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Newly-ordained encouraged to serve with ‘energy, zeal’

Seminarians David Arellano and Seth M. Seaman ordained to Order of the Diaconate

LILY NGUYEN DUNKLE
The Catholic Virginian

“When you preach and serve, always strive to do so with love, not indifference,” Bishop Barry C. Knestout said encouragingly to the two seminarians seated facing him, in front of the altar.

David Arellano, 25, and Seth Michael Seaman, 37, were ordained deacons on Saturday, May 20, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond. The sacrament of Holy Orders leaves an indelible mark on their souls as they take a step closer to the priesthood.

Being ordained to the Order of the Diaconate means Deacons David and Seth can now proclaim the Gospel; preach at Mass; administer baptisms; assist at, and bless, marriages; and conduct funeral rites, among other things in their ministry.

During the ordination rite, Father Brian Capuano, Vicar for Vocations, presented the two candidates in front of the altar. The bishop, flanked by Deacon John Kren and Deacon David Reaves, deemed the seminarians worthy and elected them for ordination.

The elect promised to remain celibate as a sign of dedication to their service, and to deepen their spirit of prayer by praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

Bishop Knestout told them to rely on the “strength, help and power of the Holy Spirit, who is always ready to give you the gifts and graces to be effective ministers and personal examples of the Gospel.”

During his homily, the bishop talked about Saint Philip the Evangelist in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

“What is notable in the story is the energy, zeal, and quickness of Saint Philip to explain the Gospel,” said the bishop.

“David and Seth, always ask for the grace of Saint Philip in your ministry to be quick to respond to the Holy Spirit, and generous in your time and energy to bring the people you encounter to Christ,” the bishop added.

The seminarians knelt before the bishop and placed their hands in his, pledging obedience to him and his successors.

Then, the two men prostrated themselves in front of the altar while the

cantor led everyone in singing the Litany of the Saints.

“I felt a deep sense of peace,” Deacon David said when asked what was going through his mind during the rite. “I didn’t have a care in the world, I was just able to be present in the moment.”

Then the bishop laid his hands on their heads and prayed the Prayer of Ordination, asking God to dedicate the deacons to service at the altar and to God’s people.

“The most powerful moment for me was the laying of hands by the bishop,” said Deacon Seth. “He left his hands for a while, and I felt the Holy Spirit was made present to me. It was truly an amazing moment to receive all that grace.”

The newly-ordained deacons were then vested in the deacon’s stole and dalmatic, signs of their new office.

After Mass, the mothers of both men were emotional and could barely speak as tears filled their eyes.

“I’m so, so proud of him,” said Deacon David’s mother, Maria Emma Arellano. She leaned on her other son, Juan, and spoke to him in Spanish for help in translating her thoughts.

She said from the time David was a little boy, as young as 4 years old, he would try to go up to the altar during Mass to “help the priest.”

Deacon Seth’s mother, Veronica Seaman, also stated it simply but firmly, saying she was “very proud.”

She then said she was even more emotional because being at the ordination made her think of her husband, Lon Seaman, who passed away four years ago. “He would have been proud as well,” she said.

Deacon Seth preached his first homily the next day at St. Joseph, Hampton, his home parish. He said afterward he had been “wanting to preach at Mass for years” and while he has “a lot of room to grow,” he felt “at home behind the ambo.”

He will serve this summer at St. Jude, Christiansburg.

Deacon David also returned to his home parish, St. Francis of Assisi, Rocky Mount, to preach his first homily. He will serve at Saint Gabriel, Chesterfield, and Good Samaritan, Louisa, this summer.



Seminarians David Arellano and Seth Michael Seaman ordained to the Order of the Diaconate at Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, May 20. (Photos/ Michael Mickle)

Richmond, VA 23294
7800 Carousell Lane

The Catholic Virginian

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Use of AI cannot ignore respect for human dignity



CHRIST OUR HOPE
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

Prior to discerning and answering my call to priesthood, I was an architecture major in college. Computer-aided drawing didn't exist. While we wrote building specification on word processors, we did everything else, drafting and designing, by hand.

This was life in the analog world. CAD (Computer Aided Design) systems would not begin to be widely used until the years after I completed my undergraduate education. The designing and drawing we did often took hours and even days to execute.

I thought about this as I watched Scott Pelley interview Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google, on "60 Minutes" (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/google-artificial-intelligence-future-60-minutes-transcript-2023-04-16/>) regarding artificial intelligence (AI) last month. Pichai said one of the professions certain to be affected by AI would be architecture.

Throughout the segment, which included interviews of others involved in AI development, viewers were offered mind-boggling information, e.g., how projects that once took multiple people working months and years could now be done in a matter of seconds due to data farm computers.

While I appreciate technology, I am not immersed and schooled in it. I have a limited idea of what's involved in AI. I know it's supposed to be a large network trying to mimic what the human brain does, but on a larger scale. From this the AI system can gather and collect all the information from the internet, learn from it and create new text and images from it.

It is my understanding that AI is based upon probability, similar to the "auto correct" feature on your phone that writes words in your texts based upon the first one or two letters you've typed. AI anticipates the next word but doesn't always get it correct because probability doesn't necessarily coincide with reality. Something might be more probable but that doesn't mean it happened or will happen.

It's going to be in error since it's working totally out of the abstract realm — hypotheticals and possibilities — of what could be, but not necessarily what is. It has no sense of the subject-

ive nor of the concrete, which we deal with all the time. These are our individual points of view and impact how we act and interact with others.

This is the brave new world this year's high school and college graduates are entering. It's a world in which those who are creating AI systems seem to be looking at the world in a materialistic way. Thus, this AI mind/intellect is only a summary of all kinds of data and information. It doesn't make the connection between the abstract and the concrete which we routinely bring together in our lives and experiences.

That understanding of the unity between body and spirit, between the intellect and the whole person, seems to be missing. If you do not see these as integrated, which we do as Catholics, you are probably going to create something that is in error, something that is not going to be able to function well in the real world.

Unless you are grounded in ethics and moral theology, unless you have a good sense of the human person that faith and the Church reveal to us, it will be difficult to be able to deal with this new world in a way that will respect and care for the good of humanity. When we seek what is good, it is always grounded in the Gospel, in our full reality as a human person — body, mind and soul.

In whatever field of study or area of employment you pursue, it is understandable that many will express uncertainty and anxiety about the power and impact of AI. We can't dismiss it, but we shouldn't forsake faith and the spiritual life either.

Those who are educated in the context of the Catholic faith, it seems to me, are in the best position and have the best capacity to make sure technology, all these expansive abilities, are used in a manner that respects, cares for and facilitates the good of the human person.

To all members of the Class of 2023, I encourage you to stay close to the faith as you pursue your professions, especially in technological fields, as that will give you the balance you need. This sober connection with reality will help to counter any abstract power of AI.

In a March address (<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/march/documents/20230327-minerva-dialogues.html>) to the "Minerva Dialogues," a Vatican gathering of an elite group of scientists, Pope Francis noted the "practical benefits of science and technology," adding that it could "contribute in a positive way to the future of humanity."

However, he cautioned, "The concept of human dignity — and this is central — requires us to recognize and respect the fact that a person's fundamental value cannot be measured by data alone. In social and economic decision-making, we should be cautious about delegating judgments to algorithms that process data, often collected surreptitiously, on an individual's makeup and prior behavior.

"Such data can be contaminated by societal prejudices and preconceptions. A person's past behavior should not be used to deny him or her the opportunity to change, grow and contribute to society. *We cannot allow algorithms to limit or condition respect for human dignity, or to exclude compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and above all, the hope that people are able to change.*" [Emphasis added]

May members of the Class of 2023, as well as all of us, take those words to heart as we navigate our AI-impacted lives.

Ethics of AI

KRAKOW, Poland (OSV News) — The ethics of AI was the reason the media ethics conference at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland, garnered a record number of researchers this year.

"The theme is gaining momentum," said Father Michal Drozdz, dean of the university's social sciences department.

"So far we're in the stage of having fun with ChatGPT, we're treating it as an adventure," he said.

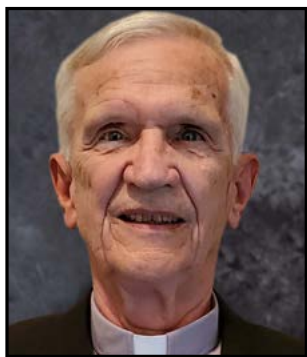
What is at stake, Father Drozdz said, is a threat of the objectification of man and empowerment of machines. He said AI is becoming more an issue of human ethical security.

"Man is at the center of everything ... and all machines, all applications, algorithms, should serve mankind," he said.

— Paulina Guzik, OSV News

IN MEMORIAM

Deacon James Satterwhite



Deacon James Satterwhite was laid to rest on Saturday, May 20, at St. Joan of Arc, Yorktown.

He passed away peacefully on Sunday, May 14, at the age of 74. He was from Cambridge, Massachusetts, but lived in Yorktown for 22 years.

Deacon Satterwhite served in the United States Air Force for 23 years, retiring as a Chief Master Sergeant in 1990. He then worked for Northrop Grumman until 2012.

He served as a deacon at St. Joan of Arc for 10 years, until his death. He is survived by his wife, Cynthia; daughters, Phoebe C. McGrath (Jaime) of Mahwah, New Jersey and Alice C. Cherrix (Christopher) of Japan; and two grandchildren, Aiden and Allison McGrath.

IN MEMORIAM

Deacon Roy Smith



Deacon Roy Smith was laid to rest on Friday, May 26, at Saint Gabriel, Chesterfield. He passed away on May 18.

Deacon Roy graduated from Fordham University in 1963 and began military service as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Quartermaster Corp. stationed at Fort Lee, Virginia. He married Sandy shortly after; they had been dating since they were 15 and 16.

He moved to Chesterfield in 2011 and began serving as a deacon at Saint Gabriel.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Stephen H. and Nancy Smith, and by his siblings, Steve Smith and Nancy Gjerlow. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Sandy; children, Laura Dichter (Scott) and Roy Jr. (Megan); grandchildren, Max, Ryan and Kelly; brother Donald Smith; and many nieces and nephews.

Celebrating 40 years of being a priest and 'friend' to parishioners

JENNIFER NEVILLE
Special to The Catholic Virginian

Father Rogelio Largoza, familiarly known as Father Ongen, glides naturally, wearing his ever-present smile, stopping to talk with parishioners gathered at the coffee and donut fellowship hour after Mass at St. Mary of the Presentation (St. Mary), Suffolk.

"I don't think he ever sits down," parish administrative assistant Kim Holmes said with a laugh as she described the biweekly social.

Father Ongen, who is celebrating his 40th anniversary as a priest, is described as having a "personable" personality that pairs nicely with his renowned sense of humor. Many consider him a friend, which is his goal.

"I make myself a friend to the parishioners, not just a pastor, because my principle there is you can only open up yourself if you are a friend to somebody because whenever you are a friend, you are trusted," he said.

"Sometimes I am their pastor, I am their priest, I am their spiritual

advisor, but I can only do that because for them I am a friend," Father Ongen added.

"The best part (of being a priest) is being with the people and serving them aside from the priestly ministry that is celebrating the Eucharist," he continued. "It is my service to the people that I show and express my dedication, my commitment, to the Lord."



Father Rogelio Largoza

According to former and present parishioners, Father Ongen makes himself available – visiting homes, fishing with parishioners and pitching in where needed, whether it's raking the churchyard, slicing onions for a Knights of Columbus stew or helping sell Christmas trees.

Donna Seate, office manager for the Cluster Parishes in Clarksville, South Boston and South Hill where he previously served, said, "From the get-go he was very personable, very caring, very friendly – just a wonderful, spiritual priest. He brought a lot to our parish. He was good with all groups of people – from the kids to the elderly to people in the middle."

At St. Mary, he has drawn the crowds, filling the pews with both young and old. Parishioners, who



Father Rogelio "Ongen" Largoza presides at a Mass at St. Mary of the Presentation, Suffolk, celebrating the 40th anniversary of his ordination.

(Photo provided by St. Mary of the Presentation)

are quick to emphasize that previous priests brought their own talents and made their own positive impacts in the parish, said Father Ongen has been building a more vibrant, united parish after COVID-19 lowered attendance. The parish has about 140 active families, and Holmes said she faces a stack of new registrations ready to be filed.

He has encouraged parishioners to join ministries and for those ministries to be more active, they said. The coffee and donut fellowship hour is new as are occasional brunches and celebrations including one for Father Ongen's mile-

stone. The event brought in members of his family, priests with whom he has previously served, and a multitude of parishioners, both present and past.

"It was a great celebration, not because I reached 40 years but because I saw the concern of the people here," Father Ongen said. "I saw the joy that they felt when I celebrated my 40th anniversary. It was as if my joy was their joy. My triumph was their triumph."

At St. Mary, as at previous parishes, he is fostering spirituality. For example, he has expanded the

See Father Largoza, Page 13



Knights of Columbus State Convention

The Knights of Columbus Virginia State Council held its Annual State Convention May 5-7 at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront.

Saturday, Bishop Barry C. Knestout celebrated the annual Memorial Mass in remembrance of the brother Knights who passed away during the year. The concelebrants were Bishop Emeritus Paul S. Loverde, of the Diocese of Arlington, and Father Salvador Añonuevo, Associate State Chaplain of the Virginia Knights of Columbus.



Father Salvador Añonuevo

Sal is a true inspiration to all of the Knights" in Virginia.

Father Michael J. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882, and was beatified in 2020, bringing him one step closer to sainthood.

Each jurisdiction presents a Blessed Michael McGivney Award. The Supreme Council will choose an international winner from that group.

Father Añonuevo, pastor of Holy Cross, Lynchburg, was awarded the Blessed Michael McGivney Award. According to the nomination form, the award is given to a chaplain who is a teacher of faith, a devoted parish priest, and an exemplar of charity. Members of the state council say "Father



Bishop Barry C. Knestout bows before the Knights of Columbus' Symbols of the Fourth Degree, honoring the baldric, sword, chalice, United States flag, rose, and rosary. They symbolize liberty; honor; love of country, Church, family; Right of the Unborn/Right to Life; and devotion to the Blessed Mother.



Bishop Barry C. Knestout hugs Patrick Rowland, the state deputy of the Knights of Columbus Virginia State Council, after Rowland presents the bishop with a check for seminarians.

(Photos/Donald Poole)

Hispanic youth empowered through encounter with Christ

KAREN ADAMS

Special to The Catholic Virginian

Seeking to encounter Christ, 77 Hispanic and Latino Catholic high school teens from across the diocese gathered on April 22 at The Westin, Richmond, to explore and celebrate their community, culture, and faith.

The all-day, bilingual Youth Encuentro (“Encounter”) was titled “The Eucharist in My Life: Walking with Jesus,” for Hispanic and Latino students ages 14 to 18.

The day included Mass with Bishop Barry C. Knestout, discussion sessions led by three priests, and social activities. The event was organized by the diocese’s Office of Ethnic Ministries.

“This encounter is so important because the Hispanic and Latino Catholic youth are not just future leaders, they are leaders now,” said Daniel Villar, director of the Office of Ethnic Ministries. “We have to give them space for leadership in the Church.”

As the Hispanic and Latino community is one of the largest groups in the diocese, it’s essential that its young members have a voice, he said.

“The Youth Encounter gave them the space to communicate,” Villar explained. “A lot of these young people keep things to themselves because they don’t feel empowered to express their thoughts and feelings. But the speakers gave them a safe space to do that.”

‘It was good to share our stories’

Angel Damian and Israel Munoz, both 16, were part of a group of 12 attendees from St. Gerard, Roanoke.

Both noted that it felt special to have Mass celebrated by Bishop Knestout. “He was right there in front of us,” said Damian. “He was very welcoming and he understands our community.”

He also said it was fun getting to know people, including some from his own parish. “It made my faith better, with all of us telling our stories,” he said.

He observed that some people



Father Joe Goldsmith (left) talks to Hispanic and Latino teens about mental health during a group session of Youth Encuentro in Richmond, April 22. (Photo/Vy Barto)

were shy, especially if they spoke little or no English. He and Munoz met two girls in their group from Guatemala who didn’t speak English. “So we talked to them in Spanish to help them feel welcome,” he recalled.

He added that he was impressed by the honesty of the priests, who said they too have had their share of doubts. “But they’re still here, serving as priests,” Damian said.

Munoz said he was especially moved by the priests’ stories of their missionary work in other areas, especially Guatemala.

Overall, Munoz said, “It was good to share our stories and problems, and to hear the priests talk about their lives. It also helped me reflect more on my life and what I do.”

The three priests met with all the students in groups divided by age throughout the day. Each led a session on a different aspect of walking with Jesus through the Eucharist.

Father Mario Majano, assistant director of vocations and pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Clinton, Maryland, for the Archdiocese of Washington, spoke about the spiritual nature of encountering Christ, especially as members of Hispanic and Latino cultures.

Father Joe Goldsmith led conversations on mental health, addressing

the issues Hispanic and Latino teens are facing today. He is the pastor of the Catholic Cluster: St. John, Dinwiddie; Sacred Heart, Prince George; and St. James, Hopewell.

Father Armando Herrera discussed vocations and gave his own testimony about being called to the priesthood. Ordained in December, Father Herrera is spending three years as parochial vicar at Blessed Sacrament, Harrisonburg, after which he will join the United States Army as a chaplain.

‘Be open to possibility’

Villar emphasized that it was especially meaningful to have Bishop Knestout with them to celebrate Mass. “Youth in general, and especially youth from different cultural backgrounds, are very close to the bishop’s heart,” he explained.

“The bishop’s presence helped them understand their importance and helped them see the value of what they think and say,” added Villar.

Deacon Ramon Rivera from St. John, Highland Springs, and Deacon Ed Owen from St. Benedict, Richmond, joined the priests and bishop for Mass.

After Mass, Bishop Knestout offered a reflection on the importance of encountering each other. “He told them to be open to possibility: of meeting a new friend, of hearing what God is trying to tell them,” Villar said.

“Today’s society is so divisive, but the students were made to feel comfortable,” he said. “The bishop urged them to be open, and they listened.”

Later he noticed many of them walking back from lunch with someone they had not walked in with.

“It was profound to me, and it’s what our faith is really about: relating to each other,” he noted. “They wanted to reach out and be reached out to. And not once did I see any of them using their phones.”

The last youth encounter was in 2018; Villar hopes it will be an annual event.

He expressed gratitude for all the students, chaperones, bilingual interpreters, clergy, and others who made the event such a success – and especially “to Bishop Knestout for his presence and encouraging message and prayers for the youth.”

Hearing God’s call

“They were very receptive to what I said about encountering Jesus,” Father Herrera recalled about his discussion on vocations.

“We talked about how if Jesus has a mission for each of us uniquely, it’s important to be able to hear his voice,” he said.

“One young girl was pretty emotional and shared that she was going through a tough time. She said, ‘Jesus came to me and told me everything was going to be okay,’” Father Herrera said.

Speaking in Spanish and with the help of an interpreter, a young man from Guatemala shared an encounter of his own. Lately, he explained, he had felt lonely because he’s not from this country and he speaks only Spanish. Recently he opened his Bible to read Scripture and he said he felt the presence of God come over him.



Father Mario Majano (left) and Father Armando Herrera enjoy a lighter moment during Youth Encuentro. (Photo/Vy Barto)

“He actually felt heat in his hands,” Father Herrera said. “It brought him great comfort and great peace.”

Father Herrera emphasized prayer as the path to hearing God’s voice: learning how to pray and practicing a dialogue with God.

He quoted the late Pope Benedict XVI: “Young people, if they know how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God’s call.”



Bishop Barry C. Knestout encourages teens to be open to one another. (Photo/Vy Barto)

60% of Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic

Less than **3%** Hispanic Catholic children enrolled in Catholic schools

4 in 10 Hispanic adults stopped identifying as Catholics

– Source: OSV News

Uganda Martyrs answered with strength and courage

FATHER ALEXANDER S. MUDDU
Special to The Catholic Virginian

The Uganda Martyrs were canonized on Mission Sunday, October 18, 1964, by Pope Paul VI, in the presence of 2,000 bishops gathered in Rome for the third session of the Second Vatican Council.

“We decree that their memory be commemorated by the Universal Church with pious devotion each year on June 3,” remarked the pope.

These brave young men, 22 Roman Catholics: Achilles Kiwanuka, 17; Adolphus Ludigo-Mukasa, 24; Ambrose Kibuuka, 18; Anatoli Kiriggwajjo, 20; Andrew Kaggwa, 30; Athanasius Bazzekuketta, 20; Bruno Sserunkuuma, 30; Charles Lwanga, 25; Denis Ssebuggwaawo, 16; Gonzaga Gonza, 24; Gyavira Musoke, 17; James Buuzaabalyaawo, 25-30; Jean Marie Muzeeyi, 30-35; Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe, 25; Kizito John Baptist, 14; Lukka Baanabakintu, 30-35; Matthias Kalemba Mulumba, 50; Mbagga Tuzinde, 17; Mugagga Lubowa, 16; Mukasa Kiriwawanyu, 20-25; Noa Mawaggali, 35; and Pontian Ngondwe, 25, in barely 3 years of discipleship, became our ancestors in faith by embracing the supreme form of witnessing to Christ: the martyrdom.

On the fateful morning of May 26, 1886, King Mwanga brought his whole court before him and separated the Christians, saying, “those who do not pray, stand by me – those who pray, stand over there.”

He proceeded to ask the fifteen boys and young men standing apart whether they were Christians, and if they were, whether they intended to remain so.

When they answered “Yes” with strength and courage, Mwanga condemned them all to death. After that judgment, the future martyrs subsequently walked, staggered, and were often dragged until most of them finally reached the execution site at Namugongo.

After their imprisonment and torture, they were all killed on June 3, 1886.

To this number we can add another two: the two young catechists, David Okello, 16, and Jildo Irwa, 12-14, who were killed in Paimol near Kalongo in Northern Uganda on October 18, 1918. They, too, had refused to renounce

the religion of which they were the catechists.

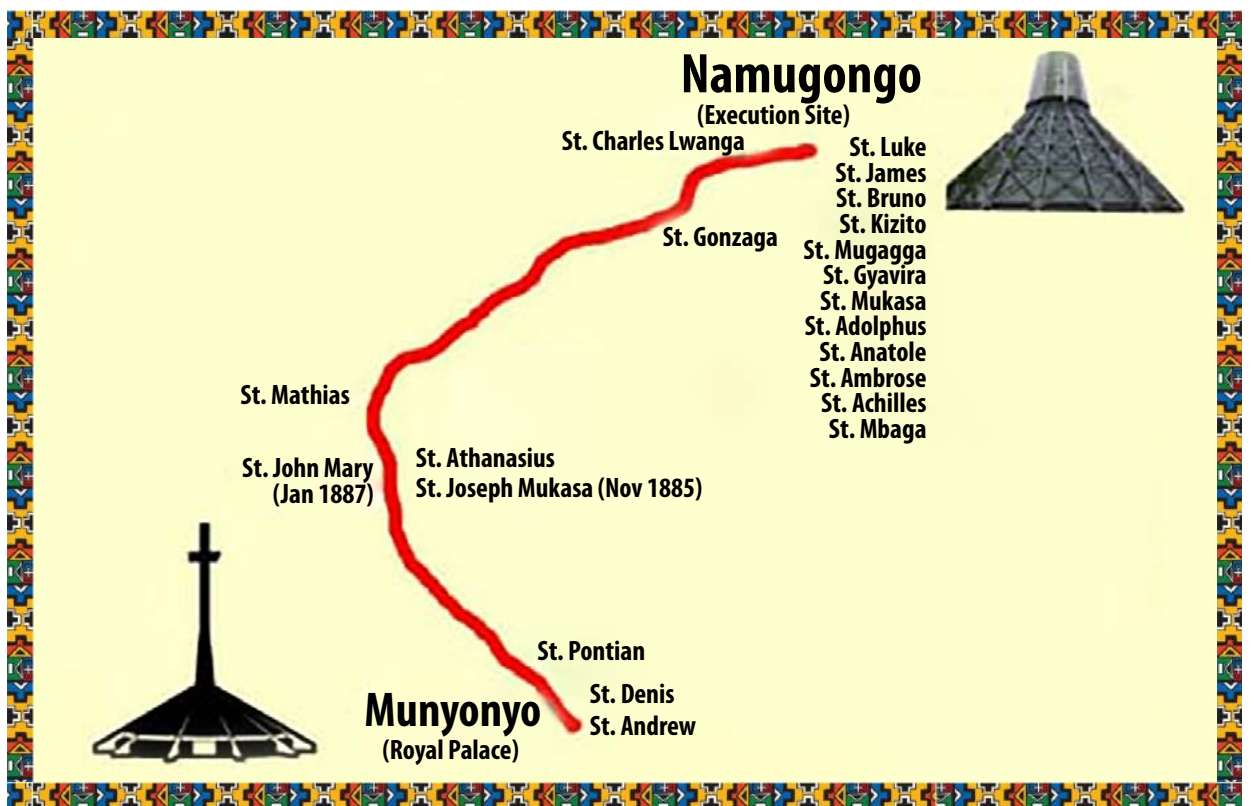
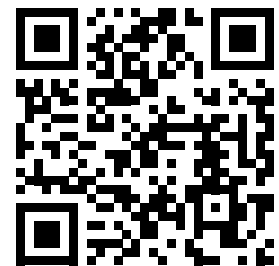
If the Uganda Martyrs had wanted, they could have fled Buganda territory. They could have gone into exile in any other part of Uganda, as many Baganda did whenever persecuted. They also could have escaped and followed missionaries to Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria – although it would never have been easy.

They knew, in advance, of the plot to execute them. They had received intelligence from King Mwanga’s palace about the plan to murder them. But even then, after discussing the dangerous situation, they unanimously resolved to die for their faith rather than revert to their past or flee to exile.

The challenge is for us to emulate the Uganda Martyrs and stick to the truth. This will save our American society from a number of evils, such as: pride, envy, wrath, impurity, gluttony, consumerism, character assassination, killing, depravity, and debauchery – the list stretches on.

Father Alexander S. Muddu, pastor of Saint Mary of the Annunciation, Ladysmith, is a priest of the Archdiocese of Kampala, Uganda. He became passionate about the Uganda Martyrs in high school and college seminary through a prayer group devoted to sharing the stories of the Uganda Martyrs.

Editor’s note: Scan this QR code to watch Father Muddu’s special presentation on the Uganda Martyrs, or find it at catholicvirginian.org.



(Source: Archdiocese of Kampala, Uganda)

Nearly 2,000 children abused by Catholic clergy over decades, says Illinois AG report

GINA CHRISTIAN
OSV News

(OSV News) – Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul released a May 23 report revealing decades of abuse by Catholic clergy against almost 2,000 children.

The report, unveiled during a May 23 press conference and totaling almost 700 pages, concludes a multi-year investigation launched in 2018 into child sexual abuse by 451 clergy and religious brothers in all six Catholic dioceses in Illinois.

Prior to Raoul’s investigation, the Catholic dioceses of Illinois publicly listed just 103 credibly accused abusers.

According to Raoul’s office, attorneys and investigators “reviewed more than 100,000 pages

of documents held by the dioceses and received more than 600 confidential contacts from survivors through emails, letters, interviews and phone calls.”

Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich said in a statement that archdiocesan officials “have not studied the report in detail but have concerns about data that might be misunderstood or are presented in ways that could be misleading.”

Among what he said church officials “know to be true” is that the 451 clergy named in the report includes the priests already on the six diocesan websites. “All were reported to civil authorities, none were undisclosed, none were ‘hiding in plain sight’ since at least 2002.”

Rockford Bishop David J. Malloy

added that safe environment protocols in the Rockford Diocese had been established in 1987, some 15 years before the U.S. bishops created their “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.”

The Diocese of Peoria said in a statement that such protocols “have gone a long way to address the scourge of sexual abuse,” and that “to the diocese’s knowledge, there is not a single priest of the diocese with a substantiated allegation who is currently in ministry or who has not been reported to the authorities.”

Bishop Ronald A. Hicks of Joliet stressed that “although the majority of abuse occurred decades ago, many victims/survivors remain haunted to this day.”

“Some may be thinking, ‘I

thought this was over.’ No sin of such great magnitude as sexual abuse of minors should ever be forgotten,” he said in a May 23 statement. “Remembering the harm done forces us to remain vigilant in our efforts to ensure it never happens again.”

Bishop Michael G. McGovern of Belleville said it was “crucial” to understand that “nothing is more important to us than the welfare of the youth entrusted to our care,” and that the Belleville Diocese “takes all allegations of inappropriate or sexual misconduct seriously.”

“In the name of our community, I offer my profound apology to all who have been harmed by the failure to prevent and properly respond to child sexual abuse by clerics,” said Bishop McGovern.

Identity crisis: self-creation is letting others define you

GUEST COMMENTARY

JAYMIE STUART WOLFE
OSV NEWS

It's promoted as total freedom, but the "self-made human" is a myth both futile and stress-inducing. As such, today's alarming rates of clinical anxiety shouldn't surprise us.

To believe that we carry the burden of our own existence – that we must strive not just to find ourselves, but to create ourselves – is a heavy load indeed.

As society navigates through difficult and delicate issues of self, including gender dysphoria, it's hard not to ask whether it's possible to "know thyself" if we deny the prior existence of a self to discover.

This isn't just an ambiguous variation on the Delphic oracle. We are a people dissatisfied with ourselves – bewildered about who and what we are, and constantly seeking reinvention.

I'm convinced the current riptide of confusion flows from — and reveals — a deep and widespread identity crisis. We have been talking about self-improvement, self-help or self-actualization for decades.

It almost seems inevitable that we would now venture on a new quest: self-creation. Rather than

receiving who we are as a gift from our Creator, many have discarded all the givens, literally throwing our baby selves out with the bath water. We've substituted the journey of self-discovery for one of self-invention.

Yet, as we struggle to define and redefine ourselves, the quest for lasting and transcendent reality is set aside. Instead, there are long, drawn-out projects of intrinsic self-interest, even selfishness.

If the thrust of our entire lives is determining what we are, we never quite get around to being who we are, let alone engaging the question of why we are.

Expressing ourselves is a poor substitute for giving of ourselves, but we cannot give what we do not possess. Very few of us are what we used to call "self-possessed." That's why our interactions are warped by both an overflow of self-expression and a lack of self-gift.

We try on different versions of ourselves, never really delving into who we really are, but letting the response of others define us. We allow the audience to create the character. Perhaps that is why so many spend so much effort to gain an audience and validation on TikTok and Instagram.

Many have stopped asking who they are, preferring to focus only on what they want to be without considering any biological, cultural or

historical givens, or acknowledging limitations of any kind. This eventually leads to unhappiness and disillusionment.

For, as the U.S. bishops' recent doctrinal note "On the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body" observes: "there is an order in human nature that we are called to respect. In fact, human nature deserves utmost respect since humanity occupies a singular place in the created order, being created in the image of God (Gn 1:27). To find fulfillment as human persons, to find true happiness, we must respect that order. We did not create human nature; it is a gift from a loving Creator. Nor do we 'own' our human nature, as if it were something that we are free to make use of in any way we please."

Gender ideology asserts a fluidity of sexual identity that simply cannot exist and must therefore divide a person's body, mind and spirit. The result appears to be a seemingly infinite multiplicity of genders.

But it is really only the multiplication of mere stereotypes – an array of self-definitions that confine us to a life of role-playing, complete with costumes and scripts. Rather than defining our masculinity or femininity as individuals, we are encouraged to be defined by the gender stereotype we choose.

See Identity crisis, Page 13

Catholic Relief Services urges support of Farm Bill

During Easter, we are reminded of the many blessings we have, including an abundance of food. We also should be aware that around the world, 828 million people go to bed hungry every night.

In the coming months Congress will be addressing the 2023 Farm Bill. The 2018 Farm Bill, set to expire in September, provides assistance to farming communities and those who live in poverty in our country and critical international assistance.

While only a very small percentage of the Farm Bill's funds go to international programs, they are important. COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and climate change have all contributed to a global food crisis.

Farm Bill programs like Food for Peace Title II not only provide emergency food assistance to impoverished communities worldwide, but also fund long-term sustainable development projects that work holistically with communities recovering from disaster to build back their systems, reduce the impact of future shocks, and promote more resilient communities.

Congress can continue to support programs like this by reauthorizing and increasing funding for the programs and improving their efficiency and flexibility.

Virginia Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner are supportive of international poverty-focused programs. Given her membership on the House Agriculture Committee, Virginia Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger can help shape this important legislation.

We urge all Virginians to become familiar with the Farm Bill by visiting <https://support.crs.org/act/farm-bill>

and then contacting our senators and your representative, imploring them to support this legislation.

– **Jimmy Culpepper,**

Stephen Knippler, Co-chairs,
Virginia Chapter of Catholic Relief Services

Let's fight the war on religion

War has been declared on religion. Some are fighting back:

- Bud Light boycott for using a transgender spokesperson.
- Franklin Graham calling out the transgender mob for attacking Riley Gaines.
- Gerald Groff suing the post office after being fired for refusing to deliver mail on Sunday.
- CatholicVote.org and Judicial Watch suing the Justice Department for information on FBI spying on Catholic churches.

Other recent religious discrimination includes:

- Termination of Catholic contract at Walter Reed hospital.
- Widespread denial of religious accommodation requests in the military, private sector and in government for the COVID-19 shots.
- Government banning of in-person Mass during the pandemic while allowing in-person shopping.
- FBI SWAT raided the home of Catholic Mark Houck for shoving a Planned Parenthood escort away from his 12-year-old son.

What can the Church do to fight back?

- Sue corporations, government and schools that discriminate against religion. Create an army of Catholic lawyers and put them to work.
- Grade politicians based on their actions pertaining to abortion and homosexuality. Joe Biden gets an "F"

for Rachel Lavine and Pete Buttigieg, men playing women's sports, and using federal resources for abortions.

• Excommunicate Catholics in positions of power who enable the culture war against our Church and our country. Hold Catholics in positions of power accountable.

Catholics are being targeted; we need to fight back.

– **Rick Kurek**
Yorktown

Msgr. Lehman shows that God provides

It is approaching six months since Msgr. Joseph P. Lehman ("Father Joe") left this world.

During Mass, as I listened to the disciples being asked why they stood there looking up at the sky and then hearing our homilist discussing the level of fear the disciples felt being "left" by Jesus, I thought about that day in July 2019 when our pastor left Our Lady of Nazareth, Roanoke, for a new assignment and three and a half years later as he departed this life.

My emotions did not involve

fear either time, because God provides. We were gifted with a wonderful shepherd and pastor, and following Father Joe's death – his familiar, comforting words explaining that bonds forged in life are not broken by death, resonated within me.

Grief and loss gave way to gratitude for a life well-lived ... for a pastor who walked the path with us – sometimes in the background, or ahead of us or alongside us, ever challenging and inspiring us to do what God asked of us.

In the days following the death of Father Joe, my heart was full of compassion for his parish (St. Bede, Williamsburg) left without their shepherd. I imagined his flock was apprehensive about the uncertainty of the days to come. And yet, they had two familiar shepherds who ministered to their needs. Again, God provides.

We needn't look to the sky for help; we need only to look to the companions God gives us on the road and be grateful.

– **Patti Peters**
Roanoke

Mail: The Catholic Virginian, 7800 Carousel Ln., Richmond, VA 23294
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Publisher: Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout

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

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

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

Eastern Correspondents: Wendy Klesch and Jennifer Neville

Western Correspondents: Karen Adams and Joseph Staniunas

Central Correspondent: Kristen L. Byrd

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Does evolution fit in the story of Adam and Eve?



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
JENNA MARIE COOPER
OSV NEWS

Q. How do we reconcile the story of Adam and Eve and original sin with evolution? (Schuylerville, New York)

A. We can say the creation story in the Book of Genesis – while being true – was not meant as a literal or technical scientific account of how the material world was formed.

Although we often refer to the Bible as one book, it's a library of different books. And while all sacred Scripture is the inspired word of God, the human drafters of the various books within the Bible were writing at different times, for different reasons and in different literary genres.

Within the Bible, we have books which are plainly intended as eyewitness historical accounts (e.g., the

Gospel of John); along with other works which were obviously meant as symbolic allegories (e.g., Revelation). Likewise, we have works that spell out practical laws (Leviticus), along with sacred poetry (Psalms).

To draw a comparison with secular literature, it would be unreasonable to criticize a cookbook for not having much of a plot, and it would be silly to say that a fantasy novel was “wrong” because it didn't teach you how to do your taxes or fix a leaky faucet. We understand that different kinds of books have different purposes, and that no one kind of book can meet every need.

Just so, we could describe the beginning of the Book of Genesis as a sort of “theological history,” because it tells us, in narrative form, some real and important things about the nature of God and his relationship to creation.

Namely, from Genesis we know that God created everything out of nothing in an act of pure will; that he considers his creation to be good; that God wished to create humanity in his own image and likeness –

meaning that humans have free will – and that the first humans abused this power of free will to turn away from God.

Significantly, from the creation story we learn that God did not actively desire humanity to experience suffering or death, but rather that this fundamental disorder in the universe came about because of a primordial human choice.

Conversely, the creation story in Genesis is not the equivalent of a textbook in geology, physics or biology. The creation story doesn't try to concern itself with details such as the wavelength of the first light created, or where exactly the first plants and animals would fit into our modern biological classification systems. We don't even know exactly how long each of the first seven “days” were in Genesis, since the term “day” in this context is used in a clearly poetic sense – that is, the author of Genesis couldn't have intended to speak of “days” in literal astronomical terms, since the sun itself was only created on the fourth “day” (Gn 1:14-19).

Still, it is legitimate for us to be curious and ask questions about how God's process of creation manifested itself concretely in the physical world. That type of scientific inquiry, however, proposes the answers to different kinds of questions than what the Book of Genesis seeks to address – though it is interesting that even Genesis seems to allude to a certain evolutionary process of sorts, with God creating simpler life forms before the more complex ones, and with humanity being the capstone of creation.

As St. John Paul II writes at the very start of his 1998 encyclical letter, “Fides et Ratio”: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth.”

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.

Umm.....

I wonder when the Kids' Catholic Virginian will get here?

Calling all you COOL Catholic Kids. Be on the lookout for a page dedicated to YOU coming soon!

WHAT WE'VE HEARD



50th anniversary of Father Charles G. O'Leary Knights of Columbus Council 6457 celebrated April 29 at Holy Rosary, Richmond. Celebration included dinner and dancing, celebrating 50 years of service to the community. Service projects include collections for

Special Olympics, Coats for Kids, Habitat for Humanity, turkey distributions, and National Night Out. (Photo/Samuel Patterson)



Portsmouth Catholic Regional School presented \$1,149.59 to Habitat for Humanity. Students raised the money and then signed these wooden planks to be used in the next local build. They showed the signed boards to Father John Bosco, chaplain, Principal Donna Henry, and Habitat for Humanity Executive Director Frank Hruska.

(Photo submitted by Portsmouth Catholic Regional)

Mary Star of the Sea Knights of Columbus Council 511 raised more than \$3,000 through its **annual baby bottle drive** at St. Joseph and Saint Mary Star of the Sea, both in Hampton. The council also donated \$500 each to Care Net Peninsula and Paul Stefan Foundation as part of the Aid and Support after Pregnancy initiative. (Photo/Art Kelly)



BENEDICTINE COLLEGE PREPARATORY



Benjamin Marks

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Benjamin Marks is the son of Jon and Cara Marks of Richmond. Benjamin has a 4.539 GPA. He is the current commander of headquarters platoon and a member of the National Honor Society. Benjamin is also a member of the soccer and lacrosse teams. Benjamin will attend the University of Virginia next year.

Salutarian: Hector Cibes-Lee. He is the son of Xavier Cibes and Hwa Young Lee of Henrico. Hector has a 4.492 GPA. He currently serves as the battalion inspector general and senior class president. Hector is a member of the National Honor Society and the Honor Court. Hector will attend the United States Military Academy at West Point next year.

Class of 2023: The 62 cadets have earned more than \$3.8 million in scholarships for the next academic year. A record 16 cadets will attend Virginia Military Institute. Eight cadets have earned ROTC scholarships; two will attend the United States Military Academy at West Point.



Hector Cibes-Lee

SALUTATORIAN

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



Michael Beauchamp

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Michael Beauchamp, MVP in swimming and track and field and the 2023 Academic Athlete of the Year at CHS, was a winner of the National Congressional APP Challenge for the 4th District of Virginia. Michael is captain of the Cyber Patriot Gold Regional Finals team, an Eagle Scout, and AP Scholar with Distinction. He has accepted an appointment to the United States Naval Academy and plans to study mechanical engineering.

Salutarian: Riley Douglas, captain of the Tidewater Conference Champion lacrosse team, is president of the Philosophy and Chemistry clubs and the Math Honor Society. He volunteers for the Special Olympics and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retirement Home, and is a 3-year school ambassador. Riley will study computer science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Class of 2023: The 112 students earned more than \$6.1 million in scholarships and grants, including three military academy appointments. Students were accepted at colleges in 35 states, the District of Columbia, and Honduras.



Riley Douglas

SALUTATORIAN

BLESSED SACRAMENT HUGUENOT CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Jackson Hawkins

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Jackson Hawkins, son of Cindy and Steve Hawkins of Powhatan, was actively involved in the BSH soccer, basketball, football and drama programs. Jackson was captain of the varsity soccer team and National Honor Society president. Jackson led the soccer team to victory at the 2023 VCC Championship. This fall, Jackson will attend the University of Virginia and major in mechanical engineering.

Salutarian: Berkley Roudabush, daughter of Susan and Jay Roudabush of Powhatan, was actively involved in the BSH drama program, cheerleading squad, basketball and tennis teams, Student Council, and National Honor Society. She served as a peer tutor. In the fall, Berkley will study at the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech.

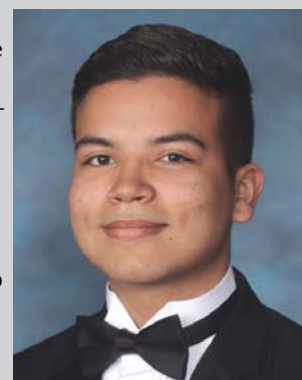
Class of 2023: Includes five "lifers" who have spent over 14 years at BSH. Students won the 2023 VCC Championships for soccer and golf and were runner-up in the VCC football championship. More than half of the class was accepted into the National Honor Society.



Berkley Roudabush

SALUTATORIAN

CRISTO REY RICHMOND HIGH SCHOOL



Juan Varon

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Juan Varon is graduating with a GPA of 4.21 and is attending The Catholic University of America next fall. Juan worked this year at the Virginia Cancer Institute for his Corporate Work Study job and is declaring as a biology major.

Salutarian: Santiago Ocando Romero is graduating with a GPA of 4.07 and is attending William & Mary in the fall. Santiago worked this year at St. Mary's Hospital for his Corporate Work Study job and is declaring as a biology (pre-med) major.

Class of 2023: Cristo Rey Richmond High School is proud to announce the graduation of our inaugural class of seniors. These 54 talented young men and women received offers collectively totaling more than \$4 million in merit scholarships to attend more than 600 colleges and universities.



Santiago Ocando Romero

SALUTATORIAN

PENINSULA CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



Anne Masters

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Anne Masters, graduating with a 4.79 GPA, will attend William & Mary with plans to major in history and eventually attend law school. Anne was inducted into the National Honor Society, National Spanish Honor Society, and Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society. Anne is a member of the forensics team and a lifelong dancer.

Salutarian: Gia Yun, graduating with a 4.75 GPA, will attend the University of Pennsylvania and plans to major in sociology. Gia was inducted into the National Honor Society, National Spanish Honor Society, and Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society. She was captain of the tennis team and served as a member of the Newport News Mayor's Youth Commission.

Class of 2023: 67 graduates, as well as three additional students who comprise the inaugural graduating class of the St. Vincent Virtual Academy. The average GPA for the class is 3.40. Seniors have received more than 250 college acceptances and have been awarded \$3 million in scholarship awards.



Gia Yun

SALUTATORIAN

ROANOKE CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Angela Drapac

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Angela Drapac will be attending Virginia Tech in the fall to study biomedical engineering. Angela completed 12 AP and Dual Enrollment courses. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Key Club, Red Cross Club, Student Ambassador, RCS Catholic Campus Ministry, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Help Save the Next Girl, and Student Government. She has served as the team captain for cross country.

Salutarian: Meagan Beheler will be attending the University of Virginia in the fall to study kinesiology. Meagan completed 11 AP and Dual Enrollment courses. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Key Club, Help Save the Next Girl, Student Government, Medico Club, and Film Club. She has served as the team captain for golf and cheerleading. She is also the founder/president of Bundles of Luv, which has made more than 300 blankets for hospitals, nursing homes and shelters in the Roanoke area.



Meagan Beheler

SALUTATORIAN

SAINT GERTRUDE HIGH SCHOOL



Erin Woodson

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Erin Woodson is well-known for her accomplishments in basketball, culminating in her selection as a McDonald's All-American nominee. All of Erin's athletic and academic accomplishments stem from her constant commitment to improve. Erin is excited to continue her academic and basketball journey at Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Salutarian: Helen Counts is a critical thinker and analytical writer who loves mathematics. She has portrayed many characters in theater productions, showcasing her powerful vocals. Helen is also a peer tutor for math and physics. Students who work with Helen appreciate her patience and enthusiasm. She will be attending Christopher Newport University in the fall.



Helen Counts

SALUTATORIAN

WALSINGHAM ACADEMY



Scarlett Sullivan

VALEDICTORIAN

Valedictorian: Scarlett Sullivan has been a Walsingham student since sixth grade. She is an excellent writer, has taken a number of college enrichment courses, and was named a National Merit Commended Scholar last fall. Scarlett will attend the University of Virginia to major in history.

Salutarian: Mary Blinn joined the Class of 2023 for her eighth-grade year after living in multiple places as a member of a military family. She has been very involved in campus ministry during her time at Walsingham. Mary is an accomplished rower and will row at the University of Miami next year as she purses a degree in international studies and a minor in Arabic.

Class of 2023: Walsingham Academy will hold commencement exercises for 42 graduates in its 76th graduating class on Saturday, June 3. Class of 2023 has received more than \$4 million in scholarships with 158 college and university acceptances.



Mary Blinn

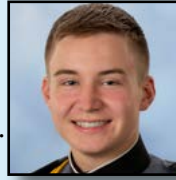
SALUTATORIAN

Walter Gannon Scholarship recipients named

The following students have each received a \$1,500 Walter Gannon Diocesan Scholarship, made possible by a gift from Walter Gannon. Each school's principal nominated a student based on academics, concern for others, and economic need.

Benedictine College Preparatory

Matthew Gasperini. The 2022-2023 recipient of the Walter Gannon Diocesan Scholarship for Benedictine College Preparatory School is Matthew Gasperini. He is the son of Geoffrey and Bethany Gasperini of Glen Allen. Matthew is a member of the National Honor Society and the cross country, indoor track and field, and rugby teams. Matthew will attend the University of Dallas to begin his undergraduate studies.



Blessed Sacrament Huguenot

Jeb Hatfield. Jeb played football, basketball, and soccer, and was part of the Latin and drama clubs. Senior year, he was a captain of the football and soccer teams, treasurer of his class, and homecoming king. Jeb's favorite memory from school was winning the football state championship during junior year. Jeb will attend James Madison University in the fall, and thanks his parents for always supporting him. Jeb's advice for younger Knights is to take in the BSH experience and not take it for granted.



Catholic High School

Bailey Dawson. Bailey, a National Honor Society member, is a strong student with an altruistic streak. Bailey is the German Club president, student ambassador, leads the Sci-Fi Club, and volunteers at the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center. More than once, Bailey stepped up as "man of the house" as his parents battled health issues. He finished first in 10 baking contests for his specialty — Irish Soda Bread! Bailey will attend Old Dominion University in the fall and is interested in studying business and German.



Cristo Rey Richmond High School

Danielle Bradby. Danielle, a native of Richmond, will attend Longwood University in the fall, majoring in animation. Her goal is to become a professional animator and create her own animated show. Danielle works at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture as a work-study intern. She is developing a comic book that tells the story of Black caterer, chef and bartender John Dabney. Danielle also works at her high school's writing center, helping her peers with papers, résumés and other writing assignments.



Peninsula Catholic High School

Quinn Layman. Quinn's dedication to his faith and his service to others makes him a role model to his peers. Every summer Quinn volunteers with St. Jerome Catholic Church for their summer mission trip, helping to rebuild a community in Virginia. Quinn is on the liturgical team and retreat team at PCHS. He has taken many Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, and Honors-level classes. Graduating with a 4.0 GPA, Quinn has been accepted into the Virginia Military Institute and plans to join the Navy.



Roanoke Catholic School

Angela Drapac. Angela is president of the RCS Key Club and participates in the Red Cross Club, Student Ambassador Program, Catholic Campus Ministry, Help Save the Next Girl and our Student Government Association. She is part of the National Honor Society and is active on the basketball, cross country and track teams. Angela has been a virtual teaching assistant to families in need. Angela has been accepted to the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech. She plans to pursue a degree in biomedical studies.



Saint Gertrude High School

Colleen Dunn Weir. Colleen served on Honor Council as a junior and senior and as class chaplain for three years. In recognition of Colleen's strong yet gentle character, the student body chose her to be the 2023 May Queen. Colleen has had leading roles in multiple theater productions during her four years. During COVID, she kept theater alive by writing an original script, "Secrets of a Quarantined Blogger," which students were able to film and share. She will attend William & Mary.



Walsingham Academy

Anne Barry. Anne is a "lifer," having been at Walsingham for her entire K-12 education. She has achieved a high level of academic success and will continue her education at William & Mary. Anne has been a vital part of our theater and performance program since middle school. Anne has demonstrated strong leadership and has acted selflessly on many occasions out of her concern for others. She has earned the respect of the faculty and her peers because she is respectful, gracious and kind.



Bishop appoints interim superintendent

THE CATHOLIC VIRGINIAN STAFF

Bishop Barry C. Knestout appointed Dr. Jennifer Bigelow as interim superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Richmond. The appointment comes after Kelly Lazzara, superintendent of schools for the diocese, resigned from her position in the Office of Catholic Schools, effective July 1.



Dr. Jennifer Bigelow

Dr. Bigelow has more than 20 years of Catholic education experience and will lead diocesan schools during the 2023-2024 school year.

"I am thrilled to continue to work in Catholic education," said Dr. Bigelow, who will return to the diocese after serving as associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction from 2019-2022.

She called her recent appointment "an opportunity to rejoin a great staff that does amazing work to support our schools."

Dr. Bigelow began her career at an all-girls Catholic school in Florida. She earned her doctoral degree from North Carolina State University with an emphasis on Catholic school leadership. She received her master's degree in educational leadership from the University of South Florida.

Dr. Bigelow has worked in school administration in Tampa, Florida, and Raleigh, North Carolina. She also served as superintendent of schools in the Diocese of Arlington for four years.

"What I love about working in Catholic education is the opportunity to help people grow in their faith and be able to support academic excellence," Dr. Bigelow said.

Lazzara will return to her home state of Pennsylvania after being appointed president of Oakland Catholic High School in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.



Kelly Lazzara

"I will always reflect fondly on my eight years of service to the Diocese of Richmond," Lazzara said.

She was appointed superintendent in 2019 and in the last eight years also served the diocese as principal of Star of the Sea, Virginia Beach, and as an associate superintendent.

"These past four years as superintendent and the prior two years as associate superintendent of operations, have been filled with great joy, despite some very large challenges," said Lazzara. "Throughout these past years, it has been an honor to serve you all."

"I am extremely proud of the work our schools have accomplished, especially these last few years," she added. "I will keep you and the diocese in my prayers, and I ask for your prayers as I enter this next chapter of my life."

The diocese begins a nationwide search for a new superintendent this summer.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus points us toward the Eucharist



Since it was Mary who gave birth to Jesus, it seems only fitting that Mother's Day and the month of May, which is dedicated to the Blessed Mother, precede Father's Day and June, the month dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

Given the preeminence of motherhood, more may be nuanced by the order of these months than is readily apparent – all of which began in the Garden of Eden. The word Eve in Hebrew means “to breathe” or “to give life,” which explains why the serpent approached Eve before Adam.

Satan knew that if he convinced the one who was meant to give life to disobey the law of God, Adam, whose name in Hebrew means “clay” or “soil,” would follow. However, because sin could never be the last word, God reversed the effects of sin by becoming the New Adam while instilling Mary as the New Eve.

As Christians, we can claim Mary as our mother and God as our Father because Jesus said, “Whoever sees me, sees the Father” (Jn 14: 9b).

In taking on our human body, the Word of God became visible to those who lived with him in first

century Palestine. Yet, after rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven, Jesus retained his human body – though in a glorified state.

When Jesus appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and asked that we revere the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he appeared with his heart burning with love for us.

The heart is essential to human life, but more than an organ that pumps blood through the body, the heart is a symbol of love and self-giving. What could be more self-giving than the Divine Mercy of Jesus?

Every moment of every day, Jesus' Sacred Heart pumps spiritual life throughout the Body of Christ. As Catholics, how privileged we are to be able to receive him into our own body, not as a symbol, but as life-giving food to sustain us for the journey.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. Without the Eucharist there would be no Church, which should prompt us all the more to want to receive it worthily and as often as possible.

When Jesus appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, he revealed how he is wounded by even the slightest fault. His words should motivate us to strive to refrain from even venial sins.

Sadly, it appears the world has become so desensitized to sin, that it no longer shocks us. When



we believe the great lie that denies the presence of sin, we place our spiritual life in jeopardy. This is the reason Jesus asked us to honor his Sacred Heart. In doing so, it would be difficult to treat sin as a psychological defect or the result of human nature.

Today, more than ever, when the right to life is being litigated in the courts, we should have recourse to Mary, the New Eve, who consented to bear the Son of God in her womb. True to her role as the New Eve, Mary is a model for all women. Despite the difficulties that her saying “Yes” to God would incur, not only during her pregnancy, but throughout her life on earth, Mary's fiat was ongoing and unconditional.

Although we often look to Joseph as a model for earthly fathers, let's not forget that God is our heavenly Father and that in honoring Jesus, we are also honoring the Father.

There is a tendency for some to reduce our thinking about Jesus to strictly human dimensions, which is why Jesus revealed in Scripture and to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque the fullness of his majesty as the glorified second person of the Blessed Trinity.

These unfathomable mysteries are more than the human minds can appreciate on their own. This is the reason Jesus continues to reveal himself to saints — not for their own aggrandizement, but for the good of his body, the Church.

Although the Church is a divine institution, God left it to weak and sinful human beings to perpetuate it on Earth. Considering abuses that have been brought to light, we are more aware than ever of the need for divine assistance.

As we enter June, let us turn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to help us increase our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in the Eucharist and in the tabernacle where Jesus waits for us to visit him often. And so we pray:

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee!

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!

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

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Have faith in the ‘merciful and gracious God’

Reflections on the Mass readings for Sunday, June 4: The Most Holy Trinity



**BELIEVE AS
YOU PRAY**
MELANIE CODDINGTON

This Sunday’s first reading permits us to eavesdrop on a conversation between Moses and the Lord God, as they meet inside a cloud hovering at the peak of Sinai-Horeb, the mountain of covenant.

God has called this meeting, and Moses arrives as instructed, carrying a second set of tablets for the inscription of the Ten Commandments. Recall that he smashed the first in a temper after finding the Israelites worshipping a golden calf at the foot of the same mountain.

In this brief episode, we hear the divine name (YHWH) proclaimed by the Lord God and followed by a self-description that echoes throughout the psalms: “...a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”

Moses himself sets the precedent for recalling this moment of God’s self-communication in subsequent covenant conversation, as he brings the Lord’s own words to bear on God’s frustration with his chosen people in Numbers 14:13-19.

The divine name forms a bridge between this reading and the responsorial psalm for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, which declares, “...blessed is your holy and glorious

name.” The responsorial psalm selection comes from Daniel chapter three.

The term “canticle” signifies its origin outside the Book of Psalms. Its biblical setting takes me back to my Presbyterian roots, to Sunday school days in the church of my childhood.

As the story goes, three notorious Hebrew youths – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – have refused to comply with a direct order from their boss, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and have been cast into a white-hot furnace for their disobedience.

Instead of burning to a crisp like the servants who threw them in, they walk about in the flames, singing praises to God. Even when the king’s men stoke the fire with brimstone and pitch, it does no harm to the faithful Hebrews.

“The angel of the Lord went down into the furnace ... drove the fiery flames out ... and made the inside of the furnace as though a dew-laden breeze were blowing through it” (Dn 3:49-50).

The four verses selected for the response come from the miraculously un-singed lips of our three heroes and form the introduction to a lengthy canticle, found in our Catholic Bible’s expanded version of the Book of Daniel. (The Catholic canon of Scripture, based on the Septuagint, an early Greek translation of the Old Testament, includes 100 verses of Daniel 3. The Hebrew text, on which the Protestant canon relies, frames the story of the three faithful Hebrews much more succinctly, excluding the long song.)

Ex 34:4b-6; 8-9
Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55
2 Cor 13:11-13
Jn 3:16-18

We hear variants of the refrain, “...praiseworthy and exalted above all forever,” in Sunday’s verses, which stack one upon the other in a mighty crescendo, framing images of God’s glory that soar upward on an ever-grander scale.

One can imagine the three singers walking in time through the fire, taking turns with the call line and responding together.

Our second reading from Second Corinthians, chosen, no doubt, for the Trinitarian blessing that concludes it, speaks firmly to our time, exhorting us to rejoice, mend our ways, encourage and agree with one another, and live in peace.

Sunday’s brief Gospel connects directly to the image of God presented in Exodus 34, as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.” This one “so loved the world” that he brings about the salvation of that world through the life, death and resurrection of his Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection on this so-called economy of salvation, over time, brought to expression the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity that we celebrate this Sunday.

In these days of persistent conflict and division, hatred, violence and cruelty, we do well to take these words to heart and put them into action toward all of God’s beloved. Thus, we may experience the presence of “the God of love and peace” in new and surprising ways.

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

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Pope adds Fátima visit to World Youth Day trip

JUSTIN McLELLAN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima during his trip to Portugal for World Youth Day 2023, the Vatican said.

In a statement May 22, Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, confirmed that the pope will travel to Lisbon Aug. 2-6 and will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima Aug. 5. Pope Francis, who repeatedly has said he intended to be in Lisbon for World Youth Day, had not spoken publicly about also going to Fátima in August.

In October 2022, he publicly registered to attend World Youth Day as a pilgrim with the help of two Portuguese university students after praying the Angelus from the window of the papal apartments overlooking St. Peter's Square.

The Marian shrine at Fátima is connected to Pope Francis' public prayer appeals for an end to the war in Ukraine. In March 2022, just over one month after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the pope consecrated both

countries to Mary's immaculate heart, praying before a statue of Our Lady of Fátima in St. Peter's Basilica.

Before her death, Sister Lúcia dos Santos, one of the three Portuguese children who claimed to see apparitions of Our Lady of Fátima in 1917, had said Mary requested that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart by a reigning pope to bring peace to the world.


Previous popes had consecrated Russia to Mary's immaculate heart in various forms but had never mentioned the country by name as Pope Francis did in 2022.

In 2017, Pope Francis celebrated Mass at the shrine to mark 100

years since the apparitions of Our Lady of Fátima as part of a quick trip to Portugal that lasted just over 24 hours. He canonized Francisco Marto and Jacinta Marto, the cousins of Sister dos Santos, who also

saw Mary at Fátima.

Francisco died in 1919 at the age of 10, while Jacinta succumbed to her illness in 1920 at the age of 9. Sister dos Santos died in 2005 at the age of 97.



Be on the lookout for The Catholic Virginian's special World Youth Day coverage this summer, featuring Bishop Barry C. Knestout and other members of the faithful from the Diocese of Richmond!



Pope Francis makes the sign of the cross in front of a Marian statue after consecrating the world, and, in particular, Ukraine and Russia, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in St. Peter's Basilica, March 25, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Father Largoza

Continued from Page 3

First Friday Eucharistic Adoration to 24 hours, culminating on Saturday with benediction. He introduced a novena to our Lady of Perpetual Help. His homilies, often humorous but packed with theology and challenges, can keep the congregation rapt, parishioners said.

St. Mary parishioner Annette Rian said, "Now that there are less restrictions relating to COVID, Father Ongen takes what we have here and makes it more beautiful, more spiritual and more community."

Similarly, Larry Gunther, a parishioner at St. Catherine of Siena, Clarksville, said, "Everybody's faith became deeper because of him" when Father Ongen was pastor there.

Father Ongen, the second youngest of nine children, was born in 1958 in Nabua, Camrines Sur, a province in the Philippines. He credits his parents, whom he called "church people" for his faith formation. The family prayed the rosary together every evening, and his father was active in the parish, serving on the steering/executive committee.

He went to elementary school in his hometown but transferred to Holy Rosary Minor Sem-



Father Rogelio Largoza on his ordination day, March 20, 1983, in the Philippines. (Photo provided by St. Mary of the Presentation, Suffolk)

inary in Naga City when he was 12 because his older brother was already in the seminary there. He said his parents wanted him to have "a good discipline," because "of the high standard of education the seminary was giving" to his brother. He subsequently went to Holy Rosary Major Seminary after four years. It was there that he discerned the priesthood and was ordained in 1983 at age 25.

He served at several parishes in the Philippines and was a missionary in the West Indies

for a few years. When he came to the United States, he became parochial vicar at the Cluster Parishes of Portsmouth and Chesapeake from 2016-2017 and then pastor of the Cluster Parishes of Clarksville, South Boston and South Hill from 2017-2021. He returned to the Philippines in 2021 to serve as guest priest and then as an attached priest at a parish in Naga City. Last July he became the pastor of St. Mary of the Presentation.

Andrew Graf, grand knight of Council 7363 which is affiliated with St. Mary, said, "Father Ongen brings an atmosphere of fun and steadiness so you can grow in faith and be a normal person."

Delores Oliver, of St. Paul Parish, Portsmouth, remembers fondly when Father Ongen served there.

"He was such a quiet, compassionate person. He was over the top," she said, adding that by his tone of voice and tendency to "look at you directly in your eyes," one "just knew that he cared."

"When you meet him, it makes you feel like you have known him forever," she said. "No matter how busy he is, he takes time to listen. He's never in a hurry."

Additionally, Gunther said, "He is the easiest person in the world to talk to. He's sincere. He's one of the best people I've ever met."

Identity crisis

Continued from Page 6

We are never freed from imprisoning stereotypes; our only option is to choose a different cell block.

But there is another question no one seems to be asking: Isn't all this just an insidious form of self-rejection or abnegation? I can think of nothing more tragic than a search that begins by rejecting oneself.

Our faith gives us a healthier alternative: self-acceptance. The first gift God gives each of us is being "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139).

Each one of us has the power to accept all our strengths and limitations, all our past experiences, positive and negative, as gifts from God, who loves every cell of his beloved children.

Genesis gives us one thing that contemporary accounts of humanity cannot: the assurance that we are good (Gn 1:31). We need not be

bright, talented or attractive, or even "useful" to be good and to be loved.

God has loved and willed us into existence. When we embrace the depth of that truth, identity can only emerge as gift – one that can be freely given because it has been fully received.

Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.

OPPORTUNITIES

Church of the Ascension seeks a **Coordinator of Youth Ministry** for middle and high school. The candidate should have 1-3 years' experience working with middle school and high school youth. This position is part time, averaging 25 hours a week. Candidates should have a love of God, our Catholic faith and, of course, for youth. Passionate about making connections with the youth and engage them in such a way as to grow their faith and connect them with our parish and the global Church. Spiritually mature and able to coordinate the administrative and ministry tasks required of the position. Please visit www.ascensionvb.org/employment for more information or contact Lisa Liedl at liedll@ascensionvb.org.

St. Francis of Assisi, Staunton, seeks a part-time **Religious Education Leader**. The candidate will be a Catholic in good standing with a passion for the faith. Responsible for revitalizing our faith formation program, instilling the rich truths of Catholic doctrine in the parish. The ideal candidate will be able to demonstrate organizational and interpersonal skills to support our existing programs. The Religious Education Leader will also recruit volunteers for catechists, work with volunteer leaders for RCIA, Youth Ministry and Adult Faith Formation, monitor the diocesan-mandated VIRTUS training program and background checks for all volunteers, as well as work with the pastor, office staff, volunteers and parishioners daily. A bachelor's degree, previous parish ministry experience and conversational Spanish are desirable. All interested candidates should submit a cover letter and résumé to office@stfrancisparish.org.

St. John the Apostle Catholic Church and School, Virginia Beach, a vibrant parish of more than 3,000 families in a beach community, is seeking a full-time **Director of Youth Ministry**. The director of youth ministry plans and leads a comprehensive catechetical youth ministry program with various components. Responsible for organizing middle and high school youth events, including service opportunities and social activities, while also organizing and encouraging participation in diocesan and other youth events. Recruits and engages adult volunteers to participate in events, supervises staff and/or volunteers, including program leaders and support staff. Also join the Pastor and Director of Religious Education in teaching 8th grade religion at the parish school monthly. The applicant must be a practicing Catholic in good standing. A bachelor's degree in theology or religious studies is required; a master's degree is preferred. Professional ministry experience is highly encouraged. Musical ability a plus and experience in establishing and maintaining balanced budgets. The candidate must be a good team player with excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Please send résumé and cover letter to Father Rob Cole, St. John the Apostle Church, 1968 Sandbridge Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23456 or email frob@sjavb.org.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Yorktown, seeks a full-time **Administrative Assistant**. The Administrative Assistant is a highly skilled multi-tasker and team player who operates in an ever-changing environment. This position works closely with the pastor and staff members. Must be a Catholic in good standing. Three or more years of administrative experience and understanding of Microsoft Suite. Ability to organize, take direction and work independently; maintain confidentiality and present in a courteous and professional manner. Office hours are Monday – Thursday from 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Successful applicant will have a background check and must attend a VIRTUS training class. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and résumé to rspencer@st kateri.cc.

SHORTTAKES

St. Edward Church Family Ministry presents REVIVE! Join us Friday, June 9, 5 p.m., 2700 Dolfeld Dr., North Chesterfield. Schedule as follows : 5 p.m. cookout in the pavilion; 6:15 p.m. speaker, praise and worship, and adoration in the church; 8 p.m. ice cream social, and play time in the pavilion and playground. Please RSVP with the number of people attending and your home parish at <https://bit.ly/3O9S52U>! Call Peggy at 804-864-4714 or Pat at 804-864-4701 with questions.

Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Palmyra, is hosting its Annual Yard Sale, June 9-10, 8 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Items include furniture, housewares, books, CDs, clothes, tools, sports equipment, gardening tools, electronics, bedding, linens and knick-knacks. Join us at 4309 Thomas Jefferson Parkway. Contact Cynthia Aycock at Cynthia.b.aycock@gmail.com or 434-996-6065 with any questions.

You are invited to the **Ninth Annual Hope 4 Life Charity Banquet**, Saturday, June 10, St. Matthew Catholic School, 3316 Sandra Lane, Virginia Beach. Reception at 6:30 p.m., banquet at 7 p.m. Keynote by Sister Catherine Marie of the Sisters of Life. RSVP to Louantha Kerr early to save your seat: ourhope4life@gmail.com or call 757-810-1653. Donations gratefully accepted. All proceeds benefit Hope 4 Life Medical Mobile Pregnancy Center to assist moms and families in crisis pregnancies.

Have you heard? Is it a secret or is it a beautiful **retreat experience** to deepen your faith and WOW you with the love of God? Cursillo means "a little course" in Christianity. It is a three-day experience for men or women, run by an impassioned group of leaders. Be prepared to deepen your encounter with the Lord. The retreat offers talks, small groups, prayer and reflection, Mass and confession. Encourage your spouse, your friend, your grown children to come. Women's Cursillo is June 22-25 at Church of the Sacred Heart, Prince George. Please contact Rob Grubbs at 804-370-8181 or Kaitlin Cox at 804-516-4704.

Join Deacon Christopher Malone from the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, on a **Spiritual Pilgrimage to**

Lourdes, Spain and Portugal to visit Our Blessed Virgin Mary's many gorgeous shrines, where miracles occur daily. An 11-day tour, Sept. 27 – Oct. 7, for \$4,399, including airfare, first-class hotels, daily prayers, arrangements for Mass, local tours, breakfast, dinner and more! Our journey highlights Lourdes, where Our Lady appeared 18 times to St. Bernadette. In Spain, we will visit the unique Basilica La Sagrada Familia, the breathtaking Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, the Basilica of Our Lady of The Pillar in Zaragoza, the medieval town of Salamanca, and the birthplace of St. Teresa of Avila. Pilgrimage will continue to Portugal, where we will see the great 20th-century Marian shrine at Fatima and then to Lisbon, the birthplace of St. Antony of Padua. For more information, contact Alba's Tours at 804-298-4035 or tours@albastours.com. Reservations are available now.

Join Father Kevin O'Brien, Church of St. Therese, Chesapeake and Father John Grace, Immaculate Conception, Hampton, on a **pilgrimage to the Holy Land** Sept. 25 – Oct. 5. Many sights in Israel will be visited, including: Nazareth, Sea of Galilee, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Masada, Dead Sea and much more! There's also an optional two-day extension to Petra and Jordan. Fewer than 10 spots remain! Cost is \$4,195 per person/double occupancy; \$895 per person for the extension. If you have questions, please call Megan at St. Therese, 757-488-2553.

Catholics from across the diocese are invited to **join Bishop Knestout on Saturday, Oct. 21, for a pilgrimage** to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. In support of the National Eucharistic Revival, pilgrims from our diocese will uniquely encounter Christ in the Eucharist during this daylong journey of faith. More information will be published soon. Please contact the Office for Evangelization at evangelization@richmonddioocese.org with questions.

Join Father Alexander Muddu, St. Mary of the Annunciation, Richmond, on a **pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Jordan** from Nov. 4-14 for the most incredible spiritual experience of your life. This 11-day tour to two countries for \$4,399 includes round-trip airfare, 4-star hotels, daily Mass, breakfast, dinner, and much more! As we walk in Jesus' footsteps in Jerusalem, a few places on the itinerary include The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden of Gethsemane and the Basilica of Agony, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu where Peter betrayed Jesus thrice. Moreover, in Tiberias, we will sail through the Sea of Galilee, tour Nazareth, and witness the site of the transfiguration on Mount Tabor. Pilgrims can go to the Dead Sea for a day and relax! We will spend one night in Amman and one night in Petra, one of the magnificent Seven Wonders of the World. For more information, contact Alba Kim at 804-298-4035 or tours@albastours.com.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for June 4, 2023

Exodus 34: 4b-6, 8-9 / John 3: 16-18

Following is a word search based on the First Reading and Gospel for the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, Cycle A. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

EXODUS	EARLY	MORNING
MOUNT SINAI	TABLETS	HIS NAME
LORD	MERCIFUL	SLOW
TO ANGER	MOSES	BOWED
FAVOR	PEOPLE	PARDON
WORLD	ONLY SON	BELIEVES
PERISH	ETERNAL	BE SAVED

CAME DOWN

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P E R I S H I S N A M E
A E S E V E I L E B X K
R R O V A F A S L O W W
D M N P N A N A D R O L
O O L T L K I U L Y A M
N R Y N B E S A V E D E
T N S S X T T D E J L R
R I O G E R N E A B R C
I N N L D S U N R C O I
C G B D E W O B L N W F
A A B E R G M M Y B A U
T O A N G E R X T Y D L
    
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El Papa: Seamos dóciles a la voz del Paráclito y sensibles a su presencia

Este 14 de mayo, VI Domingo de Pascua, el Santo Padre en su alocución antes de rezar la oración del Regina Caeli recordó que, “si invocamos al Espíritu Santo, aprenderemos a acoger y recordar la realidad más importante de la vida, que nos protege de las acusaciones del mal: somos hijos amados de Dios”.

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

“El Espíritu Santo no nos deja solos, está junto a nosotros, como un abogado que asiste al imputado estando a su lado. Y nos sugiere cómo defendernos frente a quien nos acusa”, lo dijo el Papa Francisco en su alocución antes de rezar la oración mariana del Regina Caeli de este 14 de mayo, VI Domingo de Pascua, ante los miles de fieles y peregrinos que se dieron cita en la Plaza de San Pedro, en el Vaticano.

Dos aspectos importantes del Paráclito

Al comentar el Evangelio de este VI Domingo de Pascua, en el cual San Juan nos presenta la promesa de Jesús a sus discípulos de enviarles “otro Paráclito, que este siempre con ellos”, el Santo Padre dijo que, Jesús nos habla del Espíritu Santo, al que llama Paráclito, y de ahí propuso dos aspectos para la reflexión: su cercanía y su ayuda contra quien nos acusa.

“Paráclito es una palabra que viene del griego, que significa al mismo tiempo el que consuela y abogado. El Espíritu Santo no nos deja solos jamás, está junto a nosotros, como un abogado que asiste al imputado estando a su lado. Y nos sugiere cómo defendernos frente a quien nos acusa. Recordemos que el gran acusador es siempre el diablo, que te pone dentro los pecados, el deseo de pecar, la maldad. Reflexionemos sobre estos dos aspectos: su cercanía a nosotros y su ayuda contra quien nos acusa”.

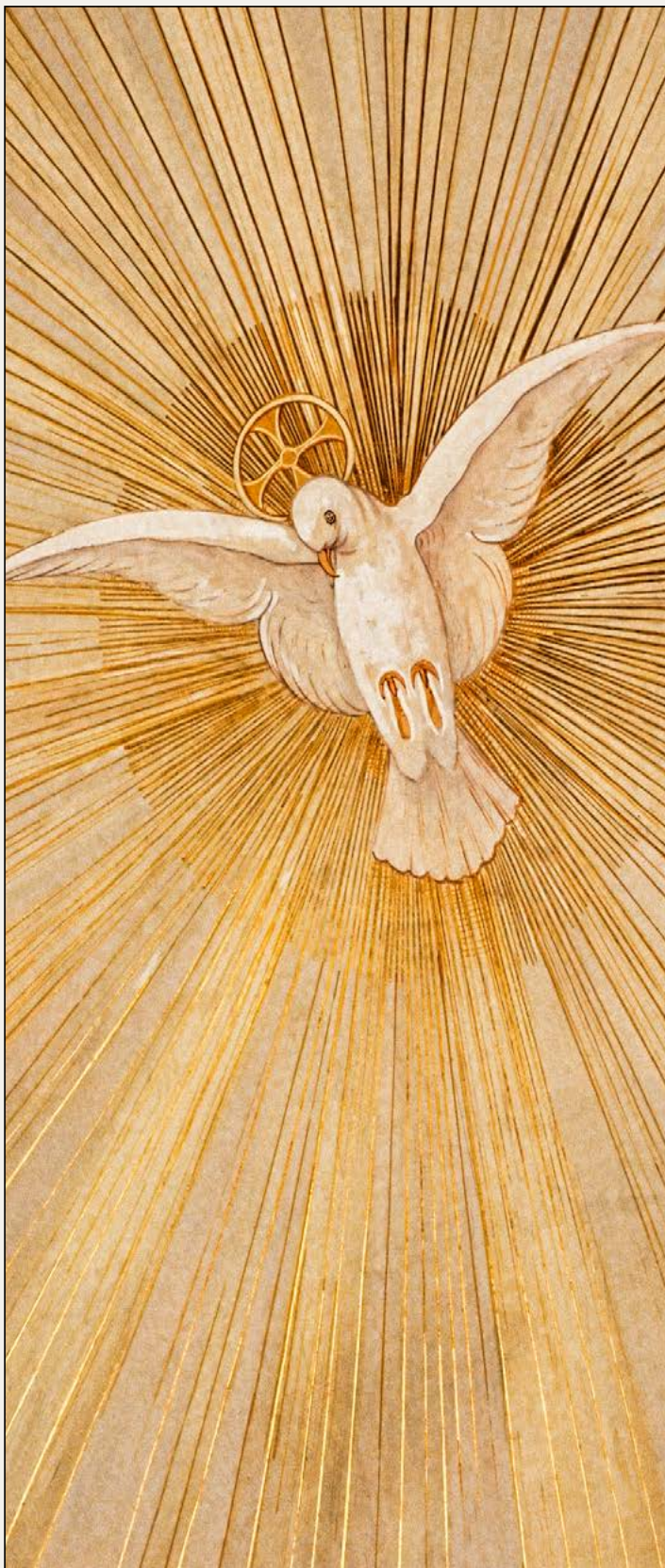
El Espíritu Santo está siempre cerca de nosotros

La cercanía del Espíritu Santo fue el primer aspecto sobre el cual reflexionó el Papa Francisco este domingo. El Paráclito, dijo el Pontífice, no nos abandona jamás.

“El Espíritu Santo quiere quedarse con nosotros: no es un huésped de paso que viene a hacernos una visita de cortesía. Es un compañero de vida, una presencia estable, es Espíritu y desea morar en nuestro espíritu. Es paciente y está con nosotros también cuando caemos. Se queda porque nos ama de verdad, no finge querernos para luego dejarnos solos en medio de las dificultades. No. Es leal, es transparente, es auténtico”.

El Paráclito nos consuela y nos corrige

En este sentido, el Papa Francisco explicó que la cercanía del Espíritu Santo se manifiesta cuando nos encontramos en una situación de prueba, ya que Él nos consuela, trayéndonos el perdón y la fuerza de Dios. Y cuando nos pone ante nuestros errores y nos corrige, indicó el Papa, lo hace con suavidad: en su voz, que habla al corazón, están



responde a sus esquemas y sus modelos; del diablo, que es el ‘acusador’ por excelencia y el que divide, y que hace todo lo posible para que nos sintamos incapaces e infelices”.

El Espíritu Santo nos sugiere cómo responder al acusador

Ante todos estos pensamientos acusatorios, evidenció el Pontífice, el Espíritu Santo nos sugiere cómo responder. ¿De qué modo? El Paráclito, dice Jesús, es Aquel que nos enseña y nos recuerda todo lo que Jesús nos ha dicho.

“Él nos recuerda las palabras del Evangelio, y nos permite así responder al diablo acusador no con palabras nuestras, sino con las palabras mismas del Señor. Sobre todo, nos recuerda que Jesús hablaba siempre del Padre que está en los cielos, que nos lo ha dado a conocer y nos ha revelado su amor por nosotros, que somos sus hijos. Si invocamos al Espíritu, aprenderemos a acoger y recordar la realidad más importante de la vida, que nos protege de las acusaciones del mal. Y ¿Cuál es esta realidad más importante de la vida? Somos hijos amados de Dios. Somos hijos amados de Dios: esta es la realidad más importante, y el Espíritu nos recuerda esto”.

Dóciles a la voz del Espíritu Santo y sensibles a su presencia

Antes de concluir su alocución, y pedir la intercesión de la Virgen María “para que nos haga dóciles a la voz del Espíritu Santo y sensibles a su presencia”, el Papa Francisco invitó a todos a preguntarnos hoy:

“¿Invocamos al Espíritu Santo, le rezamos con frecuencia? ¿No nos olvidemos de Él, que está junto a nosotros, es más, en nuestro interior! Y, asimismo, ¿prestamos atención a su voz, tanto cuando nos anima como cuando nos corrige? ¿Respondemos con las palabras de Jesús a las acusaciones del mal, a los ‘tribunales’ de la vida? ¿Nos acordamos de que somos hijos amados de Dios?”.

siempre presentes el timbre de la ternura y el calor del amor.

“Cierto, el Espíritu Paráclito es exigente, porque es un verdadero amigo, un amigo fiel, que no esconde nada, que nos sugiere qué cambiar y cómo crecer. Pero cuando nos corrige jamás nos humilla y nunca infunde desánimo; por el contrario, nos transmite la certeza de que con Dios podemos lograrlo, siempre. Esta es su cercanía. Es una bella certeza”.

Espíritu Santo es nuestro defensor

El segundo aspecto sobre el cual reflexionó el Santo Padre fue el del Espíritu Paráclito como abogado nuestro, el que nos defiende de quien nos acusa:

“De nosotros mismos cuando no nos queremos y no nos perdonamos, llegando quizá incluso a decirnos que somos unos fracasados buenos para nada; del mundo, que descarta a quien no



Former 'saint' sets his sights on space

KRISTEN L. BYRD

Special to The Catholic Virginian

NASA is pumping up its Artemis II mission to make history for a number of reasons: it will be the first manned space shuttle to land on the moon in half a century; its crew will include the first person of color and the first woman to land on the moon; and it will carry equipment that has been built and tested by a saint – an All Saints Catholic School, Richmond, “saint,” that is.

All Saints alumnus John Williams attended the Richmond parochial school from junior kindergarten through eighth grade, graduating in 2006. He works as a NASA engineer and hopes to inspire the next generation to set their sights on space, too.

Williams returned to his former school on April 28 to share his experience with students who walk the same halls he once did. He began the day as the guest speaker at the school’s annual “Breakfast with the Saints” fundraiser.

He talked with school supporters, staff and faculty, including some of his former teachers, before speaking to All Saints’ 200 students as part of NASA’s ambassadorship program.

“NASA has always placed a heavy impetus on inspiring the next generation,” said Williams. “They are the

shuttle, Williams was able to connect with students of every grade level, explaining things in an engaging and informative way.

Students also came prepared, asking a lot of questions which he tried to answer. Little hands shot up like rockets as he fielded inquiries about his personal and professional life, space exploration history, future endeavors, and what would happen if the moon exploded (it would not be good).

Williams shared that from the time he was a baby, he was entranced by his toy cars, trains and planes. Anything that moved grabbed his attention – and it hasn’t let go for 31 years.

His father took him to an air show one day as a child and he fell in love with aviation. In middle school, he learned that engineers build airplanes, so he made that his goal, eventually earning his master’s degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Cincinnati. He spent five years building and testing jet engines for General Electric before being recruited to join NASA four years ago.

Laying the groundwork

One of the major aims of the Artemis program is to lay the groundwork for future missions to Mars, explained Williams.

While it would take six months for astronauts to reach the distant red planet, the moon is much closer and can serve as a testing ground for scientists to learn how best to keep astronauts safe. Williams explained that space travel contains many potential threats to the human body.

Low or zero gravity causes bone mass and muscles to deteriorate and the body overall to become weaker. Sometimes after a mission, astronauts can barely walk as they readjust to earth’s gravity.

Space also exposes astronauts to cosmic radiation, which can mean an increased risk of ailments, including degenerative disease and cancer. Since Mars missions will last two years at a time and mean prolonged exposure to radiation and zero gravity, Artemis’ work on the moon is pivotal to ensuring astronauts’ safety.

Williams has been working on Artemis’ Orion Stage Adapter, overseeing flight readiness for satellites carried within it called BioSentinel CubeSats. Each CubeSat is roughly the size of a shoe box.

BioSentinel will perform long-duration biology experiments in deep space, including experiments with yeast cells, which are similar to human cells. The yeast will be exposed to radiation and monitored by scientists.

Artemis II is slated to launch in November 2024 and several other missions are planned over the coming years. Future Artemis endeavors include Gateway, which will be the first space station to orbit the moon.



John Williams explains the highlights of the Artemis I mission, which launched in November 2022, during a visit to All Saints School, Richmond, April 28. (Photo submitted by All Saints School)

Gateway will include a scientific laboratory to study deep space as well as docking ports for visiting spacecraft, such as lunar landers and re-supply crafts.

Grounded by faith

While much of his work might be focused on deep space, Williams stays grounded by his deep faith.

“I am a devout Christian,” he proclaimed. “As such, all understanding comes through faith in Christ.”

“When I look out into the vastness of space, I don’t see a contradiction of Scripture,” he added. “I marvel at God’s design and cherish my ability to comprehend only a small part.”

Williams said people of various faiths are working at NASA, with the same goal of “pushing humanity further than ever before.”

He said something that strikes him about NASA is how people of all walks of life work together, each fulfilling their part of a much greater whole. More than 400,000 people, and hundreds of companies from all 50 states, as well as several other countries, have contributed to the Artemis program.

“I saw a mosaic of all people working on getting us back to the moon,” he recalled. “Men and women of all races and creeds work together toward a common goal. It felt like an accurate representation of America.”

An All Saints’ start

Carmen Murph, who taught Williams at All Saints, was elated to see her former pupil again.

“As a student in the fifth grade, he told me that one day he was going to be a big success in life,” she said. “I myself was overjoyed to see how far he’s come and to see what he is achieving, learning.”

Principal Scott Meadows also had nothing but praise for Williams’ return. “I think that Mr. Williams embodies

what we hope for our students. He was such a strong role model for all of our students, and we hope to have him return,” said the principal. “It is great to see things come full circle.”

When speaking to his young audience, Williams talked about how he started out just as they did — a student at All Saints.

“I didn’t realize until after I left how unique the nurturing experience was at All Saints,” said Williams. “The teachers truly cared for your well-being and success in a way that I haven’t observed elsewhere. The foundation laid there is something I draw inspiration from now, years later.”

After the event, Williams returned to NASA’s flight center in Alabama, where he will continue to work on getting people to the moon, Mars and beyond.

It’s a long way from the school in which he spent 10 years learning and praying but said it’s a trip he wants as many kids as possible to take. The event at All Saints marked his first as a NASA ambassador, and he hopes it’s the first of many.

“Never stop dreaming. The mundaneness of adulthood tends to dampen our childhood hopes, dreams and aspirations,” he said. “Always hold on to a piece of that as you get older.”

To learn more about NASA’s Artemis program, find a link in this story at catholicvirginian.org or scan below.



John Williams explains parts of the space shuttle to 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders on April 28 at All Saints School, Richmond. (Photo submitted by All Saints School)

ones that will carry the torch, pushing this nation and the world to new frontiers.”

Carrying his own torch in the form of a scale model of a space