease Brown recalled.

(Photo/Karen Adams)

come at white Catholic churches.

By 1977, Bishop Walter F. Sullivan, urged by Roanoke native and Franciscan Father James Goode (known as the “dean of Black Catholic preachers”), thought it was time for a diocesan priest to lead the small church, and he asked then-Father Barrett to do so. The young priest felt it was important to have pastors who reflected the image of their parishioners, and simply “being present” could help others feel welcome and understood, he explained.

“At [St. Mary’s Seminary and University, Baltimore] seminary I had written my dissertation for my master’s in theology on the need for indigenous clergy in the Black Catholic community,” he said. “Black parishes had been staffed by religious orders, but there’s a different kind of structure and support for diocesan priests.”

He was surprised by the friendliness of Roanoke, he said. “My impression was that people were warm and welcoming; both the Blacks and whites I met were hospitable.”

He recalled attending services that also included local Protestants, Muslims and members of the Greek Orthodox Church, and a Jewish rabbi, all praying for the community together.

“There was a true sense of ecumenism,” he said.

Msgr. Barrett remembered that when he left, he cried with many of his St. Gerard parishioners – some of whom, Black and white, had earlier been uncertain about a Black pastor when he arrived.

“We had come to love each other,” he said.

Longtime St. Gerard parishioners James and Altermease Brown were among those who came to hear their former pastor speak at OLN.

“He was just a very spiritual and understanding priest, friendly to everyone at St. Gerard’s and close to the families,” recalled Altermease Brown.

She added that his mother and her mother, Camille Willis, had become friends when the Barretts visited St. Gerard.

“When my mother died, Msgr. Barrett wrote a beautiful letter that was read at her funeral, and that meant a lot to me,” she said.

Besides his time as pastor in Roanoke, Msgr. Barrett also served at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Norfolk; Holy Rosary, Richmond (his home parish); and the Peninsula Cluster (St. Vincent de Paul, Newport News; St. Joseph, Hampton; and St. Mary Star of the Sea, Hampton). He also served as director of the diocesan Office for Black Catholics in 2022.

Journey of faith

Msgr. Barrett later reflected on his early life as a Catholic in Richmond and the path that led him to the priesthood.

He paid tribute to his late mother and father, Elizabeth and Walter Sr., who were not yet Catholics but Baptists at the time, and who supported his Catholic journey anyway.

He also credited his aunt Hattie Barrett Ward, a “very enthusiastic” convert whose life showed him the beauty and strength of her Catholicism when he was a child. She also convinced the Bar-

See Msgr. Barrett, Page 13

Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine’s dedication honors martyr’s mission



(Photo by Bishop Barry C. Knestout)

Oklahoma City (OSV News) – Bishop Barry C. Knestout was one of 2,000 people – including 37 bishops – at the Feb. 17 dedication of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul S. Coakley said Blessed Stanley was “an ordinary guy ... but God chooses the ordinary.” Blessed Stanley was martyred in Guatemala while serving in a mission in 1981.

Full story at catholicvirginian.org.



(Photo/Sooner Catholic, Archdiocese of Oklahoma City)



(Photo by Bishop Barry C. Knestout)

Tech teacher honored for out-of-this world lessons

Keeping God at the center of science class

KRISTEN L. BYRD

Special to The Catholic Virginian

Technology teacher Peter Tlusty remembers watching the Apollo space missions as a child and dreaming, like so many others at the time, of becoming an astronaut. Though Tlusty has never travelled to space himself, some of his classroom experiments have. He has shared his love of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) with students at St. Mary Catholic School in Richmond for the past six years, and recently participated in NASA's Cubes in Space program to launch his students' experiments into the mesosphere and beyond.

On Feb. 8, he received a national teacher innovation award from FACTS, an educational management support company that assists thousands of schools around the globe. According to the FACTS website, these awards "shine a light on the creative teachers making a difference through bold initiatives, commitment to their students, and support of FACTS' mission."

Path to the front of the class

Tlusty's journey to becoming a STEM teacher was a winding one. He played the trumpet in a Motown band for a while, until he realized he was better at running lights and sound for the group than actually playing in it. He later helped his brother at his recording studio, which led him to learn more about computers. Then he started designing and building handcrafted furniture, which morphed into a home improvement contracting business. Though these odd jobs may seem unrelated, they had one thing in common: each required him to work with his hands.

The son of two teacher parents, Tlusty eventually pursued a job in the education field himself, earning a degree in early childhood education. He was teaching fourth grade at another local Catholic school when he saw an advertisement for a technology teacher at St. Mary.

"I was an elementary school teacher who included a lot of STEM activities in my classroom and liked to tinker with computers and thought, 'Why not (apply)? I guess I fooled them into hiring me, and I think it may have worked out OK for the two of us,'" he said.

This would prove to be an understatement, as Tlusty, affectionately known as "Mr. T," has become beloved by students and colleagues alike.

Outside the box, out of this world

"Mr. T is a great teacher," said eighth grade student Lourdes Olivencia. "He makes class both fun and challenging by allowing us to share our ideas and always encouraging us to think outside the box. He always comes up with a new design problem that we have to solve as a group. His class has allowed me to discover my passion for the engineering design process."

Principal Brandon Hess spoke about how Tlusty works to build strong relationships with his students, often arriving early to greet them before school begins and staying late to lead afterschool activities.

"Mr. T inspires students through challenges that are literally 'out of this world,'" Hess said. "Students see these challenges as impossible, but Mr. T provides them with the tools and confidence to make them possible."

One example of making the impossible possible is the school's participation in the Martian 3.0 program. This program, sponsored by AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics), tasks

students with designing and building a system that can grow food on Mars.

"This was the challenge in our eighth-grade engineering design class," explained Tlusty. "We collaborated with several schools across the nation and around the world. We combined this project with our most recent Cubes in Space project where we sent vegetable seeds up on a NASA high altitude science balloon mission trying to protect them from the rigors of space."

Science and God are 'intertwined'

A constant core component of Tlusty's classes is faith. He sees science and God as inseparably intertwined, and recognizes the Catholic Church's important historic role in astronomical, medical and scientific breakthroughs. He often adds an "R" for Religion and an "A" for Art to "STEM" to make "STREAM," as he sees it all interconnected.

"I always stress the role of the Catholic Church through history and its leadership in science discovery," he said. "The Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., just opened a new exhibit called 'Scripture and Science: Our Universe, Ourselves, Our Place.' It includes Buzz Aldrin, who took Communion on the Moon; George Lemaitre, who was a Catholic priest and is known as the Father of the Big Bang Theory; and Mary Kenneth Keller, a Catholic nun who also was a computer science pioneer."

Tlusty enjoys and welcomes classroom discussions about the role of religion in science.

"When presenting in class about the Webb Telescope and its mission to see into the past and get a perspective on the beginnings of the universe, we had the most amazing discussion about the Big Bang Theory and Creationism. A student asked, 'Didn't God create the Universe?' Another student put it brilliantly that God said, 'Let there be light,' and then, boom, there was the Big Bang."

Resources that broaden the classroom

Tlusty is active in many STEM organizations that give him access to a wide range of educational resources. The Civil Air Patrol, of which Tlusty is a member, has provided flight simulators for his classroom. Tlusty explained that these simulators consist of airplane controls similar to those found in real airplanes, except they are plugged into a computer. Students can use them to learn how to fly a plane from their desks.

His affiliation with GAVRT (Goldstone Apple Valley Radio Telescope) gives Tlusty access to an enormous radio telescope capable of receiving data related to the sun, Jupiter, black holes and other celestial entities. This telescope can be controlled directly from his computer and literally brings the galaxy into the classroom.

Tlusty also shares his love of STEM outside of the St. Mary campus. As a volunteer NASA Solar System Ambassador, he gives presentations about NASA missions, judges school science fairs and STEM competitions and tries to engage the general public with all things NASA.

Tlusty is also a member of the National Association of Rocketry and heads a local chapter dedicated to student launches. He mentors students, teaches rocket design and judges flight competitions.

Tlusty believes everyone can benefit from STEM.

"I always say these students do great things and it makes me look good," he said. "A lot of the STEM stuff we do is hard work and often challenging work. We do have fun in the process though. I have faith in these kids and we have faith in God. What could be better?"



Top: Peter Tlusty is a volunteer NASA Solar System Ambassador outside the classroom. His students at St. Mary Catholic School, Richmond, have taken part in NASA's Cubes in Space program.

(Photo/Lynne Berkness)

Above: Peter Tlusty watches as Mary Catherine Ve-horn looks at the moon through a telescope.

(Photo/Katy Botha)



Above: Students Samuel Garcia (left) and Michael Corbitt (center) pay close attention as "Mr. T" explains the design of the race car. (Photo/Katy Botha)

Below: Peter Tlusty heads a local chapter of the National Association of Rocketry, dedicated to student launches. Becky Smolka (left) and Sydney Duda (center) prepare for a rocket launch. (Photo/Gary Duda)



Bishop's message and invitation this Lent



Diocese of Richmond

Office of the Bishop

First Week of Lent 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to offer you my prayerful best wishes during your spiritual journey this Lent. I pray it will be a time of grace and an opportunity to grow in faith; to deepen your understanding of all God has done and continues to do for all of us.

Lent is also time of gathering together in parish communities to offer personal witness to our faith. It is a unique time for us to recognize and acclaim the faith of those who will enter into full communion in the Catholic Church, and a time of deep reflection and conversion. For some, it may be a time for the restoration of faith, that for various reasons has not been sustained. I pray it is a time of grace and blessing for you.

In the Diocese, we are making plans, particularly for Holy Week. I invite you to attend the **Annual Chrism Mass** which will take place on Monday of Holy Week – April 3, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Richmond. More information will be provided in the coming days regarding parking and other details.

The Chrism Mass is a unique moment in the life of the Church when priests from all across the Diocese gather with me to publicly witness and renew our commitment to our vocation to priesthood. It is also a sign of unity and communion between priests and their bishop. The Annual Chrism Mass offers an opportunity, in the blessing of the oils, for the lay faithful to deepen their understanding of the use and effects of the Holy Oils and Chrism in the Sacramental life of the Church. I hope you will make every effort to join me for this annual liturgy of Holy Week.

May Christ Our Hope lead you in this holy season of Lent to a renewed life of grace and reconciliation, as I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond

Pastoral Center • 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, Virginia 23294-4201 • Phone: (804) 359-5661 • Fax: (804) 358-9159



Diocese of Richmond

Office of the Bishop

Primera semana de Cuaresma 2023

Queridos amigos en Cristo,

Cuentan con mis oraciones para esta Cuaresma. Espero que sea un tiempo de gracia y les proporciona una oportunidad para crecer en la fe y profundizar sobre todo lo que Dios ha hecho y sigue haciendo por todos nosotros.

También, la Cuaresma es un tiempo de reunirse con sus comunidades parroquiales para dar testimonio personal de nuestra fe de una manera muy especial. Es un tiempo único para reconocer y apreciar la fe de aquellos que entrarán en plena comunión con la Iglesia Católica, y un tiempo de conversión y reflexión profunda. Para algunos, puede ser un tiempo de restaurar su fe, que por diversas razones no ha sido consistentes en ella. Espero que sea un tiempo de gracia y bendición para ustedes.

En la diócesis estamos planeando un evento para la Semana Santa. Los invito a asistir a la **Santa Misa Crismal** el lunes, 3 de abril 2023 a las 6:00 p.m. en la Catedral Sagrado Corazón en Richmond. Se proporcionará más información en los próximos días sobre este evento.

La Misa Crismal es un momento único en la vida de la Iglesia. Los sacerdotes de toda la diócesis se reúnen conmigo para testimoniar y públicamente renovar nuestra vocación al sacerdocio. Es también una señal de unidad y comunión entre los sacerdotes y el obispo. En la bendición de los óleos, la Misa Crismal da a los fieles laicos la oportunidad de profundizar más sobre el uso y los efectos de los Santos Óleos y el Crisma en la vida sacramental de la Iglesia. Espero que puedan acompañarme en esta liturgia anual de la Semana Santa.

Que Cristo, nuestra esperanza, los guíe en este tiempo sagrado de Cuaresma a una vida renovada y llena de gracia y reconciliación.

Sinceramente en Cristo,

Reverendísimo Barry C. Knestout
obispo de Richmond

Pastoral Center • 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, Virginia 23294-4201 • Phone: (804) 359-5661 • Fax: (804) 358-9159

Bishop kicks off confirmation season



Above: Sacred Heart, Danville, hosted the diocese's first confirmations of the year on Feb. 23 for Saint Joseph, Martinsville; Saint Francis of Assisi, Rocky Mount. (Photo/Charles & Cindy Jefferson)

Below: Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, hosted confirmation Feb. 24 for Church of the Transfiguration, Fincastle; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Salem; Saint Gerard, Roanoke. (Photo/Ryan Hunt)



CV letters policy

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

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

Publisher: Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout

Editor: Lily Nguyen Dunkle (804) 622-5225 lnguyen@catholicvirginian.org

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

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

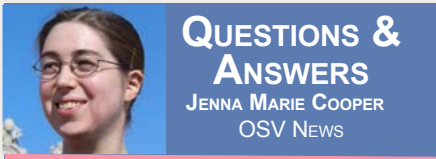
Eastern Correspondents: Wendy Klesch and Jennifer Neville

Western Correspondents: Karen Adams and Joe Staniunas

Central Correspondents: Kristen L. Byrd and Rose Morrisette

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

How to refocus if you are distracted at Mass



Q. Sometimes I become distracted at Mass and only really get refocused when I hear the consecration bells. Is that a sin? (Bunnell, Florida)

A. No. If you are accidentally getting distracted on occasion, this is not a sin. The Catholic faithful have an obligation to attend Mass by being physically present on Sundays and holy days of obligation; but the Church's law doesn't and can't require the faithful to have their minds perfectly focused for the entire length of the liturgy.

Of course, the more focused we reasonably can be, the better. Sometimes there are actions we can take to minimize distractions — perhaps turning off gadgets or taking time before Mass to recollect ourselves — and we should do what we can in this regard.

But God understands that we are human and our active minds wander sometimes. The important thing is just that we keep turning

our focus back to the Mass whenever we catch our attention straying.

Q. If someone is dying, can anyone hear their confession and offer absolution? (Fredericksburg, PA)

A. No. Only a priest or bishop has the power to forgive sins sacramentally in Jesus' name. Even in an emergency, non-ordained laypeople are not able to confer absolution; nor can Catholic deacons, even though they are ordained.

Interestingly (and only if there is a real danger of imminent death), a priest who, for a variety of reasons, may have lost his priestly faculties can still validly confer sacramental absolution upon a dying penitent. A "faculty" in this sense is the permission from the legitimate authority, (generally the local diocesan bishop), for a priest to celebrate certain sacraments.

For some sacraments, including the sacrament of penance, this faculty is needed not only so that the sacrament may be licit, but also for its validity (see Canon 966 of the Code of Canon Law).

To be sure, most parish priests you encounter will indeed have the

faculty to hear confessions. A priest might lack this faculty in a few unusual scenarios, such as being deemed incapable of the good judgment needed to counsel penitents appropriately, e.g., perhaps due to severe physical or mental illness, or if he is under some sort of canonical punishment like excommunication. In some situations even a priest in good standing may not have the faculty to absolve certain egregiously grave sins, such as desecration of the Blessed Sacrament or making an attempt on the life of the pope, in a particular instance.

However, in danger of death, the Church's law itself is the authority giving the faculty to grant sacramental absolution. As we read in Canon 976: "Even though a priest lacks the faculty to hear confessions, he absolves validly and licitly any penitents whatsoever in danger of death from any censures and sins, even if an approved priest is present."

Q. Our whole Mass is the "Novus Ordo" in English but the pastor insists on using Kyrie eleison and also has us chanting the "Lamb of God" prayer in Latin. Does this invalidate the Mass? (Ocean Pines, MD)

A. It's perfectly valid to use Latin chant in the "Novus Ordo" Mass.

Often Catholics will refer to the pre-Vatican II missal as the "TLM" or "Traditional Latin Mass," but this is somewhat of a misnomer. All our liturgical prayers are originally written in Latin, and translations are always made from this Latin "master copy." So technically, the "Novus Ordo" is also a Latin Mass.

As Latin "Roman" Catholics, whose faith comes to us by way of the ministry of the apostle Peter as the first bishop of Rome, Latin is our traditional liturgical language. Even while it's important that we be able to follow along with the liturgy and understand what we are praying, it's also good to keep in touch with our heritage. As the Second Vatican Council document "Sacrosanctum Concilium" says: "... steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them" (No. 54).

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osu.com.



Diocesan Day of Reflection

"Let us come together as one voice drawing upon the vision of God"

St. Michael Catholic Church

4491 Springfield Rd.

Glen Allen, VA 23060

SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2023

8:30 am to 4:00 pm



Facilitator
Sr. Cora Marie Billings, RSM

Please see your pastor/parish leader to register!



Planned Giving Officer

The Diocesan Office of Development has an opening for a full-time Planned Giving Officer. This position is responsible for securing planned gifts to support ministries of the Diocese of Charlotte, cultivate relationships with current and new Catholic Heritage Society members, and increase endowment gifts to the Foundation Diocese of Charlotte that support the Diocese of Charlotte.

Must be willing to travel within the Diocese of Charlotte.

Knowledge and Experience:

- BA/BS degree required
- 3 to 5 years of demonstrated experience in professional fund development; 3 years planned giving experience preferred
- Excellent relationship building skills: ability to work effectively with parishioners, prospects, and parish leaders
- Proficient in MS Office
- Excellent organizational and attention to detail skills
- Self-starter with the ability to work independently
- Experience in Blackbaud Raiser's Edge/NXT and WealthEngine preferred



Please submit letter of interest and resume to:

Gina Rhodes, Office of Development

gmrhodes@rcdoc.org or mail to:

1123 South Church Street, Charlotte, Nc 28203

The Diocese of Charlotte is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Sharing *His Love* w



Empowering the *Next Generation*

Seminarian Education | Youth and Young Adult Ministries | Campus Ministries | Segura Educational Initiative for Children | Migrant Ministry



Providing for *Those in Need*

Fuel and Hunger Fund | Pastoral Support | Retired Priests | Saint Francis Home | Home Mission Grants | Mother Teresa Fund | Prison Ministry



Strengthening Catholic Communities

Parish Sharing | International Priests | Lay Leadership and the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Institute | Ethnic Ministries | Patrimony Restoration | Clergy Formation | Museum of Virginia Catholic History | Frank Parater

with *Others*

Catholic
Community
Foundation
of the Diocese of Richmond
2023 ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL



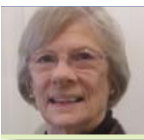
*"Your gifts to the Annual Diocesan Appeal help strengthen our Church and one another and demonstrate how you **Share His Love with Others**. Your contributions provide food and fuel for heating as well as rent and shelter assistance for children, families, and the elderly across the Diocese. Your gifts also enhance our parishes in times of need or growth. They support young men studying to become our future priests, and then care for them as they enter retirement after giving their lives in service to the People of God."*

**– Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond**

Scan here to donate to the
2023 Annual Diocesan Appeal



Trust in the mercy, forgiveness of God



IN LIGHT OF FAITH
BARBARA HUGHES

The story is told of the young monk who was asked by his superior to take a basket down to the river, fill it with water and bring it back to the monastery. Eager to please, the young man grabbed the basket, hurried to the river and filled the basket with water. However, by the time he returned to the monastery the basket was empty.

Once again, he headed to the river with the basket. As before, the water seeped through the basket, and it was empty by the time he arrived back at the monastery.

Not to be deterred, the young man set out a third time, filled the basket with water and hurried back to the monastery. Upon his return the prior, who was wearing a knowing smile, was waiting for him.

By now the younger man was frustrated and told his superior that the task he had given him was impossible to complete and that all his effort was useless because no matter how often he filled the basket with water, it was always empty by the time he returned. The wise prior simply directed the young monk to look at the basket and told him to notice how much cleaner the basket was, not only on the outside but on the inside as well.

The story is one I sometimes share with people when they complain they confess the same sins over and over when going to the sacrament of reconciliation. On the surface, it seems as if we are making little progress, but that's because we tend to look at it as a task we accomplish. Then, much like the young monk, we lose sight of what is really taking place.

Like the basket that was being cleansed when it was filled at the river, a hidden and even more important effect is taking place inside our soul when we receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Each time we confess our sins, we humble ourselves before God who is purifying us from within. That's the truth that often eludes us.

Every sacramental encounter is an encounter with Christ. We can't see the purifying action of grace within, but God is always more concerned about cleansing the inside of the heart rather than what is perceived as an impurity on the outside.

Every time we confess our sins, we grow, not only in humility, but in self-knowledge; self-knowl-

edge and knowledge of God go hand in hand. Each informs the other. Recall the story of the publican who, not even daring to raise his eyes to heaven prayed, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner" was the one who went home justified before God. (See Luke 18:11-14).

On the surface, we may not look any different after receiving the sacrament, and we may continue to struggle with the same sins, faults and failings, but with each sacramental encounter we are changed. So, the next time you're tempted to delay or postpone receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, you might reflect on the story of the young monk and the basket of water.

That's not to say we should be content with our confession sounding like a laundry list that we recite time after time. Every confession should be preceded by a prayerful and thoughtful examination of conscience. And even though we fail, we should still resolve not to sin and ask God for the grace to be faithful.

God is a God of surprises and rarely acts in our lives the way we expect. We are called to trust that God knows our needs and our potential better than we do. Instead of looking for personal progress, which can delude us, we do well to trust in the mercy and forgiveness of God. Jesus assured us of this when he breathed on the apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23).

Catholics are truly blessed to have the sacrament of reconciliation so readily available. Sadly, it has fallen out of favor for many. If you find yourself among those who think that confession is only for those who have committed serious sins, think again. Many saints received the sacrament weekly, some popes, even daily. Most parishes offer a communal penance service during Lent when multiple priests are available for confession.

As you continue your Lenten journey, resolve to make the sacrament of reconciliation an important part of your 40-day pilgrimage of the heart, mindful of Jesus' words: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8).

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

The Light is ON for you!

**Deanery 1:
Day of Reconciliation
Wednesday, March 22, 2023
9:00 AM - 8:00 PM**

**Come Home and be reconciled with Christ;
visit any of the following parishes
on March 22nd during the times below for
reconciliation.**

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 9 AM - 10 AM | Christ the King, Norfolk |
| 10 AM - 11 AM | Holy Trinity, Norfolk |
| 11 AM - 12 PM | St. Mary's Basilica, Norfolk |
| 12 PM - 1 PM | St. Andrew's, Chincoteague |
| 1 PM - 2 PM | St. Mary's Basilica, Norfolk |
| 2 PM - 3 PM | St. Matthew's, Virginia Beach |
| 3 PM - 4 PM | St. Charles, Cape Charles |
| 4 PM - 5 PM | St. Pius X, Norfolk |
| 5 PM - 6 PM | Holy Trinity, Norfolk |
| | St. Andrew's, Chincoteague |
| | Blessed Sacrament, Norfolk |
| 6 PM - 7 PM | Christ the King, Norfolk |
| | St. Matthew's, Virginia Beach |
| | St. Peter the Apostle, Onley |
| 7 PM - 8 PM | Blessed Sacrament, Norfolk |
| | St. Peter the Apostle, Onley |
| | St. Pius X, Norfolk |



Hearing Jesus' words results in extraordinary things



This Sunday's first reading takes us back to the desert journey of Israel. Exodus 17:1-2 sets the stage for the story. The "whole Israelite community" is moving from place to place, directed by the Lord. Reaching Rephidim, the people find no water. Naturally, they bring this serious issue to Moses: "Give us water to drink."

His less-than-sympathetic reply, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?" does little to diffuse the situation. They walk away grumbling: "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?"

Similar arguments ensue whenever circumstances threaten the Israelite sojourners. We hear it at the edge of the sea (Ex 14:11), when the people look back and see the dust kicked up by Pharaoh's pursuing army.

Clearly preferring slavery over death, they lament, "Far better for us to be the slaves of the Egyptians than to die in the desert" (Ex 14:12b). The Lord responds, providing an escape route

through the sea and a watery grave for the chariots and charioteers.

We hear another version when hunger becomes the issue (Ex 16: 3): "Would that we had died at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our flesh pots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!" Translation: Swift death with a full stomach beats slow starvation. Again, the Lord responds, this time with manna and quail for the people to eat.

The story in Sunday's reading unfolds in a similar way: The people face a life-or-death situation (thirst) and complain to Moses, prompting his cry to the Lord on their behalf. The Lord responds, this time with witnesses at hand and clear reference to past deeds: "Go over there in front of the people, along with some of the elders, holding in your hand, as you go, the staff with which you struck the river."

Moses' staff, the instrument of God's power and providence in Egypt and at the edge of the sea, goes into action again. Even if all the people cannot see the water gush forth from the rock, respected eyewitnesses stand by to tell the tale.

Psalm 95 references this episode, repeating verbatim the two place names, Massah and Meribah. St. Paul's words from Romans 5 provide a fitting transition to the Gospel, so full of surprising faith, grace, hope and glory.

One intriguing aspect of biblical interpretation involves the cultural context of stories and symbols. The Samaritan woman at the well easily gains a 21st century American label with her checkered marital history. Yet in her culture, unfaithful wives did not live to marry again.

Since only men were permitted to divorce, we realize that this woman was five times abandoned — be she widowed or simply cast aside. Rather than children (and especially sons), she likely bore the stigma of barrenness, a terrible curse in her culture. It makes sense that she chose the heat of the day for her journey to the well, avoiding the neighbors who otherwise turned aside from her.

Consideration of cultural context reveals a cascade of miracles as the story unfolds. In hospitable, truthful dialogue with Jesus, the woman finds her bitter heart changed and runs to tell her neighbors: "This man told me everything ... could he be the Christ?" Against all odds, they rise from their mid-day nap, follow the former outcast to the well, and hear Jesus for themselves.

Then, in the most extraordinary twist of all, long-despised Samaritans welcome Jews to stay over, and they accept! Here we witness signs of the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus: the person experiences conversion, the community is activated, and the social world is turned upside down.

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

Third Sunday of Lent

Ex 17:3-7

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Rm 5:1-2, 5-8

Jn 4:5-42

25
THE IRISH FESTIVAL
 MARCH 25 AND 26 ✪ HISTORIC CHURCH HILL RVA
 \$5 DONATION ✪ 10AM-6PM ✪ 25TH & BROAD
 OPENING PARADE - 10AM SATURDAY ✪ HILL TOPPER 5K - 9AM SUNDAY

THE HILL CONQUER HILL TOPPER 5K
 Tullamore Dew IRISH WHISKEY
 GUINNESS
 BREAKTHRU BEVERAGE
 HARP LAGER
 SMITHWICK'S

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for March 12, 2023

John 4: 5-42

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Lent, Cycle A: The woman who came to the well at noon. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

SYCHAR	JACOB	JOSEPH
TIRED	JOURNEY	DRAW WATER
GIVE ME	WOMAN	A JEW
THE GIFT	OF GOD	LIVING WATER
FLOCKS	ETERNAL	PROPHET
WORSHIP	HOUR	NOW HERE
MESSIAH	I AM HE	SAVIOR

ENLIGHTENED

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

Haiti

Continued from Page 3

One tree, many branches

The Haiti Twinning Ministry at St. Mary, Blacksburg, has grown into a thriving parish family of four.

St. Mary and St. Jean Baptiste, Savanette, located in the Diocese of Cap-Haïtien, began their work together by opening a school before going on to embark on several sustainable economic ventures, including a dairy goat program and a water treatment plant.

St. Jean Baptiste flourished — so much so that two of its chapels were elevated to parishes, Richard Neves, chair of the Haiti Committee at St. Mary, said.

Today, St. Mary has three sister parishes: St. Jean Baptiste, St. Roch, Gaucimal, and Our Lady of Lourdes, Bailly.

Although the last trip to Savanette was in 2019, Neves said, “We still maintain a good relationship, largely through email.”

St. Mary supports a primary school in each of the three parishes and a middle school in Savanette.

“The middle school has been adding grades, so that now it goes through grade 13,” the equivalent of senior year under the French education system, he said.

“What has changed dramatically — beyond my expectations — is that when I first visited Savanette in 2008, there were no girls in classes after grade four. Now, in the new photos I’ve seen, half the graduating class is women.”

This will be the first year for a graduating class to have gone to year 13.

“It will be interesting to see what they do,” Neves said.

With prayerful care

The Diocese of Richmond Haiti Healthcare Support Team not only aids twinned parishes in opening clinics, but also works to support Haitian efforts in bolstering the Diocese of Hinche’s healthcare system.

Since 2018, Father Herald Jean, director of the Diocesan Health Commission of Hinche and executive vice-rector of the University of Notre Dame of Haiti at Hinche, has served as a liaison between his diocese’s commission and the team in Richmond.

“It’s our priority to care for the most vulnerable,” Father Jean said, to provide training for healthcare workers and health education for all.

“If a parish wants to open a clinic, we help them,” he said. “We guide them in the purchase of medicine, of equipment, and with inventory management.”

A central clinic in Hinche is supported by the University of Notre Dame, which has schools of nursing and of medical biology, he said. For those who cannot reach a clinic, the commission collaborates with parish priests to set up mobile clinics for children and adults.



Richard Neves of St. Mary, Blacksburg, and Father Nicolas Floréal, pastor of St. Jean Baptiste, Savanette, celebrate a new school. (Photo submitted)

“Every year we also try to carry out training sessions, not only for our staff, but for all goodwill health personnel,” Father Jean said. “Ongoing training is not required by the state, so it’s the duty of the Church to help.”

“What we are doing is not easy,” Father Jean said, noting that with a population of more than 700,000 in the central plateau region, there are many to reach. “But it is our goal to have a clinic in almost all of our schools,” he said, and “to provide not just medical, but also social and pastoral care.”

In full bloom

The Diocese of Hinche is also working on plans for overall economic development, Bishop Jean said.

“I have to ask: ‘How can I make the Diocese of Hinche independent?’” he said.

One project he feels shows particular promise is a bee-keeping venture, with the aim of cultivating specialty honey for export.

“I feel that this will be something big for us, because we are trying to produce a specific kind of honey, from the moringa tree,” he said.

A priest from Hinche has recently completed a degree in France, where he studied the science of honey production, he said, and the diocese has planted 2,000 moringa trees thus far.

The Diocese of Richmond contributed to the start-up of the project through the Battaglia Fund, a grant set aside for economically and ecologically sustainable projects in Haiti.

Such efforts bring the relationship between Richmond and Hinche to a new level, Bishop Jean said, beyond one of parish to parish, to one of diocese to diocese.

“I wish that this relationship continues between the Diocese of Hinche and the Diocese of Richmond,” Bishop Jean said. “Unfortunately, for the past three years, our friends from Richmond have not been able to visit. Part of the relationship is also the friendship — seeing our friends from the U.S. coming here, sharing our daily lives, eating our food. This means a lot to us, really — because we are united in one faith, because we are brothers and sisters.”

Come join an incredible
Catholic community of educators,
students and parents at

Roanoke
Catholic
School Est. 1889



Now Hiring for the 2023-2024 academic year: Elementary, Middle and High School Faculty, School Leadership Positions - Assistant Head of School and Dean of Faculty, and Teaching Assistants in all levels. Please contact Mr. Patrick Patterson,

Principal & Head of School at

ppatterson@roanokecatholic.com or
540.982.3532 www.roanokecatholic.com

Learn more about joining us in this short video below.



Msgr. Barrett

Continued from Page 4

retts to provide a Catholic education for their three children, Alice, Walter and Douglas.

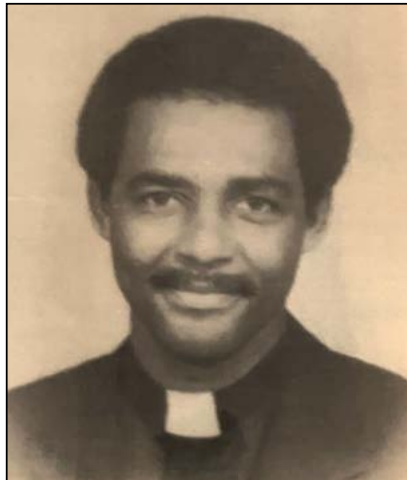
“It was her example, and the joy of her Catholic faith, that really inspired me,” Msgr. Barrett said. “She encouraged me to grow in my studies and my religious training.”

Msgr. Barrett attended Van de Vyver Catholic School and Cathedral Central High School, and joined Holy Rosary Catholic Church. His Aunt Hattie died in 1974 but saw him ordained a deacon before her passing.

Although he asked to be baptized a Catholic in the third grade, it did not happen until the seventh grade after he’d thoroughly studied the Baltimore Catechism (“I learned it cover to cover”). Part of his studies were with Sister Cecelia Reilly, still living, whom he remembers fondly.

“I think it was often the faith of women that influenced me,” he recalled later. “My aunt, and Sister Cecelia Reilly, and the other nuns who taught me were all so expressive about it.”

When he was finally baptized, despite having considered marrying and raising a family someday, he announced that he wanted to



Msgr. Walter Barrett arrived at St. Gerard, Roanoke, in 1977.

(Photo provided by St. Gerard, Roanoke)

become a priest.

“I just knew: I was drawn by the beauty and mystery of the Mass, where I felt the presence of God,” he said. “And after I became a priest I devoted myself to the Black Catholic apostolate.”

Being present, feeling blessed

Speaking by phone from his late parents’ home in Richmond’s East End where he now lives, Msgr. Barrett recalled his widowed mother’s last years, when she lived with him in his rectory. At the time he was pastor of the Peninsula Cluster of parishes. Her request to join him required special permission, which was granted first by Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo and, after his death, continued by Bishop Barry C. Knestout.

It was a blessing to provide a home and, later, caregiving for his mother, he said. When her health began to decline, all three of her children tended to her health needs. Msgr. Barrett was also her spiritual caregiver in her final days.

In the end, the son who assured his mother he would stay nearby was present at her bedside when she passed away in 2021, at home in the rectory.

“I was able to give her the last rites,” he said. “It was a gift to be able to do that.”

Msgr. Barrett has seen many changes in 47 years, especially in the racial diversity of clergy. With more Black priests, including many from African countries, and more Hispanic and Asian priests, he said, “now we look like the Catholic Church: universal. We are part of a global family.”

“I have been blessed by the prayers of many people in my life, and treated respectfully as a brother by every priest in the diocese,” he said. “I’m grateful for the friendships that transcend all barriers.”

Looking back on the “wonderful experience” of his priesthood, Msgr. Barrett said, “God truly has a plan for all of us.”

Archbishop Broglio

Continued from Page 3

able, but it did overrule a certain measure of common sense on both sides of the question.” Congress lifted the vaccine mandate in December.

“There will always be attempts by power to coerce subjects to act in a certain way,” he said.

For Catholic nurses and doctors who try to defy the military’s support of abortion rights that coercion can mean a bad assignment, being passed over for promotion, or extra duty to “wear down the opposition and extract a price for the dissent,” he said.

Archbishop Broglio advises those facing a crisis of conscience to talk to their chaplain. Anything a service member says to a chaplain is confidential, he said, even outside the seal of confession. Chaplains can’t be forced to act against tenets of their faith, disobey directives of their archbishop, and can’t be limited in what they preach or teach. But even those in the military without this protection should not be afraid to fight for their faith.

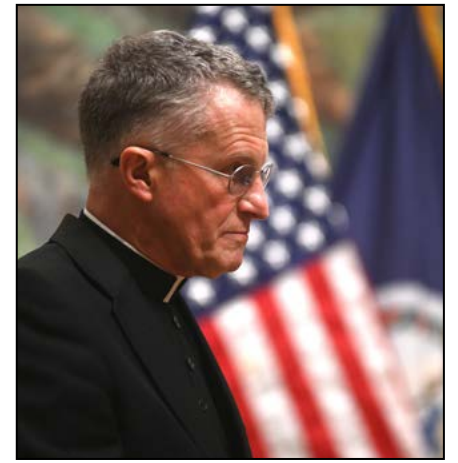
“It is more difficult for them to object and the lines of battle are less clear,” Archbishop Broglio said. “However, it is possible to prevail ... and to win.”

The military has also become a place to find those who work to win souls for Christ. The archbishop said it’s the single largest source of priestly vocations in the United States today. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, 11% of those about to be ordained in 2021 had a mother or father who had been active duty.

“That is a singularly impressive statistic and gives us great hope for the future,” he said.

‘Secret core, sanctuary’

Archbishop Broglio’s talk res-



Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio prepares to give a final blessing after his talk on being Catholic in the military Feb. 24 at VMI. (Photo/Bruce Young)

onated with the VMI cadets who came to hear him.

“We’ve had a former commandant of the Marine Corps to come and speak about righteous dissent and what that means,” said senior Christian Dutton, who plans to accept a military commission after graduation. “And I think it kind of brings it full circle in a way when the archbishop of the U.S. military comes to talk about that too. It’s very thought-provoking and doesn’t make you so afraid to have dissenting or disagreeing opinions and personally makes myself more comfortable in being more outspoken.”

“As a cadet who’s not commissioning into the military after graduation,” said senior Jake Seckerak, “everything he was talking about was still applicable especially in the sense of the moral ground that we as Catholics have to kind of keep intact.”

That moral ground can be heard in “a voice ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil sounds in his heart at the right moment,” Archbishop Broglio said. “For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths.”

Catechumens

Continued from Page 1

Although his mother, Mandy, and sister, Abigail, are not Catholic, they all attend St. Mary as a family. His father, Jacob, joined the Catholic Church last year.

“The Bible led me to it, and I studied the early Church fathers and what they believed and how they lived,” he said. “I went to Mass a few years ago and it was completely different from other churches I had been to.”

Headed toward Easter joy

Ellen Vanden Eykel, director of adult faith formation at Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, noted how she has seen that parish’s catechumens grow in their understanding of the faith.

“You can see how they’re becoming comfortable at Mass, and I see them confidently making the sign of the cross,” she said. “They’re feeling excited about receiving the sacraments and becoming part of the Church.”

The eight catechumens, all under the age of 14, were excited to be at the Rite of Election, too, she noted.

“And it was special to have (their pastor) Msgr. Patrick Golden sit with them,” she said. “They are headed toward that Easter joy.”

Teresa Lee, diocesan director of the Office of Christian Formation, attended all three diocesan events.

“With nearly 500 new Catholics, and after observing these three Rites of Election and hearing all the wonderful stories about how they have found the Church in their life journeys, my feeling is that the Catholic Church is alive and well,” she said. “All of these people come to the Catholic Church willingly; this is their choice and they want to be part of it.”

Lee added that in each church, she saw all the happy faces of those who are growing the faith.

“It was uplifting, and inspiring, and most of all, so joyful,” she said.

Priest placed on leave

Bishop Barry C. Knestout has placed Father John “Jay” Wagner on administrative leave and temporarily suspended his faculties following allegations received by the Diocese of Richmond regarding unlawful conduct by the priest involving an adult. He will not be permitted to engage in active ministry until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved.

According to the complainant, the alleged incidents occurred in or around 2017 while the priest was serving as pastor of Church of the Redeemer, Mechanicsville. Father Wagner denies the allegations, which have been reported to law enforcement for investigation.

Father Wagner had already been on voluntary administrative leave for personal reasons. Until the investigation is concluded, the diocese will not draw any conclusions, or make any decisions regarding the allegations or Fr. Wagner’s continued ministry.

OPPORTUNITIES

Assistant Editor, Office of Communications

Are you a writer who loves to tell a good story? Is working with words your passion? Become part of our team! The Catholic Diocese of Richmond's Office of Communications is seeking a talented, experienced, motivated assistant editor to join our small, creative, award-winning multimedia team. We are looking for someone with drive and focus to cover Catholic news and write inspirational faith stories found within the multiple communities we serve. Additionally, we want someone who can balance the importance of print and digital platforms for our diocesan newspaper, The Catholic Virginian (CV).

You will work closely and collaboratively with the editor of the newspaper to plan local, national, and international content; write, edit, and place copy; follow up on story leads and assist in working with correspondents in developing news, profiles and feature articles. The assistant editor will occasionally travel to develop stories, assist the editor with special projects and represent The Catholic Virginian at various events.

We want this person to take our publication's daily digital presence to the next level! The candidate will assist in strengthening the CV website and develop ways to engage the Catholic community through timely news and information. The individual will collaborate with the editor and creative director to produce a visually appealing print and digital product through written and visual storytelling.

Bachelor's degree in English/Journalism/Mass Communications or related field required and a minimum of three years' experience in print and/or digital communications, with Catholic communications preferred. Strong understanding of journalism, best practices, prioritizing coverage and the ability to keep abreast of emerging trends required.

The successful candidate will be a strong, professional communicator – interpersonally and in writing – and a collaborator. Flexible, self-motivated, strong attention to detail, great news judgment with the ability to identify stories that will grab a reader's attention. Excellent time management skills are a must in order to juggle multiple special projects. Ability to maintain confidentiality is expected. Photo skills a plus. Some evening and weekend hours with travel throughout our diocese is expected.

Proficiency using Microsoft Office and AP Stylebook is required and a strong understanding of Adobe Creative Suite is needed. A practicing Catholic passionate about serving the mission of the Catholic Church with a good working knowledge of Catholic Church structure and teaching is required.

Qualified candidates should upload a cover letter, résumé with writing/editing samples or links to samples of your work, and a completed diocesan application at <http://bit.ly/3WVJfGD>. Any questions, please contact Kelly Shumate, HR coordinator, at 7800 Carousell Lane, Richmond, VA, 23294 or email jobs@richmonddioocese.org.

Communications Specialist, Office of Communications

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond, VA is seeking a Communications Specialist to support the mission of the diocesan Office of Communications. The Communications Specialist reports directly to the Communications Director and works closely with the director to develop materials for online, social media content, and offers media and public relations support. The position proactively monitors, oversees, and provides written content for diocesan digital communication platforms, supports diocesan programs in order to serve the overall mission of the Roman Catholic Church and is reflective of the voice and priorities of the bishop of Richmond.

The Communications Specialist is a self-motivated, team player, with the ability to generate ideas, exercise good judgment and write compelling content and edit for a wide range of digital and print communications, including but not limited to the diocesan website, diocesan social media content, and media and public relations efforts. In addition, the successful candidate will publish press releases, statements, reports and letters for the Office of Communications.

The successful candidate must also have a bachelor's degree in Public Relations, Marketing, English or related field. At least 2-3 years working in com-

munications or related field is necessary. A practicing Catholic with working knowledge of the structure and teachings of the Catholic Church is needed, but not required. Must have extensive knowledge and experience working with social media, strategy, and its various platforms. Analytics of this platform is a plus. Required skills include proficiency with PC software, including Microsoft Office and Wordpress. A familiarity with Adobe Creative Suite and Google Analytics, AP Stylebook and Canva is a plus.

Excellent written and oral communications skills with a strong attention to detail. Self-motivated with strong organizational and planning skills. Ability to work independently and collaboratively with a proven track record of completing multiple projects under deadlines. Ability to maintain confidentiality and work well under pressure.

This full-time position will require approximately 35 hours per week with the expectation of some nights and weekends.

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, résumé and completed diocesan application at <http://bit.ly/3ZhcaGT>. If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Shumate, HR coordinator, to jobs@richmonddioocese.org.

Church of the Redeemer, Mechanicsville, is seeking a passionate disciple of Christ to fill our full-time position of minister of evangelization and communication. This person will be responsible for ensuring that we are living out our mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. The minister is tasked with using traditional and modern means to invite others to discover the Catholic faith. This work includes collaboration with clergy and staff members. The minister would form and equip our parishioners to be evangelists in their homes and communities. The minister would also handle developing and implementing a plan for communicating faith and sharing information with the community.

Must be willing to learn new technologies or already have competency in social media platforms, Flocknote and Adobe Suite. A bachelor's

degree in theology, Catholic studies, religious education or a related field or equivalent experience required. Three to five years' experience in Catholic parish ministry is preferred. Must supply three (3) references. Qualified candidates should send a cover letter, résumé and diocesan application to the attention of Father Jim Cowles at jcowles@churchredeemer.org. Applications are being reviewed immediately.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Newport News, is looking for a part-time bus driver to help transport students safely to and from school for the 2023-2024 school year. CLD with bus endorsement is required. Please submit a résumé and a diocesan application to sajoseph@olmc-school.com. All inquiries should be directed to Sister Anna Joseph at 757-596-2754.

SHORTTAKES

St. Edward Knights of Columbus #6546 Annual Lenten Fish Fry! Fridays March 10, 17, 24, 31, 5-7 p.m., St. Edward Community Center, 2700 Dolfield Drive, North Chesterfield. Choice of catfish or salmon with hush puppies; baked potato or fries; salad or coleslaw and a drink. \$15/adult, \$8/children 5-12, free for children 4 and under. Questions? Please email stedknights@gmail.com.

As a community, we strive to support survivors of child sexual abuse on their journey toward healing and wholeness. For those who have suffered abuse by clergy residing in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, we invite you to join us virtually at 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 15. Spouses and affected community members are also welcome. These gatherings, led by an independent facilitator, will offer a safe environment for participants to connect, share experiences, support and heal. For more information, or the virtual meeting link, please call the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 877-887-9603 or email dana@atreeplanted.org.

The Catholic Woman's Club (CWC) invites you to join us for "Books In Bloom" in commemoration of Women's History Month. Enjoy a meet and greet and book signing to celebrate local authors and enjoy a luncheon. Our guest speaker is Sharon Pajka,

author of "Women Authors Buried in Virginia." This event is a major fundraiser for the CWC that contributes to a number of local charities, i.e., Meals on Wheels, The Virginia Home, as well as providing annual scholarships to St. Gertrude High School. Thursday, March 23 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Dominion Country Club, 6000 Dominion Club Drive, Glen Allen. Cost of the luncheon is \$38 per person. To reserve your seat, write your check to the Catholic Woman's Club and mail to Carol Valentine, 4817 Coleman Road, Richmond, VA 23230. Your check is due by Saturday, March 18. Note: If you have food allergies or special needs, please note in memo field of your check. More information can be found at www.cwcrva.org.

St. Jude Catholic Church, Mineral, is holding a fish dinner every Friday during Lent thru March 31. Dining room opens at 4:30 and dinner will be served until 7 p.m. in the parish hall, 1937 Davis Highway, Mineral. Carryout is available beginning at 4 p.m. Please note the earlier time. \$10 for adult fish meal (fried or baked)/\$5 for children. \$12 for adult fried shrimp meal/\$5 for children. Meals include hush puppies, choice of two sides (French fries, mac & cheese, coleslaw or applesauce), a drink and a homemade dessert. Extra fish or shrimp may be purchased for an additional \$3. Please contact the parish office with questions at 540-894-4266.

**Local, national, and
global Catholic news
@
catholicvirginian.org**

El Papa: Cuaresma tiempo favorable para volver a lo que somos, a Dios y los hermanos



RENATO MARTINEZ — CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

“La Cuaresma es el tiempo favorable para reavivar nuestras relaciones con Dios y con los demás; para abrirnos en el silencio a la oración y a salir del baluarte de nuestro yo cerrado; para romper las cadenas del individualismo y redescubrir, a través del encuentro y la escucha, quién es el que camina a nuestro lado cada día, y volver a aprender a amarlo como hermano o hermana”, lo dijo el Papa Francisco en su homilía, en la Santa Misa con el rito de bendición e imposición de las Cenizas, con el cual se inició el Tiempo de Cuaresma. Como cada año, la celebración litúrgica del Miércoles de Ceniza se realizó con la procesión penitencial, el canto de las letanías de los Santos desde la iglesia de San Anselmo hasta la Basílica de Santa Sabina en Roma.

La Cuaresma es el tiempo favorable para volver a lo esencial

En su homilía, el Santo Padre recordó que, el apóstol Pablo nos ayuda a entrar en el espíritu del tiempo cuaresmal cuando afirma que, «este es el tiempo favorable, este es el día de la salvación» (2 Co 6,2).

“La Cuaresma ciertamente es el tiempo favorable para volver a lo esencial, para despojarnos de lo que nos pesa, para reconciliarnos con Dios, para reavivar el fuego del Espíritu Santo que habita escondido entre las cenizas de nuestra frágil humanidad. Es el tiempo de gracia para llevar a cabo lo que el Señor nos ha pedido en el primer versículo de la Palabra que hemos escuchado: «Vuelvan a mí de todo corazón».

“El rito de la ceniza nos introduce en este camino de regreso, nos invita a volver a lo que realmente somos y a volver a Dios y a los hermanos”

La ceniza nos invita a volver a lo que realmente somos

Un primer aspecto que destacó el Papa Francisco fue la invitación a “volver a lo que realmente somos”. La ceniza, precisó el Papa, nos recuerda quiénes somos y de dónde venimos, nos reconduce a la verdad fundamental de la vida, es decir, sólo el Señor es Dios y nosotros somos obra de sus manos.

“Nosotros tenemos la vida mientras que Él es la vida. Él es el Creador, mientras nosotros somos frágil arcilla que se moldea en sus manos. Nosotros venimos de la tierra y necesitamos del Cielo, de Él. Con Dios resurgiremos de nuestras cenizas, pero sin Él somos polvo. Mientras inclinamos la cabeza, con humildad, para recibir las cenizas, traigamos a la memoria del corazón esta verdad: somos del Señor, le pertenecemos. Él, en verdad, «modeló al hombre con arcilla del suelo y sopló en su nariz un aliento de vida» (Gn 2,7), es decir, existimos porque Él ha exhalado el aliento de la vida en nosotros”.

“Y, como Padre tierno y misericordioso, Él también vive la Cuaresma, porque nos desea, nos espera, aguarda nuestro regreso. Y siempre nos anima a no desesperar, incluso cuando caemos en el polvo de nuestra fragilidad y de nuestro pecado, porque «Él conoce de qué estamos hechos, sabe muy bien que no somos más que polvo» (Sal 103,14)”

La Cuaresma es el tiempo para recordar quién es el Creador y quién la criatura

La Cuaresma, subrayó el Santo Padre, es por tanto el tiempo para que recordemos quién es el Creador y quién la criatura; para proclamar que sólo Dios es el Señor; para desnudarnos de la pretensión de bastarnos a nosotros mismos y del afán de ponernos en el centro, de ser los primeros de la clase, de pensar que sólo con nuestras capacidades podemos ser protagonistas de la vida y transformar el mundo que nos rodea.

“Este es el tiempo favorable para convertirnos, para cambiar la mirada antes que nada sobre nosotros mismos, para vernos por dentro. Cuántas distracciones y superficialidades nos apartan de lo que es importante. Cuántas veces nos centramos en nuestros deseos o en lo que nos falta, alejándonos del centro del corazón, olvidándonos de abrazar el sentido de nuestro ser en el mundo”.

“La Cuaresma es un tiempo de verdad para quitarnos las máscaras que llevamos cada día aparentando ser perfectos a los ojos del mundo; para luchar, como nos ha dicho Jesús en el Evangelio, contra la falsedad y la hipocresía. No las de los demás, sino las nuestras”

La ceniza nos invita a volver a Dios y a los hermanos

Un segundo aspecto que destacó el Papa Francisco fue recordar que, “la ceniza nos invita a volver a Dios y a los hermanos”. De hecho, si volvemos a la verdad de lo que somos y nos damos cuenta de que nuestro yo no es autosuficiente, entonces descubrimos que existimos gracias a las relaciones, tanto la originaria con el Señor como las vitales con los demás.

“Así, la ceniza que hoy recibimos en la cabeza nos dice que cada presunción de autosuficiencia es falsa y que idolatrar el yo es destructivo y nos encierra en la jaula de la soledad. Nuestra vida, sin embargo, es sobre todo una relación; la hemos recibido de Dios y de nuestros padres, y siempre podemos renovarla y regenerarla gracias al Señor y a aquellos que Él ha puesto junto a nosotros”.

“La Cuaresma es el tiempo favorable para reavivar nuestras relaciones con Dios y con los demás; para abrirnos en el silencio a la oración y a salir del baluarte de nuestro yo cerrado; para romper las cadenas del individualismo y redescubrir, a través del encuentro y la escucha, quién es el que camina a nuestro lado cada día, y volver a aprender a amarlo como hermano o hermana”

Tres grandes vías para volver a Dios y a los demás

Pero, cómo podemos realizar todo esto, se pregunta el Santo Padre. Para completar este camino —volver a lo que realmente somos y volver a Dios y a los demás— el Pontífice indicó que hoy, se nos invita a recorrer tres grandes vías: la limosna, la oración y el ayuno.

“Como hemos escuchado en el Evangelio, Jesús nos advierte: no se trata de ritos exteriores, sino de gestos que deben expresar una renovación del corazón”.

“La limosna no es un gesto rápido para limpiarse la conciencia, sino un tocar con las propias manos y con las propias lágrimas los sufrimientos de los pobres. La oración no es ritualidad, sino diálogo de verdad y amor con el

Padre. El ayuno no es un simple sacrificio, sino un gesto fuerte para recordarle a nuestro corazón que es lo que permanece y que es lo pasajero”

La sinceridad del alma y la coherencia de las obras

Jesús nos hace «una advertencia que conserva también para nosotros su validez saludable: a los gestos exteriores debe corresponder siempre la sinceridad del alma y la coherencia de las obras.

“En efecto, ¿de qué sirve [...] rasgarse las vestiduras, si el corazón sigue lejos del Señor, es decir, del bien y de la justicia?» (Benedicto XVI, Homilía miércoles de ceniza, 1 marzo 2006). Muchas veces, sin embargo, nuestros gestos y ritos no tocan la vida, no son auténticos, quizás los hacemos sólo para que los demás nos admiren, para recibir el aplauso, para atribuirnos el crédito”.

“Recordemos que, en la vida personal, como en la vida de la Iglesia, lo que cuenta no es lo exterior, los juicios humanos y el aprecio del mundo; sino sólo la mirada de Dios, que lee el amor y la verdad”

No quedarnos en gestos exteriores

En este sentido, el Papa Francisco invitó a ponernos humildemente bajo su mirada, entonces la limosna, la oración y el ayuno no se quedan en gestos exteriores, sino que expresan quiénes somos verdaderamente: hijos de Dios y hermanos entre nosotros.

“La limosna, la caridad, manifestará nuestra compasión con quien está necesitado, nos ayudará a volver a los demás; la oración dará voz a nuestro íntimo deseo de encontrar al Padre, haciéndonos volver a Él; el ayuno será una gimnasia espiritual para renunciar con alegría a lo que es superfluo y nos sobrecarga, para ser interiormente más libres y volver a lo que realmente somos”.

Pongámonos en camino con la caridad, oración y ayuno

Finalmente, el Santo Padre exhortó a que, inclinemos la cabeza, recibamos la ceniza, aligeremos el corazón y que no desperdiciemos la gracia de este tiempo santo.

Pongámonos en camino por medio de la caridad:

“Nos han dado cuarenta días favorables para recordarnos que el mundo no se cierra en los estrechos límites de nuestras necesidades personales y para redescubrir la alegría, no en las cosas que se acumulan, sino en el cuidado de aquellos que se encuentran en la necesidad y en la aflicción”.

Pongámonos en camino por medio de la oración:

“Se nos otorgan cuarenta días favorables para dar a Dios la primacía de nuestra vida, para volver a dialogar con Él de todo corazón, no en ratos perdidos”.

Pongámonos en camino por medio del ayuno:

“Se nos ofrecen cuarenta días favorables para reencontrarnos, para frenar la dictadura de las agendas siempre llenas de cosas por hacer; de las pretensiones de un ego cada vez más superficial y engorroso; y de elegir lo que de verdad importa”.

“Fijemos nuestra mirada en el Crucificado y caminemos. Respondamos con generosidad a las llamadas fuertes de la Cuaresma. Al final del trayecto encontraremos con más alegría al Señor de la vida, al único que nos hará resurgir de nuestras cenizas”

Planting seeds of service in Walsingham students

JENNIFER NEVILLE

Special to The Catholic Virginian

When the junior class of Walsingham Academy, Williamsburg, experienced their Theology Service Day Retreat at Williamsburg House of Mercy (WHOM), it hopefully inspired them to make service to others a lifetime effort, according to organizers.

“From my point of view as campus minister, I think it’s always about planting seeds” by giving students the opportunity to help the community meaningfully, said Steve DeLaney, who is also a theology teacher. “The other impact I hope it has is to open their eyes to people living in poverty in our own town.”

He said each year the retreat aims to drive home Catholic social teachings — principles of human dignity, the call to participation and putting the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

WHOM, an outreach mission of St. Bede, Williamsburg, is an independent non-profit that serves the homeless and others in financial distress in a variety of ways such as running food and diaper banks and helping the homeless find jobs and housing.

On Tuesday, Feb. 7, the nearly 40 students did the legwork needed for weekly food distributions and a monthly clothing and housewares market. The food distributions keep food on 1,150 tables each month while the monthly market serves an average of 85 families per month. The students also participated in painting a mural in the warehouse to make it a warmer and more aesthetically pleasing place for the organization’s 600-some volunteers and as a remembrance that the students had been there to help, explained Liz Buckley, WHOM director of development.

She said WHOM has partnered with Walsingham Academy for the past few years.

“It’s important for the students to really understand that it’s not just food; it’s not just the shelter,” Buckley said. “I think it’s important for them to understand that people have problems that are much deeper” and “these service projects are a way to get them to really understand that.”

Students confirmed the event was eye-opening and they were glad to be able to lend a helping hand.

“We got to help others who are in need, and it was just overall a pretty chill experience helping other people,” said Will Patterson. “I think I will definitely be back in the future to help more.”

Isabella Kennedy also enjoyed serving her community.

“It was a great experience for me because I got to get involved,” she said. “It was really great just to know that I was making a little bit of a difference.”

Alex Black appreciated the opportunity to “see the depth of the situation, especially in Williamsburg.”

“I think it was nice that we were given the opportunity to see that we can help,” she said. “I would definitely go back again and help if I am able.”

Likewise, Kennedy, who said the retreat “shows me I have to further my involvement and work hard so that way all people can be benefited,” affirmed, “not many people are aware of how prominent Williamsburg’s homeless population is.”

“Recognition is not something that should



Above: Members of Walsingham Academy’s junior class sort donated clothes at the Williamsburg House of Mercy for a clothing market which helps about 85 families each month. (Photo/Liz Buckley)



Left: Juniors from Walsingham Academy, Williamsburg, paint a mural Feb. 7 to brighten up the Williamsburg House of Mercy. (Photo/Liz Buckley)

Below: Nearly 40 juniors from Walsingham Academy, Williamsburg, help the Williamsburg House of Mercy prepare for food distributions that put food on 1,150 tables each month. (Photo/David Isolano)



fuel your desire to give back. It should come from inside, the things that you have witnessed and you have seen,” she continued. “Recognition should not be a driving factor, and each person should find their own motivation.”

Students enjoyed their service day so much that at the end of the day many asked when they could return to do more. Plans are under way for students to help with WHOM’s Easter basket preparations – a distribution expected to reach 600 children in the Greater Williamsburg community.

“We’re finding the younger generation is eager to get involved and make a change in their community,” said Shannon Wolosynowski, WHOM executive director. “If they start

now while in high school, there’s a great chance it continues once they go to college. Even just recognizing a need for a change is an important step in being the change you want to see in your community.”

Buckley said, “Knowing that a future generation can really start to step up and think outside of their own little bubble is really important to me, and I think that we achieved that with our partnership with Walsingham this time and previous times and future times to come.”

Editor’s note: Liz Buckley, from Williamsburg House of Mercy, contributed to this report. To learn more about Williamsburg House of Mercy and ways to volunteer/donate, look for the link posted in our story at www.catholicvirginian.org.