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WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas

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COURTESY

Bishop Michael Sis blessed a monument commemorating the 60th anniversary of the first-ever English-language Cursillo, which was held from Nov. 9–12, 1961, at St. Joseph Parish in San Angelo. A celebration was held at St. Joseph on Nov. 6, 2021. See Page 12.

From the Bishop's Desk

Symbols of Advent and Christmas



Bishop Michael J. Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

follow the line of a circle, it has no beginning or end, so it is a symbol of the eternity of God, who has no beginning or end. Jesus Christ has won for us the possibility of eternal life in union with him in heaven. Evergreen plants are symbolic of eternal life, because they are still green, even in the middle of winter, when other plants have died.

Each of the four candles of the Advent wreath represents 1,000 years, to total 4,000 years. Why 4,000 years? If you make a literal count of the years in the Old Testament, from Adam to Christ, it comes to 4,000 years. Thus, the Advent wreath symbolizes all the generations of human beings who awaited the coming of the Messiah to save us from the sin of Adam and Eve. As we light an additional candle with each week of Advent, we see visually that we are coming closer to the celebration of the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

Traditionally, the Advent wreath uses three violet candles and one rose candle. The color violet has two symbolic meanings. On the one hand, it is the color of royalty, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is our king. On the other hand, violet is symbolic of repentance, because Advent includes a call to conversion.

The rose-colored candle on the Advent wreath symbolizes joy. It is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, which celebrates the joy of the nearness of the birth of the Savior.

CHRISTMAS WREATH

The symbolic meaning of wreaths during the Christmas season echoes what is said above about the circular shape, the use of evergreen plants, bells, holly, and the colors of red, green, white, and gold.

LIGHTS

Christmas lights express joy at the birth of Christ and celebrate Jesus Christ as the light of the world who dispels the darkness of sin. The Gospel of John says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1:5). Because of our Baptism, the light of Christ is in us, and we are called to let his light shine through us into the lives of those around us. Jesus says in Mt 5:16, "Let your light shine." All this rich meaning should come to mind when we see Christmas lights.

GIFTS

The practice of giving gifts at Christmas time reminds us of God the Father's gift of his only Son to the world. Jesus says in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Having received such a precious gift from God, we naturally want to respond by giving gifts to others. Gift-giving also recalls the gifts of the wise men to the baby Jesus – gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

STOCKINGS

The practice of using stockings at Christmas comes from a story about St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra, in

what is now the country of Turkey. Nicholas died around 350 AD. He was very generous to the poor. A concrete instance of his generosity was when he helped three young women whose father was very poor. The father didn't have money for dowries, which in their culture were needed for women to get married. In response to their plight, the Bishop Nicholas, on three different nights, anonymously threw a bag of gold through the window of their house, one for each daughter. The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. In some versions of the story, there are three balls of gold rather than bags.

POINSETTIA FLOWERS

These flowers are native to tropical and subtropical areas of Central America and southern Mexico. The star-shaped leaves remind us of the star of Bethlehem. In Mexico these plants are called *Flores de Nochebuena* (Christmas Eve Flowers).

There is a beautiful story from Mexico associated with their use at Christmas. According to the story, everyone in the village would gather in the church for Mass on Christmas Eve (*Nochebuena*), and each family would bring a gift to present to the Baby Jesus. There was a little girl who was very poor, and she also wanted to give a gift to the Christ child.

She picked a few weeds from along the side of the road to bring to church for the baby Jesus, because she could not afford anything else. The other people in her neighborhood looked down on her, but she believed that even most humble gift, given in love, would be acceptable in God's eyes. When she arrived at church, the weeds bloomed into a wonderful bunch of red flowers with thick green leaves. Then all the people around knew that they had witnessed a true Christmas miracle.

CHRISTMAS TREE

The symbolism of the evergreen, the lights, and the star on top of the tree are all explained above. The origin of the Christmas tree is rooted in two medieval Catholic practices:

1. A medieval German Christmas tradition called the *Weihnachts Pyramide*, or Christmas Pyramid, was a layered structure decorated with figures from the Nativity and sometimes with candles.

2. In a separate tradition, the Paradise Tree was part of the scenery on the stage of medieval mystery plays in Germany, which started in the eleventh century as religious theatre. In those days, Dec. 24 was observed as the Feast of Adam and Eve. The tree represented both the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9). The fir tree was decorated with red apples to symbolize the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam and Eve. Later, these trees came to be used in people's homes. The apples evolved into the ornaments of shiny red balls. A star of Bethlehem was later added on top. Eventually, candles were added to the Paradise Tree, from the custom of the *Weihnachts Pyramide*.

With time, these two practices (the Paradise Tree and the Christmas Pyramid) were blended into a single custom of Christmas trees in people's homes, with lights and decorations, including red balls. That is the historic origin of the Christmas tree.

CONCLUSION

Christmas is primarily about the birth of Jesus Christ, who took a human body so he could offer himself as a sacrifice of love for our salvation. The many beautiful Christian symbols associated with Advent and Christmas help us to honor him with love.

Christmas is a celebration of the Incarnation of God. It commemorates the fact that the eternal Son of God took human flesh and become one of us for the sake of our salvation. Of course, the actual initial moment of the Incarnation was at the Annunciation, nine months earlier, but Christmas is still a celebration of the same mystery of the Incarnation.

We can better prepare our hearts for the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord by becoming familiar with the meaning of the symbols commonly associated with Advent and Christmas. By reflecting on these symbols, and conversing about them with family and friends, the upcoming weeks will be a much richer experience of faith.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

One of the primary symbols of Christmas is light. In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice is the point in the year with the longest night and the shortest day. In our current Gregorian calendar, the winter solstice is Dec. 21, but in the previous Julian calendar, the solstice took place on Dec. 25. Thus, the original date of the celebration of Christmas coincided with the day when the light begins to conquer the darkness. This natural phenomenon echoes the theological truth that the light of Christ conquers the darkness of sin and death.

CHRISTMAS COLORS

The color red used in Christmas decorations symbolizes the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, who gave his life for our salvation.

The color green is symbolic of life and hope.

The colors white and gold represent Christ as the light of the world, glory, victory, and the purity of our sinless Savior. These colors are used liturgically on feasts of Our Lord, including Christmas.

STAR

The use of a star in Christmas decorations reminds us of the star that led the Wise Men to the newborn Jesus in Bethlehem.

ANGELS

The artistic depiction of angels at Christmas time reminds us that angels appeared to the shepherds announcing the good news of the birth of Christ (Lk 2:8-14).

BELLS

Bells in Christmas symbolism remind us of the bells of churches calling the faithful to worship, joyfully announcing the birth of Christ. They are rung at Midnight Mass, either calling people to Mass, or celebrating at the end of Mass. We Catholics were ringing bells for Christmas for many centuries before the song "Jingle Bells" was written in 1857. That song was originally intended as a Thanksgiving song, not Christmas.

HOLLY

The prickly, pointed leaves of holly in Christmas decorations are reminders of the crown of thorns of Jesus Christ in his Passion. The red berries of the holly symbolize Christ's blood shed for our salvation. White flowers on the holly symbolize the purity of Christ, victory, and Christ as the light of the world.

ADVENT WREATH

The four candles of an Advent wreath symbolize the light of Christ, who is the light of the world. The candles are placed in a circle of evergreen leaves. If you

Símbolos de Adviento y Navidad

La Navidad es una celebración de la Encarnación de Dios. Conmemora el hecho de que el Hijo eterno de Dios tomó carne humana y se convirtió en uno de nosotros por el bien de nuestra salvación. Por supuesto, el momento inicial real de la Encarnación fue en la Anunciación, nueve meses antes, pero la Navidad sigue siendo una celebración del mismo misterio de la Encarnación.

Podemos preparar mejor nuestros corazones para la Fiesta de la Natividad del Señor familiarizándonos con el significado de los símbolos comúnmente asociados con el Adviento y la Navidad. Al reflexionar sobre estos símbolos y conversar sobre ellos con familiares y amigos, las próximas semanas serán una experiencia de fe mucho más rica.

LUZ Y OSCURIDAD

Uno de los principales símbolos de la Navidad es la luz. En el hemisferio norteño, el solsticio de invierno es el punto del año con la noche más larga y el día más corto. En nuestro calendario Gregoriano actual, el solsticio de invierno es el 21 de diciembre, pero en el calendario Juliano anterior, el solsticio se llevó a cabo el 25 de diciembre. Así, la fecha original de la celebración de la Navidad coincidía con el día en que la luz comienza a conquistar la oscuridad. Este fenómeno natural se hace eco de la verdad teológica de que la luz de Cristo conquista las tinieblas del pecado y la muerte.

COLORES NAVIDEÑOS

El color rojo utilizado en las decoraciones navideñas simboliza el sufrimiento y la muerte de Jesucristo, quien dio su vida por nuestra salvación.

El color verde simboliza la vida y la esperanza.

Los colores blanco y dorado representan a Cristo como la luz del mundo, la gloria, la victoria, y la pureza de nuestro Salvador sin pecado. Estos colores se utilizan litúrgicamente en las fiestas de Nuestro Señor, incluida la Navidad.

ESTRELLA

El uso de una estrella en la decoración navideña nos recuerda la estrella que condujo a los Reyes Magos hasta el recién nacido Jesús en Belén.

ÁNGELES

La representación artística de los ángeles en la época navideña nos recuerda que los ángeles se aparecieron a los pastores anunciando la buena noticia del nacimiento de Cristo (Lucas 2:8-14).

CAMPANAS

Las campanas en el simbolismo navideño nos recuerdan las campanas de las iglesias que llaman a los fieles a adorar, anunciando con alegría el nacimiento de Cristo. Se tocan en la Misa de Medianoche, ya sea llamando a la gente a la Misa o celebrando al final de la Misa. Los católicos hemos estado tocando las campanas de Navidad muchos siglos antes de que se escribiera la canción "Jingle Bells" en 1857. Esa canción fue originalmente pensada como una canción para el Día de Acción de Gracias, no Navidad.

ACEBO

Las hojas puntiagudas y espinosas de acebo en las decoraciones navideñas son recordatorios de la corona de espinas de Jesucristo en su Pasión. Las bayas rojas del acebo simbolizan la sangre de Cristo derramada por nuestra salvación. Las flores blancas en el acebo simbolizan la pureza de Cristo, la victoria, y Cristo como la luz del mundo.



Obispo Michael J. Sis

Diócesis de San Ángel

CORONA DE ADVIENTO

Las cuatro velas de una corona de Adviento simbolizan la luz de Cristo, que es la luz del mundo. Las velas se colocan en un círculo de hojas perennes. Si uno sigue la línea de un círculo, no tiene principio ni fin, por lo que es un símbolo de la eternidad de Dios, que no tiene principio ni fin. Jesucristo nos ha ganado la posibilidad de la vida eterna en unión con él en el Cielo. Las plantas de hoja perenne son un símbolo de la vida eterna, porque todavía están verdes, incluso en pleno invierno, cuando otras plantas han muerto.

Cada una de las cuatro velas de la corona de Adviento representa 1,000 años, para un total de 4,000 años. ¿Por qué 4,000 años? Si hace un recuento literal de los años en el Antiguo Testamento, desde Adán hasta Cristo, llega a 4,000 años. Así, la corona de Adviento simboliza todas las generaciones de seres humanos que esperaban la venida del Mesías para salvarnos del pecado de Adán y Eva. Al encender una vela adicional con cada semana de Adviento, vemos visualmente que nos acercamos a la celebración del nacimiento del Mesías, Jesucristo, la luz del mundo.

Tradicionalmente, la corona de Adviento usa tres velas violetas y una vela rosa. El color violeta tiene dos significados simbólicos. Por un lado, es el color de la realeza, proclamando que Jesucristo es nuestro rey. Por otro lado, el violeta simboliza el arrepentimiento, porque el Adviento incluye una llamada a la conversión.

La vela de color rosa en la corona de Adviento simboliza la alegría. Se enciende el Tercer Domingo de Adviento, el Domingo de Gaudete, que celebra la alegría de la cercanía del nacimiento del Salvador.

CORONA DE NAVIDAD

El significado simbólico de las coronas durante la temporada navideña se hace eco de lo que se dijo anteriormente sobre la forma circular, el uso de campanas, plantas de hoja perenne, acebo, y los colores rojo, verde, blanco, y dorado.

LUCES

Las luces navideñas expresan alegría por el nacimiento de Cristo y celebran a Jesucristo como la luz del mundo que disipa las tinieblas del pecado. El Evangelio de Juan dice: "Esta luz brilla en las tinieblas, y las tinieblas no han podido apagarla" (Juan 1:5). Debido a nuestro Bautismo, la luz de Cristo está en nosotros, y estamos llamados a dejar que su luz brille a través de nosotros en las vidas de quienes nos rodean. Jesús dice en Mateo 5:16: "Deja que brille tu luz". Todo este rico significado debería venir a la mente cuando veamos las luces de Navidad.

REGALOS

La práctica de dar regalos en Navidad nos recuerda el regalo de Dios Padre de su único Hijo al mundo. Jesús dice en Juan 3:16: "Tanto amó Dios al mundo que dio a su Hijo unigénito, para que todo el que crea en él no se pierda, mas tenga vida eterna." Habiendo recibido un regalo tan precioso de Dios, naturalmente queremos responder dando regalos a los demás. La entrega de obsequios también recuerda los obsequios de los magos al niño Jesús: oro, incienso, y mirra.

MEDIAS DE NAVIDAD

La práctica de usar medias en Navidad proviene de una historia sobre San Nicolás, el obispo de Myra, en lo que ahora es el país de Turquía. Nicolás murió alrededor del 350 dC. Fue muy generoso con los pobres. Un ejemplo concreto de su generosidad fue cuando ayudó a tres mujeres jóvenes cuyo padre era muy pobre. El padre no tenía dinero para las dotes, que en su cultura eran necesarias para que las mujeres se casaran. En respuesta a su difícil situación, el Obispo Nicolás, en tres noches diferentes, arrojó de forma anónima una bolsa de oro por la ventana de su casa, una para cada hija. Las bolsas de oro caían en medias o zapatos que se dejaban secar ante el fuego. Esto llevó a la costumbre de que los niños cuelguen medias o saquen los zapatos, esperando ansiosos los regalos de San Nicolás. En algunas versiones de la historia, hay tres bolas de oro en lugar de bolsas.

FLORES DE NOCHEBUENA

Estas flores son nativas de áreas tropicales y subtropicales de Centroamérica y el sur de México. Las hojas en forma de estrella nos recuerdan a la estrella de Belén. En México estas plantas se llaman Flores de Nochebuena.

Hay una hermosa historia de México asociada con su uso en Navidad. Según la historia, todos en el pueblo se reunían en la iglesia para la Misa en Nochebuena, y cada familia traía un regalo para presentar al Niño Jesús. Había una niña que era muy pobre y también quería darle un regalo al niño Jesús. Ella recogió algunas malas hierbas a lo largo del camino para llevar a la iglesia para el niño Jesús, porque no podía pagar nada más. Las demás personas de su vecindario la despreciaban, pero ella creía que, por más humilde que fuera un regalo, dado con amor, sería aceptable a los ojos de Dios. Cuando llegó a la iglesia, las malas hierbas florecieron en un maravilloso ramo de flores rojas con gruesas hojas verdes. Entonces toda la gente a su alrededor supo que habían presenciado un verdadero milagro navideño.

ÁRBOL DE NAVIDAD

El simbolismo de hoja perenne, las luces, y la estrella en la parte superior del árbol se explican anteriormente. El origen del árbol de Navidad tiene sus raíces en dos prácticas católicas medievales:

1. Una tradición navideña medieval alemana llamada *Weihnachts Pyramide*, o pirámide de Navidad, era una estructura en capas decorada con figuras de la Natividad y, a veces, con velas.

2. En una tradición separada, el Árbol del Paraíso fue parte del escenario en el estrado de las obras de misterio medievales en Alemania, que comenzaron en el siglo XI como teatro religioso. En aquellos días, el 24 de diciembre se observaba como la Fiesta de Adán y Eva. El árbol representaba tanto el árbol del conocimiento del bien y del mal como el árbol de la vida en el jardín del Edén (Génesis 2:9). El abeto estaba decorado con manzanas rojas para simbolizar la fruta prohibida que comían Adán y Eva. Más tarde, estos árboles llegaron a usarse en los hogares de las personas. Las manzanas se convirtieron en adornos de bolas rojas brillantes. Ya después, se agregó una estrella de Belén en la parte superior. Finalmente, se agregaron velas al Árbol del Paraíso, de la costumbre de la *Weinachts Pyramide*.

Con el tiempo, estas dos prácticas (el Árbol del Paraíso y la Pirámide de Navidad) se combinaron en una sola costumbre de árboles de Navidad en las casas de las personas, con luces y decoraciones, incluidas bolas rojas. Ese es el origen histórico del árbol de Navidad.

CONCLUSIÓN

La Navidad se trata principalmente del nacimiento de Jesucristo, quien tomó un cuerpo humano para poder ofrecerse a sí mismo como sacrificio de amor por nuestra salvación. Los muchos hermosos símbolos cristianos asociados con el Adviento y la Navidad nos ayudan a honrarlo con amor.

CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



December

1

Rev. John A. Pierce (D — 1979)

1

Rev. Joseph Uecker (B)

2

Rev. Juan Lopez (B)

4

Rev. Thomas Manimala (B)

4

Rev. Larry Cyr, CPPS (D — 2017)

5

Rev. Laurent Mvondo (O — 1981)

5

Rev. Angel Vizcarra, OP (D — 2004)

7

Deacon Arturo Casarez (O — 2002)

7

Deacon Michael Kahlig (O — 2002)

7

Deacon Michael LaMonica (O — 2002)

10

Rev. Francis Njoku (B)

12

Rev. James Aaron (D — 1999)

12

Rev. Romanus Akamike (D — 2015)

12

Deacon José Gallegos (B)

12

Deacon Nestor Perez (D — 1993)

12

Deacon Lorenzo Salazar (B)

14

Rev. Albert Ezeanya (B)

14

Rev. Bernardito Getigan (O — 1985)

15

Rev. Peter Vaitonis (D — 1968)

17

Rev. Joseph Vathalloor, CMI (D — 2020)

18

Deacon Fred Greene (O — 1997)

19

Deacon Salvador Primera (B)

20

Deacon Julio Carrasco (B)

20

Rev. John Waldron (D — 1995)

21

Rev. Thomas Manimala (O — 1995)

21

Bishop Michael Pfeifer (O — 1964)

21

Rev. Bala Anthony Govindu (B)

21

Rev. Adam Droll (B)

23

Rev. Yesuratnam Mulakaleti (O — 2004)

27

Rev. Mark Woodruff (B)

28

Rev. Nicholas Femenia, CM (D — 1999)

28

Rev. Knick Knickerbocker (B)

28

Rev. Msgr. Benedict Zientek (B)

29

Deacon Miguel Lopez (B)

29

Rev. Msgr. Louis Moeller (D — 2008)

30


Rev. Joseph Choutapalli (O — 1990)

30

Rev. John Hoorman, CPPS (D — 1995)

See CLERGY, Page 14

B = Birthday | O = Date of Ordination
D = Date of Death



Bishop's Calendar

Please contact the bishop's assistant, Lupe Castillo, for information about the bishop's calendar.
325-651-7500 | lcastillo@sanangelodiocese.org

December 2021

3

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral/Finance Council joint meeting at 1:00 p.m.

3

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Clergy and Religious Advent Dinner; Social at 5:00 p.m.

4

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Congar Institute Training

5

COLEMAN, Sacred Heart, Mass of 40th Anniversary of Ordination of Rev. Laurent Mvondo at 11:00 a.m.

5

WALL, St. Ambrose, Mass of 80th Anniversary of the parish and 30th anniversary of ordination of Rev. Joseph Choutapalli at 5:00 p.m.

7

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Staff Advent Day of Prayer at 9:00 a.m.

8

CHRISTOVAL, Carmelite Monastery, Mass of Profession of Sr. Mary Elijah Guignon at 10:00 a.m.

8

SAN ANGELO, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Mass at 6:30 p.m.

9

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Staff Advent Dinner; Social at 6:30 p.m.

11

MIDLAND, St. Ann Catholic School, Diocesan Schools Commission meeting at 9:30 a.m.

11

MIDLAND, MLK Park, procession at 3:00 p.m.

11

MIDLAND, Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, Mass at 5:00 p.m.

12

EOLA, St. Philip Benizi, Mass at 8:00 a.m.

12

MILLERSVIEW, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mass at 9:30 a.m.

12

EDEN, St. Charles, Mass at 11:00 a.m.

17

ODESSA, Holy Redeemer, Mass at 6:00 p.m. followed by Posadas

18

ODESSA, St. Mary, Simbang Gabi Mass at 5:00 a.m.

18-21

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Seminarian Gathering

20

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Solemn Vespers at 6:30 p.m.

21

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass of the Anniversary of Dedication at 6:30 p.m.

24

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Christmas Eve Mass at 6:30 p.m.

31

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass of Mary, Mother of God at 6:30 p.m.

January 2022

1

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass of the Vigil of the Epiphany at 4:00 p.m.

3-7

SAN ANTONIO, Oblate Renewal Center, Annual Retreat of Bishops

9

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Mass with deacon candidates at 11:00 a.m.

12

MIDLAND, St. Ann Catholic School, Middle School Mass at 8:30 a.m.

18

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.

20

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 2:00 p.m.

22

AUSTIN, State Capitol, Texas Rally for Life

24

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Catholic Charitable Foundation board meeting at 10:00 a.m.

27

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priestly Life and Formation Committee meeting at 11:00 a.m.

27

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Pension Fund Committee meeting at 2:00 p.m.

27

SAN ANGELO, Hermanamiento Team meeting at 6:00 p.m.

29

ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Mass at 5:00 p.m., followed by meeting of Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre



Christ the King Retreat Center

December 2021

3

Clergy Advent Party

4-5

Congar Institute Training

7

Advent Day of Prayer

8

Closed in Observance of the Immaculate Conception

9

Staff Advent Party

10-12

Deacon Formation

12

Deacon Inquiry Session

13

Deacon Quarterly

18-21

Seminarian Winter Gathering

24-27

Closed in Observance of Christmas

31

Closed in Observance of the New Year

January 2021

3

Closed in Observance of the New Year

7-9

Deacon Formation

9

Deacon Inquiry Session

9-14

Holy Trinity Seminarians Silent Retreat

19

DOSA Staff Meeting, Mass & Lunch

23

1st Holy Communion Retreat, Wall

23

Virtual Confirmation Retreat

28-30

Engaged Encounter and Natural Family Planning

Reporting Sexual Abuse

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for our children and vulnerable adults. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you need a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church, we are here to help you. To report incidents, call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609 (cell), or write Diocese of San Angelo, Victim Assistance Ministry, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the incident occurred outside this diocese, our Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate diocese. Please keep in mind that one always has the right to report abuse to civil authorities, and civil law requires that any abuse of a minor must be reported.

Reportar Abuso Sexual

La Diócesis Católica de San Ángelo está firmemente comprometida a crear y mantener el ambiente más seguro posible para nuestros niños y adultos vulnerables. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por cualquier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de traición o herido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarle. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Ángelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San Ángelo, TX 76902. Un intérprete de español está disponible. Si el incidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a traer su preocupación a la atención de la diócesis correspondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de reportar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, y la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado.

A note on December liturgies and days of obligation

As we make plans to participate in the liturgy of the church at Christmas, we are in a unique situation this year. Both December 25 and January 1 are Saturdays. In such a situation, there are often questions regarding which Mass will be celebrated on Saturday evening.

In the liturgical practice of our Catholic Church, there is a ranking system of the various celebrations. In order of importance, the Solemnity of Christmas occupies a higher place than the Feast of the Holy Family. For this reason, Masses celebrated on Saturday evening, December 25, will be for Christmas, not for the Holy Family.

On days such as these, there are also questions regarding the fulfillment of the obligation to attend Mass. Christmas is always a holy day of obligation, and Sundays are also holy days of obligation, so Catholics need to participate in Masses both for Christmas on December 24 or 25 and for the Feast of the Holy Family on Sunday, December 26. The Church does not offer a "two-for-one" option on Saturday evening, December 25, which means that one cannot attend just one Mass on Saturday to fulfill both the Christmas obligation and the Sunday obligation.

All Masses on Friday evening, December 24, and all day on Saturday, December 25, will use the readings and prayers for Christmas, including Saturday evening Masses. On Sunday, December 26, all Masses will use the readings and prayers for the Feast of the Holy Family.

For the Feast of the Holy Family, the obligation to attend Mass may be fulfilled from the evening of Saturday, December 25 through Sunday, December 26. For example, one may fulfill the Sunday obligation by attending evening Masses after 4:00 p.m. on December 25 (even though the Mass texts will be for the Nativity) or Mass any time on Sunday, December 26.

On the following weekend, the situation will be slightly different. Since the January 1 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, takes place on a Saturday, it is not a holy day of obligation in the U.S. in 2022. Although it is not a holy day of obligation this year, Mass is always a spiritual benefit. Parishes may offer Masses for this solemnity on either Friday evening, December 31, or during the day on Saturday, January 1, before 4:00 p.m.

On Saturday evening, January 1, Masses starting at 4:00 p.m. or later will use the readings and prayers for the Vigil of the Epiphany of the Lord. Then, all Masses on Sunday, January 2, will use the readings and prayers for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

Have you tried the Liturgy of the Hours?

Perhaps you've noticed your priest at church, a small but thick prayer book open in his hands. He was praying the breviary.

Did you know that the breviary, also called the Divine Office and more recently the Liturgy of the Hours, is not just for priests? That in its document on the Liturgy, the Second Vatican Council encouraged everyone to pray it?

This is an invitation for you to make the Liturgy of the Hours part of your daily prayer!

What is the Liturgy of the Hours? For fuller information, google Liturgy of the Hours for a number of good articles and videos explaining this form of prayer.

Briefly, the Liturgy of the Hours is a form of prayer dating back to Old Testament times. Jesus himself prayed the Psalms, as did Mary! From the beginnings of the church, popes, bishops, priests, deacons, monks, cloistered nuns, and lay people have prayed them.

There are five "hours" — actually shorter arrangements of prayer (10-15 minutes each). The Hours consist of psalms, canticles, and readings from the Holy Bible. The two principal hours are Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. Beginners should start with these two for daily use. The other hours are Office of Readings, Midday Prayer, and Night Prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours is available in book form. There is the 4-volume edition, a 1-volume "Christian Prayer," and even a thin "Shorter Christian Prayer." Unfortunately, many beginners have a hard time juggling the book form.

More recently the Liturgy of the Hours can be found as an app on your phone or laptop. There are several such apps, but I recommend using the app iBreviary, which was put together by the Franciscans of the Holy Land. It is free, although the Franciscans will ask for a donation from time to time. The app selects the prayers for each day. A variety of languages are offered on iBreviary — English, Spanish, Italian, and even



Father Mark Woodruff

Latin.

How do you use iBreviary? Every day begins with the Invitatory (Psalm 95). Other psalms are recommended for variety, but most people begin with Psalm 95. After praying Psalm 95, scroll down to Morning Prayer and begin. A hymn follows, then the psalms. It continues with a short reading from the scriptures, a responsory and the Benedictus (the prayer of Zechariah), followed by intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, and a prayer for the day. Evening

Prayer has a similar pattern.

Most people pray it alone, but many pray it with others. Husbands and wives sometimes pray it together, and some people even pray it with friends during Zoom sessions.

The psalms — from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament — may be a bit complicated at first. Consult with a bible commentary for an overview of the psalms to help you understand and pray them. The psalms describe the conditions of real people and many people even today find that the psalms express their deepest feelings!

Please give the Liturgy of the Hours a try. Regular use as a morning, evening and night prayer will make this a very significant part of your prayer life.

Father Mark Woodruff is a priest of the Diocese of San Angelo serving in the parishes of St. Anthony and St. Joseph in Odessa.



COURTESY

One priest's well-worn 4-volume copy of The Liturgy of the Hours.

U.S. bishops affix feast day for St. Teresa of Kolkata

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. bishops have assigned a feast date to St. Teresa of Kolkata.

The date would be Sept. 5, the death date in 1997 for the founder of the Missionaries of Charity. It will be an optional memorial on the U.S. calendar.

The vote was 213-0 with one abstention. Two-thirds of Latin-rite bishops' approval is needed, followed by a "confirmatio" by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

According to a report from Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of Hartford, Connecticut, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, Minnesota dioceses petitioned the committee in October 2020 to "inscribe" St. Teresa's name on the "proper" calendar.

"The committee voted unanimously to support this petition at its January 2021 meeting, noting the widespread devotion to St. Teresa and the inspiring example of her life and ministry," Archbishop Blair said.

Committee policy, established in 1992, requires four conditions for the inscription of saints and blessed on the U.S.

calendar: They should have been inscribed on diocesan proper calendars for at least five years; the "cultus" of the candidate "should exist in a significant number of dioceses, broader than the area or region of the country"; the candidate should have served in the United States; and a new inscription would ordinarily have the rank of an optional memorial.

Archbishop Blair noted how the Missionaries of Charity serve in about 30 U.S. dioceses currently, and St. Teresa's feast is ranked as a solemnity in the sisters' chapels. St. Teresa has also been inscribed on the Archdiocese of New York's proper calendar for "a number of years," he said.

Liturgical texts have already been written in anticipation of the feast being declared. Archbishop Blair told the bishops Nov. 17 the Missionaries of Charity are working to finalize a new text for the Office of Readings for such a feast, and the texts for the U.S. edition of the Liturgy of the Hours would likely be presented sometime in 2023 for a future vote by the bishops.

He added the Vatican has chosen to use the previous spelling of Calcutta, the saint's adopted home, for the feast. In response to a question posed by Bishop Earl A. Boyea Jr. of Lansing, Michigan, he said the U.S. bishops' practice is to add feasts on the national calendar as optional memorials.

'No one is a stranger': The church and immigration reform

Note: The following is excised from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services document "Immigration Reform and the Church's Voice: Understanding the Problem and Seeking Solutions."

For decades, the Catholic Church in the United States has called for immigration reform, elevating the importance of family unity and human dignity, among other considerations. The bishops have frequently been at the forefront of these efforts. Unfortunately, immigration reform has fallen victim to a growing partisan divide. Meanwhile, millions of undocumented immigrants and their families remain vulnerable while waiting for a permanent political solution—in many cases, for decades. Given this, the Church's consistent moral voice is essential for providing direction and promoting positive change.

In *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, the bishops of the United States and Mexico joined together to affirm the words of Pope John Paul II:

"In the church no one is a stranger, and the church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere. As a sacrament of unity and thus a sign and a binding force for the whole human race, the church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various dioceses actively to ensure that these people, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community. Solidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble."

This responsibility takes multiple forms, from accompanying immigrants in their daily lives to advocating with civil leaders for needed improvements to the U.S. immigration system. An all-of-church effort is required to fulfill this obligation, involving participation by individuals and institutions alike. The role of the bishops cannot be understated. Ultimately, it is necessary to work toward a comprehensive legislative reform of our immigration laws, but securing permanent legal status for long-term residents is a vital step.

"A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization — all typical of a throw-away culture — towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world."

— Pope Francis, 2014 World Day of Migrants and Refugees Message

Who are undocumented immigrants?

- There are approximately 11 million undocumented persons living in the United States; nearly half are in California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

- Mexican nationals account for the largest percentage of undocumented immigrants (48%), followed by Salvadorans and Guatemalans (each 7%), Indians (5%), and Hondurans (4%).

- The total number of undocumented immigrants in the United States has decreased since 2007, though the population has become more diverse. In 2007, over half

of the undocumented population was from Mexico. Since 2010, the undocumented population from Mexico has fallen from 6.6 million to 4.8 million. Growth in the Asian undocumented population has slowed in recent years, particularly from China, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam, whose immigrant populations decreased.

- The percentage of undocumented immigrants that has lived in the United States for 15 years or more increased from 25% to 43% between 2010 and 2019.

- Approximately 59% of undocumented immigrants speak English well, very well, or only English.

- About 5.8 million U.S.-citizen children live with undocumented household members, with 4.9 million of these children having at least one undocumented parent. At the same time, nearly 1.7 million U.S. citizens have a spouse who is undocumented. Roughly a quarter have been married for 20 years or longer, while more than half have been married for 10 years or longer. Spouses of U.S. citizens who entered the country without inspection cannot adjust their status to become lawful permanent residents due to inadmissibility bars.

- Undocumented immigrants have an incarceration rate about one-half that of native-born Americans. Based on Texas crime data from 2018 that identifies criminals by immigration status, undocumented immigrants had a criminal conviction rate 45% below that of native-born Americans.

- Undocumented immigrants are estimated to have contributed over \$20 billion in federal taxes in 2018, along with almost \$12 billion in state and local taxes. Approximately 5.2 million undocumented immigrants are estimated to work in essential industries, such as health care, energy, and food production. Undocumented farmworkers also make up about 50% of the farm labor workforce. An estimated 96% of those in the labor force are employed. Rather than undermining wages, recognizing the millions of undocumented workers across the country will mean native-born workers no longer have to compete with those who are frequently exploited because they lack legal status.

What are common misconceptions about undocumented immigrants?

- Some argue that providing legal status and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants would encourage unlawful immigration. However, multiple studies analyzing unlawful migration flows following passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986 contradict this assertion or else fail to support it. Rather, the primary drivers of migration are conditions in countries from which people migrate. This is the same conclusion reached by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

- Some tout the "generosity" of the U.S. immigration system, limiting their support for those immigrants who "come legally," but one of the primary reasons people do not immigrate legally is because there are many systemic barriers that prevent them from doing so. Also, many enter legally and remain past the time they are authorized because there are insufficient visas available under the current system. Our system also contains a very limited number of per-

manent visas for low-wage laborers to come to the United States, but the demand for their work is much higher: as many as 300,000 undocumented people each year are absorbed into the U.S. workforce, but only about 140,000 employment-based visas total are issued in a year. Immigrants also come illegally because there is an enormous backlog that prevents them from reunifying with family members already living in the United States. Some family members might have to wait for more than a decade before their visa is processed and for reunification to occur. This is to say nothing of the numerical limits placed on the number of immigrants from any one country. Lastly, some people are fleeing persecution and seeking protection. Current policies make it very difficult for those with limited means and lacking documentation to enter the country at designated ports of entry.

- Some believe that a legalization effort would "reward" illegal immigration. However, a majority of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. first entered the country legally and have remained beyond the period they were authorized. Meanwhile, most people seeking to enter the United States unlawfully are stopped, and those requesting asylum — at the U.S.-Mexico border or elsewhere — have the legal right to do so under both domestic and international law. A disproportionate emphasis on the border or enforcement fails to acknowledge these and other factors, including the widespread obstacles to legal immigration.

How does the American public feel about undocumented immigrants and immigration reform?

In a 2021 survey by the Cato Institute, when asked which best described how they feel about immigrants in the United States, 6% said they think of immigrants primarily as "family," 19% as "friends," 41% as "neighbors," 21% as "guests," 7% as "intruders," and 6% as "invaders." When asked which is the better approach to illegal immigration, 56% said the better solution is simplifying the legal immigration process, while 43% thought increasing border security and building a border wall is the better approach. According to that same poll, an overall majority (55%) also favor a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently living in the country, 18% favor legal residency without citizenship, 24% would deport all unauthorized immigrants, and 4% would do nothing. A recent survey by Public Opinion Strategies found there to be very strong support among American voters for creating a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children (Dreamers), with 74% of voters in favor. The poll also revealed strong support for facilitating a legal and reliable workforce for farmers and ranchers by streamlining the agricultural guest worker program and providing earned legal status for essential undocumented agricultural workers; about 75% are in favor of this proposal. Support for each of these proposals crosses ideological lines, is consistent across gender/age groups, and is strong in every corner of the country.

What should comprehensive immigration reform do?

In advocating for immigration reform,

the USCCB has consistently upheld that changes to the U.S. immigration system should:

1. **Ensure access to permanent legal status and a pathway to citizenship for current residents.** Given the millions of undocumented persons already living in the United States, legalization is a crucial part of any reform. At a minimum, this should include Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS)/Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) holders, migrant agricultural workers, and other undocumented essential workers.

2. **Reaffirm and prioritize family unity and reunification.** Any reform of the U.S. immigration system should strengthen families and maintain the long-standing emphasis on family unity. Such family-focused policies include: (1) measures that establish legal pathways and waivers that enable families to maintain unity or restore it for those families already torn apart; (2) removal of the three- and ten-year bars to lawful immigration; (3) utilizing prior, unused family-based immigration visas; and (4) mechanisms that will clear current backlogs and ensure timely family reunification.

3. **Reform the immigration detention system.** Immigration reform legislation should eliminate the use of detention as a method of deterrence, and the use of for-profit corporations in immigration detention, reserve detention only for individuals who are national security or public safety threats, expand and prioritize community-based alternatives to detention (ATDs), which are proven to ensure immigration compliance in a more humane way, and include other reforms that aptly protect vulnerable migrants and their families.

4. **Evaluate and revise immigration enforcement strategies, both along the U.S.-Mexico border and within the interior, to ensure the just and humane treatment of all migrants.** Border management should reflect broader U.S. economic and humanitarian interests and prioritize the well-being of local communities. This requires a prohibition on the use of military resources and personnel along the border, as well as the separation of local policing from interior enforcement. Additionally, reform legislation should require the identification and protection of vulnerable populations, such as children, as part of any interior enforcement strategy.

5. **Promote access to asylum and due process.** Immigration reform legislation should limit policies that place undue burdens on asylum and instead establish reasonable and achievable pathways to citizenship for refugees and asylum seekers. To facilitate this, universal access to legal assistance should be made available.

6. **Incorporate policies and actions that address the root causes of migration.** Political and religious persecution, environmental degradation, and economic underdevelopment and exclusion have long been factors driving people to leave their homelands. Truly comprehensive and effective immigration reform cannot occur without including policies that will mitigate the drivers of irregular migration and promote interventions that allow people to thrive in their homeland. Anti-trafficking measures and efforts to oppose transnational organized crime that respect victims should be included among these policies.

The church at prayer

Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart holds Solemn Vespers on Sundays at 5:20 p.m.

What is Vespers?

Vespers is the second-to-last canonical hour of the day. Canonical hours mark the divisions of the day in terms of fixed times of prayer at regular intervals. In the Roman Rite, canonical hours are also called offices, since they refer to the official set of prayers of the church. They are also called the Liturgy of the Hours in North America. The canonical hours stemmed from Jewish prayer. Early Christians prayed the Psalms, which have remained the principal part of the canonical hours. By 60 AD, the Didache (an early Christian treatise) recommends disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day; this practice found its way into the canonical hours as well. By the second and third centuries, such Church Fathers as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian wrote of the practice of morning and evening prayer, and of the prayers at the third, sixth and ninth hours.

By the fourth century, the elements of the canonical hours were more or less established. By the time of Saint Benedict of Nursia, the monastic Liturgy of the Hours was composed of seven daytime hours and one at night.

As the Divine Office grew more important in the life of the church, the rituals became more elaborate. Praying the Office already required various books, such as a psalter for the psalms, a lectionary to find the assigned Scripture

reading for the day, a Bible to proclaim the reading, a hymnal for singing, etc. As parishes grew in the Middle Ages away from cathedrals and basilicas, a more concise way of arranging the hours was needed. So, a sort of list was developed called the breviary, which gave the format of the daily office and the texts to be used. By the 14th century, the breviary was not so brief and contained the entire text of the canonical hours.

When we reference canonical hours in the Middle Ages, these are the equivalent times:

- Vigil (eighth hour of night, 2 a.m.)
- Matins (a later portion of Vigil, from 3 a.m. to dawn)
- Lauds (dawn; approximately 5 a.m., but varies seasonally)
- Prime (early morning, the first hour of daylight, approximately 6 a.m.)
- Terce (third hour, 9 a.m.)
- Sext (sixth hour, noon)
- Nones (ninth hour, 3 p.m.)
- Vespers (sunset, approximately 6 p.m.)
- Compline (end of the day before retiring, approximately 7 p.m.)

In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, bishops, priests, and deacons are obliged to recite the full sequence of the hours each day, keeping as far as possible to the true time of day, and using the text of the approved liturgical books that apply to them. The laity are

exhorted to pray the hours.

Current practice

After the Second Vatican Council, which decided that the hour of Prime should be suppressed, Pope Paul VI decreed a new arrangement of the Liturgy of the Hours. The modern Liturgy of the Hours usage focuses on the three major hours and from two to four minor hours. The major hours consist of the Office of Readings (formerly Matins), Morning (or Lauds) and Evening Prayer (or Vespers).

The character of Morning Prayer is that of praise; of Evening Prayer, that of thanksgiving. Night Prayer has the character of reflection on the day that is past and preparing the soul for its passage to eternal life.

In each office, the psalms and canticle are framed by antiphons, and each concludes with the traditional Catholic doxology. The current Roman breviary is published under the title the Liturgy of the Hours in four volumes, arranged according to the liturgical seasons of the church year.

What is the difference between Vespers and Solemn Vespers?

Solemn Vespers is Vespers celebrated with solemnity — that is with anything added to the basic structure

We congratulate the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart on 57 years!

Sacred Heart was consecrated a cathedral on Dec. 21, 1964

Come celebrate this historic moment at the cathedral:

Monday, Dec. 20
Vespers at 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 21
Mass at 6:30 p.m.
(The ordinary 12:10 p.m. daily Mass will be omitted this day.)

Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart
20 E Beauregard Ave
San Angelo, TX 76903

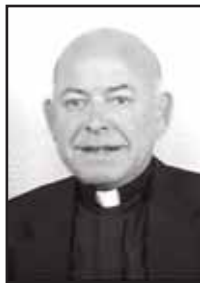
See VESPERS, Page 22

Encourage businesses to keep Christ in Christmas

Christmas, as the very word implies, is all about Christ — or should be — the word itself refers to the first great Christ-Mass. If it weren't for the birth of Christ, there would be no Christmas. Sadly, in recent years there is a secular movement among many business and commercial groups that want our dollars but not our belief to remove Christ from Christmas by doing away with the word itself, religious displays, and a joyful wish of "Merry Christmas," and instead use "Happy Holidays." In many places, "friendship trees" have replaced Christmas trees.

It's time for Christians to stand up and demand that our stores and places of businesses use the proper words to describe what the season is all about. As the old adage says, celebrate the true "Reason for the Season." Marking the greatest day in history when the very son of God became man, Jesus, the "Reason for the Season" did not come just condemning people for sin, evil and corruption. He helped the poor without one government program, he healed the sick without a government healthcare system, he fed the hungry without food stamps and wherever he went, he inspired large crowds to have faith, hope, encouragement, and a spirit of sharing.

Christmas, then, is a time to recover the true values of what makes Christmas. They are universal. They uphold the human dignity and the right of every human being irrespective of religion, race, or status. Jesus of Nazareth, whose birth



Bishop Emeritus
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Diocese of San
Angelo

we celebrate, was a wise man of great principles and he brought a message of hope, peace, love, justice, and human dignity into a suffering world. Much of what is happening today in America is due to the apathy of people of faith when they are confronted. For years, wholesalers and retailers have amassed billions of dollars at Christmas and Hanukkah Season. It does not take a new divine revelation that states these are religious holidays. If we spend our money at stores and there are no signs of what the season represents, then we Christians need to demand that Christ be put back into Christmas — using the word Christmas — and that we also recognize Hanukkah as this is part of the religious season.

The attitude and approach that we need to take as regards to Christmas and Hanukkah was given by Howard Stern, a prominent radio personality. Listen to his wise words: "I am a Jew and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. It does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful, lit up, bejew-

eled trees Christmas trees, and I don't feel threatened. That's what they are: Christmas trees. It doesn't bother me a bit when people say Merry Christmas to me. I don't think they're slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. It shows that we are brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of the year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene at key intersections. If people want a creche, it's just fine with me, as is a Menorah a few yards away."

The attacks on Christmas are disguised as political correctness or a misunderstanding of the First Amendment to the Constitution. Separation of church and state does not mean separation of church from state. The state cannot impose church on the people, but the people can display and say as much church in the public square as they desire.

The Christmas festivities are a positive reinforcement of Christian faith in the lasting values and principles which Christ brought into the world that are as valid today as they were on the first day he spoke them. We are called to lift the poor from misery and poverty, to bring social equality and respect for each one and to live in peace and end war.

Flowing from its divine origin, Christmas is meant to be a joyful time filled with celebrations, joining in the gladness of the singing and music of the angels of that first Christmas, the sharing of love and gifts and beautiful displays of lights and trees with Christ in the center.

God can act in unexpected ways, calling for brave acceptance, pope says

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — St. Joseph teaches people to learn to take life as it comes and to accept what God has in mind, Pope Francis said.

Speaking about how Joseph reacted to Mary being pregnant while they were still engaged, the pope explained why St. Joseph "gives us an important lesson: He chooses Mary with 'his eyes open,'" and "with all the risks" that came with it.

"They had probably cultivated dreams and expectations regarding their life and their future," he said during his weekly general audience Dec. 1. But then, "out of the blue, God seems to have inserted himself into their lives and, even if at first it was difficult for them, both of them opened their hearts wide to the reality that was placed before them."

During his audience in the Vatican's Paul VI hall, Pope Francis continued a series of talks on St. Joseph, reflecting on his role as a just man and husband of Mary, and what he can teach all engaged couples

See ACCEPTANCE, Page 22

In Advent, we get ready 'for whatever God wishes' for us, says cardinal

By Mark Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) —Advent "is about being ready for whatever God wishes to do with and for us," Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory said in his homily at Mass on the first Sunday of Advent Nov. 28 at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle.

He emphasized Advent is a "season of anticipation" for the birth of Jesus at Christmas, and for Christ's eventual second coming.

The season, which begins the Catholic Church's liturgical year, "reminds us that God has done something wonderful in human history through the birth of his only begotten Son."

"Advent reminds us that a baby — like the little ones that grace your life, the little ones who whimper and fidget in church — a Little One was born for us in time and that event was the real intergalactic moment that transformed human history," he said.

Cardinal Gregory said Advent offers a dual message.

"This is the season that tells us that God has

another momentous event in store for us. This Little One once born in a stable will, in fact, return. ... We have no idea when this Son will return in glory, nor how he will enter human history once again. Advent just reminds us to be vigilant, because God still has lots of plans up his sleeve," the cardinal said.

Warning people against losing focus about the meaning of Advent at a time when our culture seems to de-Christianize the season of Christmas, he noted, "Christmas is now often referred to as just 'the holidays' (to) carefully devoid of any reference to the birth of the Child that might offend others."

Concluding his homily, the cardinal said, "It seems to me, that if we can conveniently manage to ignore his (Jesus's) first arrival, then we don't even have to make any provision for his return trip! Boy, do we need Advent!"

Cardinal Gregory opened the Mass with a prayer before the lighting of the first candle on the Advent wreath, saying: "Let us pray then, that this wreath of Advent may remind us to pray for

See ADVENT, Page 22

Mary, Morning Star

The Star of Bethlehem reflects her light
Who goes before her Son in manger lies,
For "Yes" she speaks gives light to earth's dark night,
And all who follow star by her made wise.

Her Morning Star first light that heralds dawn
Of him descends from heaven to our earth,
And brings to us the One for whom we've longed,
For we know in his Bethlehem new birth.

The wisdom in her light shines on him clear---
The more we gaze on him more truth we see---
And we know she with him holds all us dear,
As we become who we are meant to be.

See Mary, Morning Star, on Christmas Day
Who shines on him, our Life and Truth and Way!

This Christmas season and beyond may we grow in knowing him, loving him, and serving him who is our Way, Truth and Life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1:9). We see Jesus' light first in and through his Mother Mary, Morning Star. With Mary, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:16).

Blessed Christmas season from our home to yours.
Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker



**Father Knick and
Sandie
Knickerbocker**

We have appreciated the opportunity to write a monthly article for the *West Texas Angelus* for the last seven years at the invitation of Bishop Sis, we appreciate Brian Bodiford's fine work as editor, and we appreciate the encouragement you, our readers, have given us. This is our last monthly article.

We invite you to visit our website that is "in progress": proclaimingtruth.org.

We've published Fr. Knick's book, *Families Are Forever; The Spiritual Formation of a Married Catholic Priest and His Family: A Journey into Truth and Light*, as well as a few of his over 2500 poems (more to be published). Watch for blogs!

Bishop Sis and the staff of the *West Texas Angelus* thank Father Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker for their many years of dedicated service.

The Diocese of San Angelo is indebted to the Knickerbockers for their promotion of the Catholic faith through ministry and writing.

St. John of the Cross found union with God in abandonment

John of the Cross (Juan de la Cruz) led a life of saintly virtue, but it is his poetry that reaches out to us across the centuries. He did not set out to become a literary figure.

He was born Juan

de Yepes y Álvarez in Fontiveros, Old Castile, Spain, in 1542. He was the youngest of three children and was an infant when his father died and left the family in poverty.

He spent his youth being apprenticed in many trades — carpentry, wood sculpting, and printing. At age 21, John entered the Carmelite monastery of Medina del Campo. After profession, he wanted to be a lay brother, but instead was sent to the Carmelite monastery near the University of Salamanca. He was ordained a priest at age 25.

He followed the stricter ancient Carmelite rule by his own choice and was considering becoming a Carthusian so that he could follow a life of deeper prayer and solitude when he met Teresa of Avila. Editor Bernard Bangley writes in Butler's Lives of the Saints that she persuaded him to remain in the Carmelites and to join with her efforts to reform the order. The order had become somewhat complacent, even lax, about its mission by the time John joined. In about a year, John and four others founded the first men's house of the reform at Duruelo. This was the beginning of the Discalced (barefoot) Carmelites, and John took the name of John of the Cross.

The next few years were marked by dissension between the reform-minded monks and nuns — the Discalced Carmelites — and the others, popularly known as the Calced Carmelites.

In those times, the publication of new religious insights brought risks. Bangley wrote that the Spanish Inquisition hunted for heresy and independent thinking. Tensions escalated and in 1577 John was arrested by Calced Carmelites who ordered him to abandon his reform efforts.

He was imprisoned in Toledo for his refusal to leave the monastery at Avila where he had been invited by Teresa to help in her reforms of that community. His captors were his own religious superior and representatives of the Inquisition.

For the next several months he lived in a dark, dank cell and suffered bloody beatings, insults and slanders. Food and exercise were minimal, and his health deteriorated dangerously. To keep his sanity and to express the most intimate experiences of his solitude, he began composing poems. It was during this dark time that John wrote his famous work "Dark Night of the Soul." In this poem John describes when God cannot be seen and the soul suffers the desolation of abandonment. In John's view, that suffering, if courageously borne, can lead a soul into union with God.

After about nine months of imprisonment, John escaped and returned to his own community. The controversy in the Carmelite order ended in 1580 when Pope Gregory XIII issued a brief authorizing the separation of the Discalced Carmelites from the Calced Carmelites.

For the next several years John founded more friaries and was confessor to nuns in various Carmelite convents. He spent six years as prior in the monastery at Granada and several more years as vice provincial in Andalusia.

His three major poems are "Dark Night of the Soul," "Spiritual Canticle," and "Living Flame of Love." He is recognized as the greatest poet and mystic writer of the Spanish language. He died on Dec. 14, 1591. He was canonized in 1726 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1926 by Pope Pius XI. His feast day is Dec. 14 and he is the patron of mystics and poets.

Mary Lou Gibson writes about the saints for the West Texas Angelus from her home in Austin.



Mary Lou Gibson

Speaking of Saints

The perfect gift



James R. Sulliman, PhD

When we love someone and a special occasion is near, we typically want to give something to them that shows we truly care about their happiness. Sometimes it is something that requires a sacrifice of time, skill, and perseverance to make something by hand. More often it is a financial sacrifice, but the intent is always the same ... to show them that we have given a great deal of thought into what we believe they would love to have ... to find the "perfect gift."

A mother and father carefully watch their children to see what they enjoy the most. When Christmas comes and their little boy or girl unwraps a present and screams with joy at its contents, the parents' feelings are indescribable. Nothing compares to the happiness of making someone happy, especially when it is someone you love deeply. Sometimes, however, we may be very disappointed.

Despite all the time, thought, effort, and sacrifice that went into our gift, the response from our recipient isn't at all what we expected. We can tell in an instant by the person's expression, which is one of puzzlement, disapproval, or disappointment, which immediately is followed by our, "I have the receipt. You can take it back if you would rather have something else." With or without receipts, the staggeringly long exchange lines at stores on December 26 bear witness to countless attempts that missed their mark. Gift cards say "I am not sure I know what to get you so I want you to have the opportunity to choose what you want most." The gift that a person makes for themselves is likely to be kept by them.

Our Heavenly Father bestows gifts to all his children. Through the Holy Spirit, we may receive wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. In Jesus, we have the perfect example to follow. Yet, just like the gifts we may give to others, the gift of his Son is often rejected. And as more and more people decide they would rather have something else than the Son who God has given us ... something "better," something without pain and suffering, something without sacrifice ... the "exchange line" extends down a road that now encircles the world. It is the road that separates a person from God. It is the road to hell, because God also provides each of us with the gift of free-will which allows us to choose to pursue whatever it may be that we would rather have than Jesus.

For some of us it is money, despite the fact that we have already been warned, "For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves

with many pains." (1 Tm 6:10). For others, even the apostles, it may be pride and power, "But Jesus summoned them and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave'" (Mt 20: 25-27). Similarly, those who put their physical pleasures and possessions above a life lived for God face an unpleasant end "For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their 'shame.' Their minds are occupied with earthly things" (Phil 3:18-19).

We often learn at an early age that God will judge each of us and will welcome some of us to be with him and our loved ones for all eternity while sending others to purgatory or hell. That creates cognitive dissonance as we try to reconcile a loving Father with such a horrible judgment. But what if our loving Father is simply giving us the gift that WE want most of all? What if that is not oneness with God?

No matter how much we are warned against choosing things that are bad for us, we do it anyway, and God allows it. We see many examples of that throughout scripture. In 1 Samuel 8:6-22, we read:

"Samuel was displeased when they said, 'Give us a king to rule us.' But he prayed to the Lord. The Lord said: Listen to whatever the people say. You are not the one they are rejecting. They are rejecting me as their king. They are acting toward you just as they have acted from the day I brought them up from Egypt to this very day, deserting me to serve other gods. Now listen to them; but at the same time, give them a solemn warning and inform them of the rights of the king who will rule them.

Samuel delivered the message of the Lord in full to those who were asking him for a king. He told them:

'The governance of the king who will rule you will be as follows: He will take your sons and assign them to his chariots and horses, and they will run before his chariot. He will appoint from among them his commanders of thousands and of hundreds. He will make them do his plowing and harvesting and produce his weapons of war and chariotry. He will use your daughters as perfumers, cooks, and bakers. He will take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his servants.

He will tithe your crops and grape harvests to give to his officials and his servants. He will take your male and female slaves, as well as your best oxen and donkeys, and use them to do his work. He will also tithe your flocks. As for you, you will become his slaves. On that day you will cry out because of the king whom you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you on that day.'

The people, however, refused to listen to Samuel's warning and said, 'No! There must be a king over us. We too must be like all the nations, with a king to rule us, lead us in warfare, and fight our battles.' Samuel listened to all the concerns of the people and then repeated them to the Lord. The Lord said: 'Listen to them! Appoint a king to rule over them.'

That choice caused them much unnecessary suffering. Nor did it end very well for the prodigal son who was given what he wanted ... until he returned to his earthly father (Lk 15:11-32).

Some might wonder why God allows us to reject him when it will cause us such pain, but if we did not have the ability to reject him, we would not have the ability to love him. Our Heavenly Father gives to all of us the gifts of love, mercy, and forgiveness embodied in the most perfect gift of Jesus. And it is Jesus who asks, "Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him" (Lk 11:11-13). But what is a father to do if the child insists on asking for a snake!? God does not "send" any of his children to hell ... many of his children "choose" it by rejecting the "Perfect Gift" that was given, is "present," and awaits.

Dr. James Sulliman, a graduate of Rutgers University and Florida State University, has 50 years' experience in individual, marriage, and family therapy. He is also the Abilene-area pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo.

During Advent, rediscover a place of rest with St. Edith Stein

The second reading for the Third Sunday of Advent is a place of personal resonance:

"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6-7).

Never before have I understood the "why" behind these words. Verse 5 lends an answer: "The Lord is near."

As we approach the feast of Our Lord's birth, I imagine many of us are tired.

Grief has etched itself into many of our stories perhaps in these past two years especially, but holidays in their association with joyous celebration also have a way of bringing old griefs into greater relief.

And yet, in all things the Lord is near.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, also known as St. Edith Stein, knew this well. She lived in tumultuous times — the reality of Nazi-occupied Europe necessitated a move from a convent in Germany to a convent in



Lindsey Weishar
Catholic News Service

Faith Alive

Holland, from which Stein was taken in 1942 and killed at Auschwitz.

Yet, for Stein, God offered a place of rest, which could be accessed in all circumstances, even in the midst of the fear, terror and unrest of her age.

"The work of salvation takes place in obscurity and stillness," Stein said in her essay, "The Prayer of the Church." "In the heart's quiet dialogue with God the living building blocks out of which the kingdom of God grows are prepared."

How are we making room in our hearts and minds for him this Advent?

At times, I've found it difficult to "prepare him room." The anxiety of days weighs down my spirits, and amid the busyness, I sometimes pause long enough to glimpse the frenetic pace of my life. It is in this place that I'm called to listen at the door of my heart for Christ's gentle knock.

Stein suggests beginning the day in the presence of God. This can be both a way to combat our anxieties about, as St. John Paul II aptly puts it in one of his poems, "the terror of things to be done" and to regain peace.

Stein simply says, "My first morning's hour belongs to the Lord. I will tackle the day's work which he charges me with, and he will give me the power to accomplish it."

To lean on the Lord in this way, to rest in him as we go through our days, is not an easy task. Stein notes that

Rincón de Raquel

"Los cerros podrán correrse y moverse las lomas; mas yo no retiraré mi amor, ni se romperá mi alianza de paz contigo; lo afirma Yavé, que se compadece de ti." dice el Señor, quién tiene compassion en ti.

- Isaías 54:10 -

Sanación, esperanza y compasión le espera en un Retiro del Viñedo de Raquel™.

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Contact Priscilla at 432-897-4788
www.rachelsvineyardsanangelo@gmail.com
Open to all faiths and strictly confidential.

The Diocese of San Angelo is hiring for the following positions:

Executive Director of The Catholic Charitable Foundation for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo/
Director of Stewardship and Development, Diocese of San Angelo

Secretary, Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

For job descriptions and how to apply, visit:
sanangelodiocese.org/job-openings

Discerning religious life?

Join the
Sisters of Divine Providence
at our FREE:

Advent Discernment Retreat

*via Zoom

Sunday, December 12
1- 7 PM CST



Open to women ages 18-40



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- individual "walks" with Sisters
- self-paced reflection times
- deepen spirituality
- experience our traditional advent evening prayer service
- discover community

SIGN UP TODAY



Questions? Contact:
VocationMinistry@cdptexas.org

Collection helps aging sisters, brothers, priests in religious orders

The Diocese of San Angelo will hold the Retirement Fund for Religious collection Dec. 11-12. The parish-based appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C. Proceeds help religious communities across the country to care for aging members.

Last year, the Diocese of San Angelo donated \$48,655.51 to the collection. "I am continually heartened by the overwhelming generosity of U.S. Catholics," said NRRO Executive Director Sister Stephanie Still, a member of the Sisters of the Presentation of San Francisco. "Even in difficult times, they find a way to give back to those who have worked tirelessly to serve our church and our world."

Hundreds of U.S. religious communities face a large gap between the needs of their older members and the funds available to support them. Historically, Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests — known collectively as women and men religious — served for little to no pay. As a result, many communities now lack adequate retirement savings.

At the same time, health-care expenses continue to rise, and an increasing number of older religious require specialized services. NRRO data shows that 26,330 women and men religious in the

United States are older than age 70. The total cost for their care exceeds \$1 billion annually.

To help address the deficit in retirement funding among U.S. religious orders, Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious collection in 1988. Distributions are sent to each eligible order's central house and provide supplemental funding for necessities, such as medications and nursing care. Donations also underwrite resources that help religious communities improve eldercare and plan for long-term retirement needs.

Religious orders typically do not receive diocesan funding but rather are financially autonomous and thus responsible for the support and care of all members. While many dioceses hold separate appeals for their retired priests' fund, the once-yearly Retirement Fund for Religious collection is for members of U.S. religious orders and benefits both men and women religious.

The 2020 appeal raised \$20.7 million, and funding was distributed to 321 U.S. religious communities.

"We are blessed by countless supporters who share our mission to ensure all religious can enjoy a safe and modest retirement," said Sister Still.

Visit retiredreligious.org to learn more.

Job Opening: 1st Grade Teacher, Angelo Catholic School

Angelo Catholic School in San Angelo is accepting applicants for a 1st grade teaching position. A successful applicant will be a Christian with a degree in elementary education and experience teaching in the elementary grade levels (K-5). Current teaching certification is preferred but is not required to apply. Start date of the position is January 3, 2021. Salary is variable based on experience and degrees. Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter by email to Elizabeth Mata, Principal of Angelo Catholic School @ emata@angelocatholicsschool.org.

College students begin leadership program



By Anita Montez

This fall in the Midland/Odessa area, campus ministry began a new endeavor. Through a grant received for this year, a small group of young adults began a pilot program. The program is called ESTEEM. The acronym stands for "Educating Students to Enliven the Ecclesial Mission." ESTEEM is a leadership formation program for Roman Catholic young adults on college campuses, focused on preparing young adults to be engaged leaders in faith communities after graduation.

The ESTEEM program is designed to assist young adult participants to reflect on their call to leadership, participate in a community of similarly talented, dedicated young adults, develop skills related to working and leading within an organization, understand their leadership vocation in the church, and discover ways to exercise leadership in the church. Topics covered by the ESTEEM curriculum include but are not limited to: Models of Christian Leadership, Ecclesiology, Catholic Social

Doctrine, Christian Spirituality, Church Governance, and Catholic Leaders in Society. There are fourteen session outlines in the curriculum guide.

The national staff works eagerly with site leaders on ways to bring the curriculum to life in each unique setting. Each session is well designed, with scriptural and intellectual resources to give the session depth, discussion, and spiritual integration. An important aspect to the program is the accompaniment of a mentor with each young adult. Finally, each spring a Capstone Conference gathers all campuses participating to share the experience of ESTEEM and to further grow in the call as engaged leaders in the faith community. The ESTEEM website, www.esteemlead.org, provides more information for the vision of this thought-provoking leadership formation program. Please keep these young adults in the Midland/Odessa area and across the country in your prayers.

Montez is the Catholic campus minister for the University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa College, and Midland College.

Texas Mission Conference 2022



“Integrating Our Mission Experience”

Keynote: Kelli Nelson

Executive Director of “From Mission to Mission” in Minnesota



February 25 - 27, 2022
Oblate Center, San Antonio, Texas
www.TXMissionCouncil.org

Texas Mission Council to hold Texas Mission Conference 2022

By Clementine Urista

An important date is coming up. The Texas Mission Conference 2022 will be held on Feb. 25-27, 2022, at the Oblate Center in San Antonio, Texas. All are invited.

Established in 1993 to bring together the diocesan mission directors and representatives from the missionary orders working in Texas and abroad. This included lay mission projects and members of the various international groups in Texas.

Our mission statement is that Texas Mission Council is a collaborative organization to the promotion and support of mission both home and abroad. The Texas Mission Council exists to create mission awareness and support through the efforts of diocesan mission directors, representatives of mission organizations serving in Texas, and individuals and groups interested in mission.

An annual meeting is held to bring those in the mission call, both here in Texas and abroad, to share the mission journeys, experiences, awareness, and changes. The support and education in mission theology is essential to mission disciples.

We follow the commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

Listen to your heart — if you want to, or have been on a mission trip — make plans and join us. This year’s keynote speaker is Kelli Nelson, Executive Director of “From Mission to Mission” in Minnesota. Learn more: www.TXMissionCouncil.org.

#iGiveCatholic day of giving nets over \$177k for local Catholic orgs

By Kelly Oniha

Wow! This year has been remarkable once again! I wanted to express our gratitude, and give a bit of wrap-up on #iGiveCatholic.

First and foremost, THANK YOU to all our donors and supporters who made #GivingTuesday 2021 an incredible success for the parishes, schools, and ministries of The Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo. During the U.S. Catholic Church’s Giving Day, you joined thousands of others around the world and generously gave back to make a critical difference, impacting for good the lives of all in our community. Your donation makes a huge difference to our parishes, schools, and ministries, and positively influences the lives of our brothers and sisters all over the globe. Your efforts will result in untold lives being changed within our community. Well done!

I also want to offer my gratitude, on behalf of the Diocese of San Angelo, to our participating organizations (parishes, schools and ministries) who invested in the church’s wellbeing throughout the year. Thank you for the hard work and effort you have put into your organizations and diocesan community over these past several months in practicing good stewardship, development, and employing effective, engaging communication techniques in order to better care for those you are called to serve.

On Nov. 30, 2021, the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo joined more than 40 other dioceses across the country to raise funds and create awareness for the important work being done in Catholic organizations through #iGiveCatholic each year on Giving Tuesday (the Tuesday after Thanksgiving).

The Diocese of San Angelo experienced HUGE successes during last year’s #iGiveCatholic campaign, raising over \$154,000 for parishes, schools, and ministries in our diocese. This year, over \$177,000 has been raised. This is absolutely incredible!

- \$177,531.40 Raised
- 540 Donors
- 22 participating parishes, schools and ministries

The top three participants included two second-time participants in using a giving day platform and one first-time participant. They were St. Stephen’s Catholic Church in Midland (most raised), Catholic Charities in Odessa, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and Shrine in Midland (most donors). Other parishes, ministries and school raised about \$30,000.

We are currently tallying the final numbers and results and will be sure to share the final amount raised. In the meantime, please accept our deepest appreciation for your support. Every year, we are overwhelmed by your generosity and love for the church, and we are hopeful for your continued participation next year.

Freedom from pornography

Pornography and sexual addiction is a personal struggle for many men. The Catholic sexual integrity program, Restoring God’s Foundation, is available online at no cost at roadtopurity.com.

This program incorporates practical steps for behavioral change, educates users on the addiction, provides guided healing of the brokenness that is at the root of the addiction, and implements the sacraments of the church for a full and in-depth path to freedom.

It is built upon the premise that true freedom from pornography involves addressing four main components: behavioral, spiritual, chemical, and emotional.

Overcoming this addiction is more than merely a matter of willpower. It takes trained professionals to guide one through the process. The Restoring God’s Foundation course offers that guidance.

It is available online for individuals, or parishes can sponsor live small groups at a reasonable cost paid by the parish. Restoring God’s Foundation was developed and reviewed by former addicts, counselors, and clergy. It has been granted the *imprimatur* by Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver.

More information can be found at roadtopurity.com.

First English Cursillo remembered

The first-ever Cursillo held in English happened at St. Joseph Church in San Angelo, Nov. 9–12, 1961

By Gloria Johns

The first English-language Cursillo in the world took place at the Mission San José in San Angelo, Texas, from Nov. 9 to 12, 1961. At that time the spiritual director was a Franciscan priest, Father Fidelis Albrecht, who was the pastor of St. Joseph. The 60th anniversary celebration of the English-language Cursillo brought people to St. Joseph Catholic Church once again on Saturday, Nov. 6, 2021, with all the flourish and pomp befitting such an historic and spiritually rich occasion.

The Knights of Columbus served as an honor guard for the Mass, which was celebrated by the current Bishop of the San Angelo Catholic Diocese, Michael J. Sis, along with Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer, Msgr. Bernard Gully, Father Juan Lopez Cortes, pastor of St. Joseph, and Father Ismael Velazco Ornelas, parochial vicar of St. Joseph.

THE HISTORY OF THE CURSILLO

Bishop Sis began the history lesson of the Cursillo in the 1940s in Spain, when members of a movement called Catholic Action was developed, a week-long study, the purpose of which was to encourage a more active faith life. Eventually these weeklong events were condensed to three days and called “Cursillos de Cristiandad,” or “short courses in Christianity.” The first 3-day Cursillo retreat was held on the Spanish Island of Mallorca. The purpose of the three-day Cursillo retreat was to

train lay people how to be more effective Christian leaders, to convert those who were distant from the faith, and to revitalize the faith of Church-going Catholics.

As Bishop Sis explained, “They were dissatisfied with being spiritually lukewarm. They wanted to be on fire with their faith! They were happy being Catholic, but they didn’t want to just be Catholic. They wanted to live it.”

The unofficial historical guest of honor at the 60th anniversary celebration was Ronnie Walcott, owner of Aladdin Flooring in San Angelo, who was a member of one of the original Cursillo teams at San José Mission. Part of Walcott’s history includes that he and his wife, Phyllis, were married almost 65 years ago by the spiritual leader of the first English-language Cursillo, Father Fidelis Albrecht. Mr. Walcott was also a member of the first graduating class of the then-Immaculate Heart School.

In the course of a most interesting lifetime, which includes Golden Glove boxing championships, marriage and children, overseeing a large business, learning disabilities, and in times gone by, plenty of “living the night life,” “the Cursillo always stuck with me,” Walcott said.

“It was life changing. It became part of my life and still is,” Walcott went on to talk of being drawn into a closer relationship with God, in God’s time, through others he encountered — “priests and men of faith.”

“It was all preparing me for the Cursillo. I hope that the English-language Cursillo is going to

thrive,” he said.

Yet, even as the Spanish-language Cursillo blossomed and remained strong, the English-language Cursillo was absent from the diocese for many years. Then in 1991, after attending an English-language Episcopal Cursillo at Christ the King Retreat Center, Max Parker approached Bishop Michael Pfeifer inquiring about a Catholic Cursillo and why, with its history in the Catholic faith, there were none being held.

“I visited with Bishop Pfeifer,” Max said, “and asked why the Episcopal Church was using our Catholic program and our retreat center for this three-day weekend and we were not. He replied that the diocese did have Cursillos, but they were in Spanish and held in parishes and not the retreat center to save on costs. I asked why we did not have any in English and he said, ‘no one has asked.’ I replied, ‘I am asking.’ He laughed and said he would look into it. A few months later, a few priests visited with me about starting an English Cursillo and said they would look into putting a team in place.”

“In October or so, 1999, I was contacted by Greg Perez and Mike Medina about participating on a team for an English-language Cursillo at Christ the King. I accepted and was a table leader at the first Catholic English-speaking Cursillo at Christ the King Retreat Center.”

THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT

Bishop Sis explained Cursillo as helping prac-

ticing Christians by “renewing and strengthening their love of Jesus, helping them grow in knowledge, and personal holiness; and bringing Christian values to all environments and people with whom they come into contact and make those values the pattern for their own lives.”

According to Tereza Rico-Miller, English Lay Director of the Cursillo for the San Angelo Catholic Diocese, friendships that Cursillistas have in the world are the source of candidates for future Cursillos. “You have to be invited to participate in Cursillo based on the mature faith and readiness you have that is recognized by a Cursillista,” she explained. It is also required that a candidate be in good standing with the Catholic Church and is able to fully participate in the sacraments. Friendships that form within the Cursillo become Permanent (Friendship) Groups—small groups that meet monthly to support and encourage one another. The Ultreya (a Spanish word for “onward”) is a meeting of the larger Cursillo community.

The bonds created through Cursillo take on special characteristics for those who participate. For example, during the reception after the 60th anniversary Mass, Rico-Miller was given special recognition from her Permanent (Friendship) Group of women who have been meeting under her leadership for 13 years.

In like manner, Max Parker remarked that, “The men I met in the Cursillo, many have become like brothers to me. Relationships made in a Cursillo truly define Proverbs 27:17: ‘As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.’”

The vibrancy of the Spirit and enthusiasm for the movement is evident in the powerful testimony of its impact as described by the participants. And it is that fire that distinguishes Cursillo as a movement rather than an event.

“I felt stagnant in my faith,” said Rico-Miller. “But as a result of Cursillo, I met my husband and our marriage has centered around God first. He supports my ministry and I support his.”

“Participating in the Cursillo has made my diaconate journey more meaningful,” said Pete Madrid, a member of St. Mary Parish who is in his final year of diaconate study and discernment.

With regard to his first Cursillo, Max Parker said, “That was probably the first time I truly felt the Holy Spirit working in me and others.”

“It has deepened my spiritual life as a priest and bishop,” said Bishop Pfeifer. “After this Cursillo experience, life is not the same and we have a new vision of the world, we act differently as we discover the Christian community has many faces which all come together in the beautiful face of Christ.”

DE COLORES!

“De Colores” could be called the unofficial anthem of the Cursillo movement. The song has its roots in Spanish history as it is a Spanish folk song. But Bishop Michael Pfeifer added another perspective to its meaning.

“Colores” is a Spanish expression which means “in color.” The “De Colores Cry” calls each one to

discover God’s love and the presence of Christ in ourselves and others,” said Bishop Pfeifer. “Today, as we know, we are still dealing with the terrible evil of racism, based on the color of skin instead of this wonderful color of the character and quality of the person described by Martin Luther King Jr. ‘De Colores’ is a powerful and sure way to overcome every evil of racism. The discovery of the joyful color of Christ in each one fills us with love and respect of each member of the body of Christ regardless of his or her physical color.”

Bishop Michael Sis summed up the meaning of the day and the Cursillo movement as follows: “Jesus’ disciples benefitted from their special time with Jesus, away from the hustle and bustle of life. But they didn’t stay there on their retreat. They returned to active life in the world, living out the Gospel and spreading the Good News.”

“That’s what we do as Cursillistas,” he continued. “We have a very special time of retreat, where we grow closer to Jesus and he forms us into more effective disciples. Then we return to our active lives and bring the joy of Christ to those around us.”

Finally, Bishop Sis issued a call to action: “Today, let’s recommit ourselves to making this experience available to people in our diocese.” “De Colores!”

Cursillos are anticipated to resume sometime in early 2022. Please contact Tereza Rico-Miller at 325.245.3796, or terezarico78@yahoo.com for more information.



On Nov. 6, 2021, Bishop Michael Sis blessed a monument at St. Joseph Parish in San Angelo commemorating the 60th anniversary of the first English-language Cursillo in the world, held at St. Joseph from Nov. 9–12, 1961. Pictured with the newly-blessed monument are (left to right): Father Juan Lopez Cortes, MSP, pastor of St. Joseph Parish; Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer; Msgr. Bernard Gully, Bishop Michael Sis, Father Ismael Velazco Ornelas, MSP, parochial vicar of St. Joseph Parish, Deacon Orlando Mendoza of Holy Redeemer Parish in Odessa; and Deacon José Gallegos of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Odessa.

COURTESY



Ronnie Walcott (left) posed with Bishop Sis after the monument was blessed. Walcott was a member of one of the original Cursillo teams that met at St. Joseph in November 1961.

COURTESY

GRN RADIO PROGRAM SCHEDULE

GUADALUPE RADIO NETWORK

Radio for your soul can be heard on:

- Abilene - 91.7 FM, KQOS
- Midland-Odessa - 1180 AM, KLPF
- Midland-Odessa - 90.9 FM (Español)
- San Angelo - 91.5 FM, KPDE

POPULAR ENGLISH PROGRAMS

6:00-7:00 AM - GRN *Catholic Drive Time* - Joe McClane & Emily Alcaraz

7:30 AM - Mass from the Society of the Most Holy

8:00 AM - Monday- GRN *Intersections* - Bree Dail & Joey Meugniot

Tuesday - Friday *Catholic Connections* - Teresa Tomeo

9:00 AM - *More 2 Life* - Dr. Greg & Lisa Popcak

10:00 AM - *Women of Grace* - Johnnette Williams

11:00 AM - *Take 2* - Jerry Usher & Debbie Georgianni

12:00 PM - Monday - *Catholic Matters* - Sammy Rodriguez & Robert Dominguez

Tuesday - Friday *The Doctor is In* - Dr. Ray Guarendi

1:00 PM - *Called to Communion* - Dr. David Anders

2:00 PM - *EWTN Open Line*

3:00 PM - *The Divine Mercy Chaplet in Song & Kresta in the Afternoon*

4:00 PM - Monday & Tuesday - *The Catholic Current* - Fr. Robert McTeigue, S.J.

Wednesday - *Faith & Culture* - David L. Gray

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Friday - *Back to the Father* - Dave Palmer

5:00 - 7:00 PM - *Catholic Answers Live*

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FRED CAMARILLO
 Holy Redeemer
 Odessa

AND A WELDER



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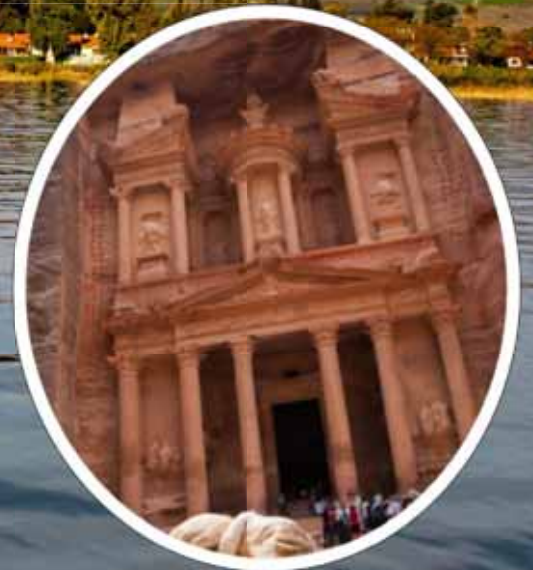
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Catholic Voices

Why equity, diversity, and inclusivity are not absolute values



Bishop Robert Barron

Word on Fire
Ministries

In the wake of the French Revolution, the triplet of "liberty, equality, fraternity" emerged as a moral compass for the secular society. Something similar has happened today in regard to "equity, diversity, and inclusion." For most pundits and social activists, at least in the West, these three values function as fundamental norms, self-evident moral truths of absolute value that ought to guide our behavior at both the personal and institutional level. But this cannot be right. For whatever plays that determining role must be good in itself, valuable in every and any circumstance, incapable of being positioned by a higher value. Neither equity, diversity, nor inclusion enjoy these prerogatives, and this can be shown readily enough.

First, let us consider equity. Fostering equality is indeed a high moral value in the measure that all people are identical in dignity and are equally deserving of respect. This ethical intuition is embedded in the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights." It is, accordingly, a moral imperative that all people be considered one and the same before the law and provided, as far as possible, parity of opportunity in the educational, economic, and cultural spheres. But equity in all things? Absolutely not. Many inequalities that obtain within human society — differences in intelligence, creativity, skill, courage, energy, etc. — are naturally given and could be eliminated only through a brutally imposed leveling out. And what follows from these natural inequalities is dramatic inequity in outcome: varying levels of attainment in all arenas of life. To be sure, some of these differences are the result

of prejudice and injustice, and when this is the case, strenuous action should be taken to right the wrong. But a blanket imposition of equity in outcome across all of our society would result in a massive violation of justice and would be made possible only by the most totalitarian sort of political arrangement.

Now, let us look at diversity. Arguably the oldest problem in the history of philosophy is that of the one and the many — which is to say, how to think clearly about the relationship between unity and plurality at all levels of existence. I believe it is fair to say that, in the last forty years or so, we have massively emphasized the "many" side of this matter, celebrating at every opportunity variety, difference, and creativity, and tending to demonize unity as oppression. God knows that the awful totalitarianisms of the twentieth century provided ample evidence that unity carries a dark side. And multiformity in cultural expression, in personal style, in modes of thinking, in ethnicity, etc. is wonderful and enriching. So the cultivation of diversity is indeed a moral value. But is it an absolute value? Not at all — and a moment's reflection makes this plain. When the many is one-sidedly emphasized, we lose any sense of the values and practices that ought to unite us. This

is obvious in the stress today on the individual's right to determine his or her own values and truths, even to the point of dictating one's own gender and sexuality. This hyper-valorization of diversity effectively imprisons each of us on our own separate islands of self-regard and gives rise to constant bickering. We loudly demand that our decisions be respected and our stances tolerated, but the ties that bind us to one another are gone.

And finally, let us cast a glance at inclusivity. Of the three, this is probably the one most treasured in the secular culture of today. At all costs, we are told over and over again, we should be inclusive. Once again, there is an obvious moral value to this stance. Every one of us has felt the sting of unjust exclusion, that sense of being on the wrong side of an arbitrary social divide, not permitted to belong to the "in" crowd. That entire classes of people, indeed entire races and ethnic groups, have suffered this indignity is beyond question. Hence the summons to include rather than to exclude, to build bridges rather than walls, is entirely understandable and morally laudable. Nevertheless, inclusion cannot be an absolute value and good. We might first draw attention to a conundrum regarding inclusivity. When a person wants to be included, she wants to become part of a group or a society or an economy or a culture that has a particular form. For example, an immigrant who longs to be welcomed to America wants to participate in an altogether distinctive political society; when someone wants to be included in the Abraham Lincoln society, he seeks entry into a very circumscribed community. In other words, he or she desires to be included in a collectivity that is, at least to some degree, exclusive!

Absolute or universal inclusivity is, in point of fact, operationally a contradiction.

Perhaps this principle can be seen with greatest clarity in regard to the church. On the one hand, the church is meant to reach out to everyone — as is suggested symbolically by the Bernini colonnade outside of St. Peter's Basilica. Yet, at the same time, the church is a very definite society, with strict rules, expectations, and internal structures. By its nature, therefore, it excludes certain forms of thought and behavior. Cardinal Francis George was once asked whether all are welcome in the church. He responded, "Yes, but on Christ's terms, not their own." In a word, there is a healthy and necessary tension between inclusion and exclusion in any rightly ordered community.

Having shown that none of the three great secular values are in fact of absolute value, are we left in a lurch, forced to accept a kind of moral relativism? No! In point of fact, the supreme value that positions every other value, the unsurpassable moral good in which all subordinate goods participate, can be clearly named. It is love, which is willing the good of the other as other, which indeed is the very nature and essence of God. Are equity, diversity, and inclusivity valuable? Yes, precisely in the measure that they are expressions of love; no, in the measure that they stand athwart love. To grasp this is of crucial importance in the moral conversation that our society must have.

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

Marriage of Mary and Joseph? Attending same-sex wedding?

Q. I have a question about one of your recent columns. (A woman wrote to say that her husband had been refusing for many years to have sexual relations with her, and you suggested that this violates the marriage contract.) If sex is so important to a marriage, would you consider the marriage between the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph to have been a valid marriage? (Indianapolis)

A. Yes, the marriage of Mary and Joseph was a valid marriage. Even though this marriage was never consummated, it was the spouses' consent that validated the marriage bond, and their decision to maintain Mary's virginity was made mutually.

They gave full consent to their unique call to raise the child Jesus as husband and wife. The church's understanding is that marriage is ordered by its nature both to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. At the time of their marriage, both Mary and Joseph knew of Mary's pregnancy.

The Gospel of Matthew (1:16) explicitly recognizes the validity of this marriage when it calls Joseph "the husband of Mary"; and in the eucharistic prayer of the Mass we say, "Blessed Joseph, her Spouse."

Q. My fiancé and I are facing a dilemma. He is from



Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Question Corner

a Catholic but extremely abusive household with controlling parents. His sister, who has not practiced the faith for nearly a decade and no longer identifies as Catholic, has recently come out as a lesbian and has invited us to her wedding ceremony.

His parents have said many hateful and cruel things about her and have all but threatened to cut off any siblings who attend. My fiancé and I would like to attend at least the reception — in order to demonstrate that there is more to Catholicism than the cruelty she has received from her parents.

We want to communicate that we don't believe this is a valid marriage but that does not change our love for her. Would that be immoral under church teaching? (El-

lettsville, Indiana)

A. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has a webpage called "FAQs on the Meaning of Marriage & Sexual Difference," and that webpage responds directly to the question you raise.

It says: "For a Catholic who is invited to a same-sex 'wedding,' it is important to consider what marriage is and what his or her attendance at such an event would mean. Since marriage is the union of a husband and a wife — that is, as a man and a woman — attending a same-sex 'wedding' may be considered support for something that is incompatible with this truth.

"Especially when it involves close family or friends, it can be a difficult decision. In such circumstances, it is good to seek the advice of your pastor or spiritual director. It is also good to remember that there are many ways of showing love to a person with same-sex attraction without attending such a ceremony."

So although there is not an absolute canonical prohibition against attendance at such a ceremony, I am sure that most church leaders would discourage your presence.

It strikes me, though, that you may have reached an acceptable compromise by deciding to show up at the reception but not the wedding — so long as the couple understands by this that you don't believe theirs is a valid marriage.

Voces Catolicas

Darnos una mejor historia

En un reciente libro, *Viviendo entre mundos*, James Hollis ofrece una obra de ingenio que lleva más profundidad de lo que es evidente a primera vista. Un terapeuta dice a un cliente: *Yo no puedo resolver su problema, pero puedo darle una historia más convincente para su dolor*. Eso es algo más que una simple ocurrencia. Tanto si nos sentimos bien o mal con nosotros mismos, con frecuencia se trata de qué clase de historia nos imaginamos que vivimos.

Recuerdo un seminario, hace algunos años, en el que uno de los oradores principales era un joven sacerdote canadiense francés, Pierre Olivier Tremblay. Tremblay inició su charla con palabras en este sentido: Soy capellán en una universidad, y estoy trabajando con estudiantes universitarios jóvenes. Están llenos de vitalidad, sueños y energía; desgraciadamente, sin embargo, sobre todo están vacíos de esperanza porque *no tienen ninguna meta-narrativa*. Sufren mucho porque no tienen una historia mayor en la que entenderse a sí mismos, ni hacer que tenga más sentido su propia historia. Sus propias historias, aun siendo preciosas, son demasiado pequeñas e individualistas como para que les dé mucho que tomar como base cuando el dolor y la angustia los cercan. Necesitan una historia mayor en la que situarse, una meta-narrativa. Aunque esto no necesariamente les quitaría su dolor y angustias, les daría algo más amplio en lo que entender su sufrimiento.

Oyendo esto, pienso en mis padres y la espiritualidad que ayudó a sostener a ellos y a su generación. Tuvieron una meta-narrativa, a saber, la historia cristiana de la historia de la salvación y de cómo, en esa historia, en el comienzo mismo de la historia, Adán y Eva cometieron un 'pecado original' que desde entonces ha torcido la realidad para dejarnos con la imposibilidad de lograr la sinfonía plena en esta vida. Cuando sus vidas se pusieron difíciles, como nos pasa a todos nosotros, ellos tuvieron una perspectiva religiosa sobre el motivo por el que estaban frustrados y doloridos. Se sabían nacidos en un mundo dañado y una naturaleza dañada. De ahí que su oración incluyera estas palabras: *por ahora vivimos, gimiendo y llorando en un valle de lágrimas*.

Hoy podríamos rechazar esto y verlo como insano y mórbido, pero esa narrativa de Adán y Eva ayudó a dar alguna explicación y significado a todos los defectos de sus vidas. Aunque no quitó su dolor, ayudó a dar dignidad a sus desgracias. Hoy veo a muchos padres sinceros tratando de dar de nuevas maneras una mayor narrativa a sus hijos jóvenes por medio de historias como *El rey león*. Ciertamente, eso podría ser útil para sus hijos jóvenes; pero, como indica Pierre Olivier Tremblay, finalmente se necesita una narrativa mucho mayor y más convincente.

La historia en la que encuadramos nuestro dolor marca toda la diferencia en el mundo frente al modo como rivaliza-



Padre Ron Rolheiser

mos con ese dolor. Por ejemplo, James Hillman nos dice que quizás el mayor dolor que experimentamos con el envejecimiento es nuestra idea del envejecimiento. Esto es cierto también para muchas de nuestras luchas. Necesitan la dignidad de ser vistas bajo un dosel más amplio. Me agrada lo que dice Robertson Davies cuando se queja de que no quiere luchar con una 'ventaja creciente', sino que quiere más bien ser 'tentado por el demonio'. ¿Quiere conceder una mayor dignidad a sus tentaciones!

Una mayor historia nos trae esta dignidad porque nos ayuda a diferenciar lo que es el significado de lo que es la felicidad. Invariablemente confundimos los dos. Lo que necesitamos buscar en la vida es el significado, no la felicidad. En verdad, la felicidad (como la entendemos por lo general) nunca puede ser perseguida, porque siempre es una consecuencia de algo más. Además, la felicidad es efímera y episódica; viene y va. El significado es estable y puede coexistir con el dolor y el sufrimiento. Dudo de que Jesús fuera particularmente feliz mientras colgaba moribundo en la cruz; pero sospecho que, a pesar de todo el dolor, estaba experimentando un significado profundo, tal vez el significado más profundo de todos. No casualmente, encontró este significado más profundo de todos porque se sabía a sí mismo como estando en la más profunda de todas las historias.

Al fin del día, ni la fe, ni la religión, ni la comunidad, ni la amistad ni la terapia nos pueden quitar los problemas. Las más de las veces, no tienen solución; un problema debe ser vivido y superado. Como Gabriel Marcel dijo con famosa frase, la vida es un misterio que vivir, no un problema que resolver. La historia en la que encuadramos nuestro dolor es la clave para trocar el problema en misterio.

Art Schopenhauer escribió una vez que todo dolor es soportable si puede ser compartido. La participación a la que se refiere no sólo tiene que ver con la amistad, la comunidad y la intimidad. Tiene que ver también con la historia. El dolor puede ser soportado más generativamente cuando se encuentra en una historia más grande que la nuestra propia, cuando comparte una meta-narrativa, un horizonte suficientemente amplio para empujarnos a la soledad idiosincrática.

Hollis está en lo cierto. Ningún terapeuta puede solucionar nuestro problema, pero puede ayudarnos a encontrar una historia mayor que pueda dar más significado y dignidad a nuestra desgracia.

Catholic Voices

Giving ourselves a better story

In a recent book, *Living Between Worlds*, James Hollis offers a piece of wit that carries more depth than is first evident. A therapist says to a client, "I cannot solve your problem, but I can give you a more compelling story for your misery." That's more than a wise-crack. Whether we feel good or bad about ourselves is often predicated on what kind of story we understand ourselves as living within.

I remember a seminar some years ago where one of the keynote speakers was a young French Canadian priest, Pierre Olivier Tremblay. Tremblay began his talk with words to this effect: I am a chaplain at a university, working with young college students. They are full of life, dreams, and energy; sadly, however they are mostly devoid of hope because *they have no meta-narrative*. They suffer a lot because they do not have a bigger story within which to understand themselves and make more sense of their own story. Their own stories, precious though they are, are too small and individualistic to give them much to draw on when pain and heartache beset them. They need a bigger story within which to situate themselves, a meta-narrative. While this wouldn't necessarily take away their pain and heartaches, it would give them something bigger within which to understand their suffering.

Hearing this, I think of my parents and the spirituality that helped sustain them and their generation. They had a meta-narrative, namely, the Christian story of salvation history and of how, in that story, at the very beginning of history, Adam and Eve committed an 'original sin' that has ever since skewed reality so as to leave us with the impossibility of ever attaining the full symphony in this life. When their lives got hard, as is the case with all of us, they had a religious perspective as to why they were frustrated and in pain. They understood themselves to be born into a flawed world and a flawed nature. Hence, their prayer included the words, "for now we live, mourning and weeping in a valley of tears."

Today we might frown on this and see it as unhealthy and morbid, but that narrative of Adam and Eve helped give some explanation and meaning to all the shortcomings in their lives. While it didn't take away their pain, it helped give dignity to their miseries. Today I see many sincere parents trying in new ways to give a bigger narrative to their young children through stories like *The Lion King*. That might indeed be helpful for young children; but as Pierre Olivier Tremblay points out, eventually a much bigger and more compelling narrative is needed.

The story within which we frame our pain makes all the difference in the world *vis-a-vis* how we cope with that



Father Ron Rolheiser

pain. For example, James Hillman tells us that perhaps the biggest pain we experience with aging is *our idea of aging*. This is true too for many of our struggles. They need the dignity of being seen under a larger canopy. I like what Robertson Davies says when he laments that he doesn't want to struggle with a "growing edge," but wants rather to be "tempted by demon." He wants to accord a higher dignity to his temptations!

A bigger story brings us this dignity because it helps us differentiate meaning from happiness. We invariably confuse the two. What we need to seek in life is meaning, not happiness. Indeed, happiness (as we generally understand it) can never be pursued because it is always a byproduct of something else. Moreover, happiness is ephemeral and episodic; it comes and goes. Meaning is abiding and can co-exist with pain and suffering. I doubt that Jesus was particularly happy as he hung dying on the cross, but I suspect that inside of all the pain, he was experiencing deep meaning, perhaps the deepest meaning of all. Not incidentally, he found this deepest of all meaning because he understood himself as being inside the deepest of all stories.

At the end of the day, faith, religion, community, friendship, and therapy, cannot take away our problems. Most times, there isn't any solution; a problem must be lived through. As Gabriel Marcel famously put it, life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. The story within which we frame our pain is the key to turning problem into mystery.

Art Schopenhauer once wrote that all pain can be borne if it can be shared. The sharing he was referring to doesn't just have to do with friendship, community, and intimacy. It also has to do with story. Pain can be borne more generatively when it finds itself inside a larger story than our own, when it shares a meta-narrative, a horizon wide enough to dwarf idiosyncratic loneliness.

Hollis is right. No therapist can solve our problem, but he or she can help us find a bigger story that can give more meaning and dignity to our misery.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website: www.ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Catholic Voices

New cures from embryonic stem cells?

A recent article in the *New York Times* by Gina Kolata chronicles the remarkable story of a patient who for many years suffered from type 1 diabetes. After receiving a newly-developed form of embryonic stem cell infusion, he became able to live insulin-free, apparently cured of his blood sugar imbalances.

It was largely a matter of time, funding and elbow grease before cures of this kind would start to appear. That makes it urgent for us, as a society, to confront and address the ethical questions arising in the wake of these up and coming therapies.

We can formulate the ethical question this way: Is it wrong to develop treatments that rely on the direct destruction of fellow human beings who are in their embryonic stages?

It should go without saying that it is always wrong to take the life of one human being to harvest body parts, even to save the life of another human being. Such medicine is fundamentally exploitative and immoral, and ought to be summarily rejected.

Many people are beginning to ask, however, whether receiving a treatment for diabetes developed from embryonic stem cells is really that different from getting vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine developed using abortion-derived cell lines?

The two cases are, in fact, quite different.

When it comes to abortion-derived cell lines and their use in developing some of the COVID-19 vaccines, the wrong that was committed involved taking somatic cells (*not* stem cells), such as kidney cells or retinal cells, from an aborted fetus and working them up in order to prepare a special "cell line" for use in research or vaccine development. The abortion, it should be noted, as wrong as it was in itself, was not performed in order to obtain research material, and the evil of this "corpse raiding" was compounded by not having obtained valid informed consent.

What makes embryonic stem cell-based therapies ethically worse is that a very young human being, still in his or her embryonic stage of existence, is being targeted and intentionally killed in order to obtain the desired stem cells that stand at the center of that medical treatment.

Why, then, would it be morally allowable to receive a vaccine prepared using abortion-derived cell lines, but morally unacceptable to receive a diabetes treatment developed from embryonic stem cells?

Because the type of moral offense and its gravity are different in kind and degree. Directly killing someone to obtain their cells for treatment is different in kind and worse than the wrongdoing involved in taking cells from a corpse, even from a young human whose life was unjustly ended for an unrelated reason. It is always wrong to steal, even from a cadaver. But it's much worse to kill in order to take.

In one case the researcher himself becomes the executioner who procures cells and tissues from the individual he has just directly and purposefully killed; in the other case, the researcher shows up at the



Father Tad Pacholczyk

Making Sense of Bioethics

morgue or the abortion clinic following the death, and procures cells or tissues from the individual's body (with the death having occurred at the hands of others and the researcher afterwards profiting from the resultant cadaver). This latter case would not raise ethical concerns at all if researchers were to derive the needed cells from a miscarriage instead of a direct abortion. If an unborn baby girl, for example, were to die of natural causes, her parents could validly grant informed consent for the use of tissues and cells from her body, in effect donating her body to science.

These kinds of distinctions are important, because receiving a diabetes treatment produced with embryonic stem cells signals a willingness on our part to tolerate the killing of younger human beings in order to benefit others who are older. Meanwhile, receiving a COVID-19 vaccine produced using abortion-derived cell lines does not indicate a willingness on our part to tolerate killing for research (since the killing was not done for research, but for some other unrelated motive), and instead indicates a willingness to tolerate cells and tissues that were unethically taken from a corpse.

Should we always avoid using therapies that are produced using embryonic stem cells taken from young humans who were killed in order to obtain the cells? Yes, such therapies are unethical because killing one human being for the purpose of healing another crosses a fundamental moral line.

But the fact that the question is being raised reminds us of the slippery ethical slope that arises whenever we try to use parts of human beings derived from abortions: legally permitting abortion only makes the confusion worse. Hence, there is an urgent need to encourage the use of alternative, non-embryo-derived cell sources by researchers, including cells derived from miscarriages, adult stem cells, or embryonic-type alternatives such as induced pluripotent stem cells, which can be obtained by genetically manipulating adult human skin cells. These approaches open a path forward in the direction of ethical research and medical therapies.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.

Keeping the faith

Do you feel the world is coming apart and keeping faith in it has become exceedingly difficult? The causes of this despondency can range from leaders who spend more time criticizing one another than confronting climate change to fights over vaccines, "the big lie," and civility itself.

Added to this, our moral compass is out of sync. Secularism, which believes we do not need God, is on the rise. When order is disrupted, disorder reigns, as do bizarreness and chaos. Worse is the loss of faith and lacking a sense of trust and commitment.

How then do we maintain faith amid mind-blowing godlessness?

One meaning of "life" is we are en route, on a journey, constantly needing updating, an "*aggiornamento*." A misconception of faith is to think it was dropped into our lap from heaven and will always be strong. As heavenly as it is, it is prone to human weakness.

Patience counsels, "Don't let anything break your spirit." Today's news, however, is often a spirit-breaker. To realize this, just reflect on how well we sleep after experiencing disturbing news.

In an age of spirit-breaking, faith would counsel we examine our journey to check if we might need to change its direction. What needs to be rearranged to make



Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

The Human Side

us more well-disposed?

Have we taken an account of the ratio between negativity and positivity we ingest? When last did we try to increase our positive outlook and lower our negativity? Have we checked what is most influencing us in our thinking and worldview?

Do we ever think of God's providence? Although our world may seem to be falling apart, do we ever ask if God is challenging us providentially to rethink how precious our faith is, to realize it is the glue that keeps us unified within ourselves and needs continuous care.

Undoubtedly much of today's dysfunctionality exists, causing us to see our world coming apart and attacking our faithfulness. The positive side of this distress is that it prompts us to go within ourselves to check where our faith really is and to consider the strength needed to sustain it.

This Advent, focus on presence, not presents

I ordered our matching Christmas pajamas in early October. Worried about supply chain issues and shipping delays, I picked the Nordic blue print we liked best and bought them 11 weeks early. And then I found Jesse Tree ornaments I liked, so I ordered those too.

Advent candles came soon after, three boxes on sale on Amazon, so it just made sense to get them now and set them aside. A new set of Christmas candy canes for the pathway came next, then an inflatable Clark Griswold my husband still doesn't know will be sitting in the front yard come Dec. 1.

"Am I ready?" I thought to myself. The gifts are hidden and all the "fixings" are ready to celebrate Advent and Christmas. Menus are prepared. Decorations are at the ready. Nativity sets have a spot on a shelf or mantle. Now we just wait. But is it enough? Are we ready?

I'm willing to admit that my assumption of readiness based purely on having a lot of "stuff" for Advent and Christmas is entirely wrong. And I'm happy to admit that my belief that I'm ready because of having all this stuff has been fueled by this weird belief that we have to do "all the things" to make Advent and Christmas special.

But it isn't the "stuff" that makes us ready or better prepared to "wait in joyful hope" for the arrival of baby Jesus. And it isn't the perfect set of Jesse Tree ornaments or pristinely wrapped presents that make the four weeks of Advent and Christmas



Katie Prejean McGrady
Catholic News Service

Window Seat Wisdom

morning good and fruitful.

Far too often, I've fallen into the trap of thinking it is the stuff that makes us ready, makes the holidays and our celebration of them somehow better.

I've convinced myself that "liturgical living" has to include products and programs and that what we do as a family has to measure up to some proverbial "Catholic living checklist" created by people watching us from afar.

Social media hasn't helped this. Scrolling past pictures of perfectly decorated homes and pristinely photographed desserts makes me jealous and competitive. A consumeristic culture convincing us to buy more has only accelerated this misguided approach to Advent and Christmas.

Not fully understanding the gift and meaning of Advent, and why the church has us slowly build to the birth of Christ, has only hurt any healthy approach to the holidays.

Catholic Voices

Jesus walks

Any Christian who goes to Jerusalem will come away inspired by the experience of visiting a city where Jesus walked.

Of course, as with all tourist sites, there is a certain amount of invention. Much of what you see is old, to be sure, but the connection to the Gospels and the life of Our Lord can be, not to put too fine a point on it, attenuated.

Take the cenacle where the apostles were gathered at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on them and the church was born. Tourists can see an upper room of a two-story building south of the Zion Gate.

It is certainly old, and it doesn't require much imagination to picture Peter and the other disciples cowering there. But it has Gothic arches, an architectural detail we don't see before the 12th century in other parts of the world.

There is one spot, though, that I hold sacred in my memory.

The excavations along the southern wall of the Temple have exposed the steps that common people would have ascended, the ritual baths where they would have purified themselves, and the doors



John Garvey
Catholic News Service

Intellect
and Virtue

that Jesus, Mary and Joseph would have entered.

I have a picture of my wife and me standing in one of those doorways. It is excavated down to bedrock.

We know that Jesus walked over the very stone we are standing on. It's probably worn down a bit from what it was 2,000 years ago, but when the picture was taken, I found myself wanting to get on my knees and kiss the stone that may have felt the imprint of our Savior's feet.

It required no imagination at all to picture Jesus walking through that door. He actually did. And with a little effort I could see myself standing there as he

See GARVEY, Page 23

A time of renewed welcome

An unexpected visit from a friend who lives quite a distance away became a blessing in many respects. Of course, it was delightful to see someone in person after a long span of being apart, even with masks and social distancing.

The visit also prompted me to pick up the pace (and items that needed to be returned to shelves, etc.) of tidying up more "lived in" spaces.

Yet another aspect of the visit has had spiritually profound effects. A renewed sense of eager anticipation energized my activity as the time for the visit drew near.

Much like the hallway that suddenly became brighter when I replaced an old bulb, the thought of extending hospitality overshadowed the long months of pandemic isolation and drew me into a more profound realization for this holiday season and, especially, Advent:

How we prepare to welcome has a deep impact on what happens when we welcome.

For example, I realized early into preparations for my friend's visit that I could not do everything in one day. Instead, I made up a schedule, breaking up the tasks into smaller periods of time. I



Maureen Pratt
Catholic News Service

Living Well

actually think I accomplished more this way, and I certainly wasn't as tired.

Advent devotions can be approached in much the same way: Instead of thinking of long readings or prayer time, smaller segments can build one on the other, to bring us forward throughout the season.

Observing my surroundings through my guest's eyes was a good way to notice details that needed attention and put my preparations in the context of wanting to do the best for a good friend. I found the semi-hidden plant leaves that needed pruning, the catalogue I'd meant to discard — some of the "littler" things.

See PRATT, Page 23

The migrant crisis in Europe

Alexander Lukashenko is one of those bad guys who could audition for the villain in a James Bond movie and be considered too blatantly evil to make the cut. Who could be that awful?

Lukashenko is the dictator of Belarus, a small, landlocked country in Eastern Europe.

Determined to crush a burgeoning democracy movement in Belarus, he produced his own version of "the big lie" when the opposition leader, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, appeared to win the last election. He forced Tikhanovskaya into exile, where she continues the fight. Another Lukashenko opponent was found mysteriously hanged in the Ukrainian city of Kyiv.

Then, there was that Ryanair passenger jet forced out of the sky above Belarus' capital, Minsk. That was Lukashenko, sending his thugs onto the aircraft to remove a journalist who had investigated the dictator's corruption.

The international community has imposed sanctions because of this behavior.

Lukashenko's response? It gets worse.

To retaliate against the European Union and NATO, Lukashenko has used refugees — desperate people trying to reach Europe — as human pawns. He's had Belarusian travel companies facilitate visas and fly refugees into Minsk, where they are sent to the borders of Latvia and Poland to flood those countries with migrants. He's capitalizing on human misery to destabilize his European enemies.

A CNN report from forests on the Polish border showed the Polish army on one side of barbed wire, and a mass of human sorrow on the other side, guarded by Belarusians. Deep cold had already descended on Eastern Europe as hundreds of migrants gathered branches to construct makeshift shelters.

An articulate, well-dressed woman said she had come from the Kurdish part of Iraq with her young son. She wanted to get to Germany, where Iraqi doctors told her the best surgery was available for her son's back problem.

What does all of this have to do with you and me?

I realized I felt sympathy for the woman interviewed because I identified with her. She could have been my next-door neighbor. Sometimes, without realizing it, I fall



Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

For the Journey

into the error of thinking of the world's needy as "other." The "unwashed masses" live in my foggy subconscious.

But in reality, each migrant is a unique individual, loved by God, with their own story, and I need to open my heart to that.

Lukashenko may be bad, but as Americans, we're not entirely innocent. We need only look to our own border to see the horrific conditions many migrants have faced there. And how did our invasion of Iraq set the stage for ongoing devastation in that country?

There's also the impact climate change is having on the movement of peoples. Experts tell us the migrant situation will only grow worse as rising sea waters and temperature changes impact lives and livelihoods. How committed am I to environmental action?

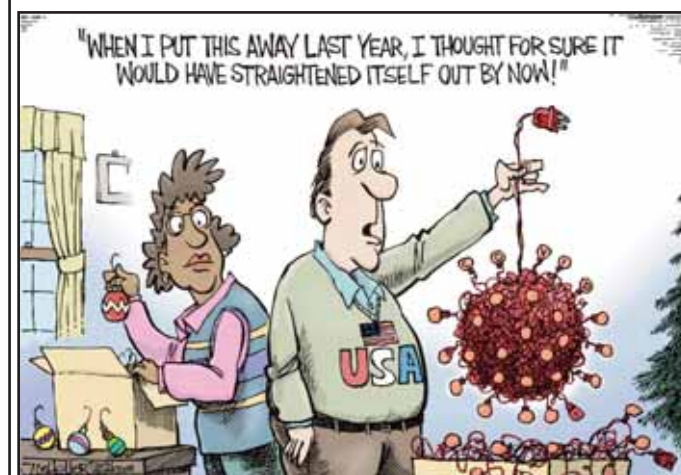
I reflect on my gratitude for good journalists. I pray for the courageous journalist pulled off that Ryanair flight.

The CNN story, and other reports, may have changed the border crisis. The situation is fluid, but according to *The New York Times* it's easing right now. Flights are taking migrants back to Iraq, and other airlines are not bringing people from the Middle East.

That doesn't mean life for those refugees is any easier, but Lukashenko's scheme may have yielded to international condemnation, and good journalism played a role.

Jesus told us, "The truth will set you free." Truth comes from honest journalism. Truth comes from looking into our own hearts. And truth comes when we seek out news from around the globe, not just in the hotbed of our current American culture.

Cartoon Corner



Justices seem willing to allow Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In the Supreme Court's first major abortion case in decades — which looked at Mississippi's ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy — the majority of justices Dec. 1 seemed willing to let that ban stay in place.

But it was unclear if they would take this further and overturn *Roe*.

While the justices considered the state law and the possible ramifications of supporting it or not, people on both sides of the issue were on the steps of the Supreme Court revealing the divide on this issue by what they were shouting or with their placard messages calling abortion murder or an essential right.

At several points during the argument, Chief Justice John Roberts continued to bring the focus back to the question at hand: the 15-week ban on abortions in Mississippi, which was struck down by a federal District Court in Mississippi in 2018 and upheld a year later by the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit.

A 15-week ban is not a "dramatic departure from viability," Roberts said.

The point of viability — when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own — was key to the discussion because the Supreme Court has consistently ruled that states cannot restrict abortion before 24 weeks or when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own.

Roberts seemed hesitant to take this further, asking if the court were to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, if it also would be asked to reconsider several other cases that people could say have been wrongly decided.

And that discussion of previous court decisions, the use of "*stare decisis*" came up frequently. The term,

which literally means to stand by things decided, was used in reference to previous abortion cases but also several other cases with some justices pointing out that precedence should not always be a deciding factor and that some cases did need to be overturned.

Justice Stephen Breyer indicated the court was treading on contested ground and was concerned that its decision could be seen as merely being political.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor took this a step further, saying the court would be seen as highly politicized if it were to overturn *Roe* and other related rulings. "Will this institution survive the stench that this creates in the public perception that the Constitution and its reading are just political acts?" she asked. "I don't see how it is possible."

But as the arguments continued, more reflection seemed to be on the issue of abortion itself and the possibility of bringing the issue "back to the people," as Mississippi Solicitor General Scott Stewart suggested.

Stewart stressed that *Roe* and *Casey* court decisions "haunt our country" and "have no home in our history or traditions."

Roe v. Wade is the 1973 decision that legalized abortion. *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* is the 1992 decision that affirmed *Roe* and also stressed that a state regulation on abortion could not impose an "undue burden" on a woman "seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability."

Justice Brett Kavanaugh emphasized the court was being forced to "pick sides" on a contentious issue and questioned why the court had to be the arbiter here.

"The Constitution is neither pro-life nor pro-choice," he said, noting that it "leaves the issue to the people to resolve in the democratic process."

Justice Clarence Thomas asked what those opposed to the state ban thought was the constitutional right to an

abortion, and Justice Samuel Alito spoke of the fetus having "an interest in having a life."

Julie Rikelman, of the Center for Reproductive Rights, who represented the Jackson Women's Health Organization in its challenge of Mississippi's abortion law, said keeping the law in place would cause "profound damage to women's liberty, equality and the rule of law."

U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar went on to argue that overturning the court's previous abortion rulings would have "severe and swift" effects causing abortion restrictions in other states.

If the court sides with Mississippi, it would be the first time the court would allow an abortion ban before the point of viability and could lay the groundwork for other abortion restrictions that other states could follow.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a court brief supporting Mississippi, stressed that abortion is not a right created by the Constitution and called it "inherently different from other types of personal decisions to which this court has accorded constitutional protection."

Referring to the court's major abortion decisions, the brief warned that if the Supreme Court "continues to treat abortion as a constitutional issue," it will face more questions in the future about "what sorts of abortion regulations are permissible."

Just as the arguments started, the USCCB issued a statement from Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, which said: "We pray that the court will do the right thing and allow states to once again limit or prohibit abortion and in doing so protect millions of unborn children and their mothers from this painful, life-destroying act."

A ruling in the case is expected in July.

Follow Zimmermann on Twitter: @carolmaczim

Communion statement aims to 'retrieve and revive' understanding

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE (CNS) — The U.S. bishops approved their statement on the Eucharist with 222 "yes" votes Nov. 17, the second of two days of public sessions during their Nov. 15-18 fall general assembly.

Their OK came a day after their discussion of the document — a discussion that took a drastically different tone than their previous debate about what the document could potentially contain during their virtual assembly five months ago.

At that June gathering, a major focus highlighted whether it would address denying Communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion.

Some bishops said a strong rebuke of President Joe Biden, the nation's second Catholic president, should be included in it because of Biden's recent actions protecting and expanding abortion access, while others warned that this would portray the bishops as a partisan force during a time of bitter political divisions across the country.

The document the bishops discussed and approved does not specifically call out Catholic political leaders, but it does more generally point out the seriousness of the sacrament.

The discussion, just prior to the vote, focused on some of the statement's wording. Specific amendments were approved and additional comments about wording changes, that were raised on the floor, did not.

One of the bishops, for example, wanted to add the word "etcetera" after a list of vulnerable people the church was responsible for in order to show its broad inclusion, but the bishops, who had already added to the list to include the unborn, chose not to add the additional descriptor.

As points of discussion, Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, outgoing chairman of the U.S. bishops' pro-life committee, stressed the prelates must not forget the responsibility they have to "take care

of the souls" of Catholic politicians who do not publicly support church teaching on abortion.

And Bishop Donald E. DeGrood of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, noted that there is a healthy tension for the bishops, to call out what isn't right but to do so in love and to be united as they find ways to apply this new document in their dioceses.

The document on the Eucharist states: "One should not celebrate Mass or receive holy Communion in the state of mortal sin without having sought the sacrament of reconciliation and received absolution."

It also says that if a Catholic in his or her personal life has "knowingly and obstinately" rejected the doctrines of the church or its teaching on moral issues, that person should refrain from receiving Communion because it is "likely to cause scandal for others."

Back in June, at the end of the bishops' discussion of the document, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the bishops' doctrine committee, said the draft would not focus on denying Communion to people but would emphasize the importance of the sacrament.

And in his Nov. 16 presentation of the 26-page statement titled "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church," Bishop Rhoades said it "addresses the fundamental doctrine about the Eucharist that the church needs to retrieve and revive."

In his short presentation to U.S. bishops, followed by just a handful of comments from the floor, the bishop said the document is addressed to all Catholics in the United States and "endeavors to explain the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the church."

He also said it is intended to be a theological contribution to the bishops' strategic plan and to the bishops' planned eucharistic revival "by providing a doctrinal resource for parishes, catechists and the faithful."

Discussion from the floor included a request from Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces, New Mexico, that the document include more about the paschal mystery, or the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Bishop Richard F. Stika of Knoxville, Tennessee, wondered how the document would be understood by college students, high schoolers or children, noting that "a lot of it's over their heads" and they would have to have some kind of theological foundation to grasp it.

"We have these beautiful, beautiful documents that sometimes are just ignored," he said, suggesting that it should be made "more readable and understandable."

In response, Bishop Rhoades said the document "as it stands is really meant for adults," but he could see it being used in high schools with a teacher who would explain it better. He also said it could be developed by publishers as a resource for catechesis for grade school students.

Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette, Indiana, said the work put in "laboring over texts should not discourage us," pointing out that often language falls short but that the church has many other means at its disposal to express the faith such as music, dance, poetry and visuals.

The draft of the document explains the importance of Communion, often calling it a gift, and uses references from Scripture, prayers of the church and Second Vatican Council documents to back this up. It also explains, citing words of the saints, how Communion is not just a symbol but the real presence of Christ.

This transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the document says, is "one of the central mysteries of the Catholic faith" which is a "doorway through which we, like the saints and mystics before us, may enter into a deeper perception" of God's presence.

It notes, almost halfway through, that the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*) describes the Eucharist as "the source and summit of the Christian life." It also says that as Catholics understand what the Eucharist means, they should more fully participate in Mass and also reach out

Review: West Side Story

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) — What do you get when you combine composer Leonard Bernstein, lyricist Stephen Sondheim, playwright Arthur Laurents and choreographer Jerome Robbins, then throw director Steven Spielberg and screenwriter Tony Kushner into the mix?

You get *West Side Story* (20th Century), the splendid second film version of the classic 1957 Broadway musical.

It was Robbins who first had the idea to update Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Laurents later developed Robbins' original concept, ultimately exchanged a feud between families in Renaissance-era Italy for a rivalry between two gangs — one white, the other Hispanic — in the then-downtrodden Manhattan neighborhood of the title.

Caught in the middle of the contemporary conflict would be in-love-at-first-sight slum dwellers Tony (Ansel Elgort) and Maria (winning newcomer Rachel Zegler).

As Kushner's script charts their romance, as well as their effort to cross the ethnic divide that separates them, he adheres more closely to the stage play than to the 1961 movie, helmed by Robbins and Robert Wise. He also amplifies the Latino flavor of the proceedings by giving characters dialogue in Spanish.

With the whole area for control of which the Jets and the Sharks compete slated to be demolished in preparation for the building of Lincoln Center (an early example of gentrification), tensions are running high. They only intensify once Tony's pal, Riff (Mike Faist), with whom he

started the Jets, proposes a climactic showdown to Maria's brother Bernardo (David Alvarez), leader of the Sharks.

Tony, here a recent parolee haunted by how close he came to committing murder in an earlier rumble — the incident for which he was imprisoned — wavers between avoiding his friends altogether and striving to make peace. The better angels of his nature are embodied in his kindly patron and boss, Valentina (Rita Moreno).

Moreno, of course, is a veteran of the previous production and won an Academy Award for her turn as Bernardo's girlfriend, and Maria's bestie, Anita — a role now taken up, with appropriate brio, by Ariana DeBose.

Another connection to the past is Valentina's backstory as the widow of Doc, the proprietor of the eponymous drug-store and hangout, played, back in the days of Camelot, by character actor Ned Glass.

By turns celebratory and heartbreaking, Spielberg's masterful enhancement of the original collaborators' already brilliant work will captivate grown-ups. Whether teens should be allowed to join in alternating toe-tapping with tearing up, however, is another question.

If Spielberg's take is even more kinetic than its lively predecessor, it's also quite a bit grittier and more visceral. That's especially true during a pivotal scene in which Anita becomes trapped among the Jets and is sexually assaulted.

To this can be added a generally respectful but somewhat mixed treatment of faith. On the one hand, Catholic elements are, if anything, more prominent than in the earlier adaptation.

Thus the exchange of marital vows solemnized in the song "One Hand, One Heart" takes place, not in a dress

shop, the frame of whose only window serves as an austere substitute for a cross, but amid the medieval splendors of The Cloisters museum. There, the would-be bride and groom are suffused by the warm light of a stained-glass window as they make their mutual commitment.

Less welcome is the fact that some of the racier lyrics given to Anita — though, admittedly, they're pretty mild by today's standards — are here sung while she's supposed to be praying the rosary in church. More substantively, she and Bernardo are depicted as living together.

As for the principals, they're shown waking up in bed together at one point. This is after the aforementioned informal wedding ceremony, though. It's clear that they consider themselves married and, in fact, before the 16th-century Council of Trent, their intensely earnest pledges to each other would have constituted a valid bond in the eyes of the church.

Balancing these defects, however they're weighed, are the movie's fundamental messages about the pernicious effects of prejudice and the overarching unity of all. Seldom has the cost of narrowmindedness been more dramatically or more movingly illustrated.

The film contains mostly stylized violence with minimal gore, an attempted gang rape, cohabitation, offscreen premarital sexual activity, about a dozen uses of profanity, at least one milder oath and some crude and crass talk.

The Catholic News Service classification is A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Mulderig is on the staff of Catholic News Service.

COMMUNION

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to serve those in need, citing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which says: "The Eucharist commits us to the poor."

It concludes with examples of saints who were transformed by their reception of the Eucharist and their deep understanding of what it means.

This heavily footnoted statement also has a pastoral message urging those who have left the church to come back. It ties this return back to the Eucharist quoting St. Teresa of Kolkata, who said: "Once you understand the Eucharist, you can never leave the church. Not because the church won't let you but because your heart won't let you."

What this document might say and how it could specifically call out Biden and other Catholic politicians has been disputed for months and has not just been a topic for the U.S. bishops and Catholics across the country, but also involved the Vatican.

Prior to the bishops' initial discussion of this document, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, urged the bishops in a letter to proceed with caution in developing a national policy "to address the situation of Catholics in public office who support legislation allowing abortion, euthanasia or other moral evils."

And Pope Francis said on a Sept. 15 flight back from Bratislava, Slovakia, that he preferred not to comment directly on the issue of denying Communion, but he urged U.S. bishops to take a pastoral approach rather than wade into the political sphere.

More recently, after the pope and Biden met at the Vatican Oct. 29, Biden was asked by reporters in Rome if abortion was one of the topics of their meeting and the president said: "We just talked about the fact he was happy that I was a good Catholic, and I should keep receiving Communion."

Follow Zimmermann on Twitter: @carolmac-zim

Faith leaders urge changes in bill's provisions for funding child care

by Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Build Back Better Act's plan to expand affordable child care and ensure that quality prekindergarten is available to all families "is a worthy goal," but as written these provisions "will suppress, if not exclude" many faith-based providers from participating, according to Catholic and other religious leaders.

"We are writing to express our urgent concerns regarding the child care and universal prekindergarten provisions in the House-passed Build Back Better Act," said a Dec. 1 letter the faith leaders sent to U.S. Sens. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Richard Burr, R-N.C., the chairwoman and ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. The signers represent religious denominations, schools and charities "that comprise and serve millions of Americans," the letter said. Among the signers were the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty, chaired by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, and the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, chaired by Bishop Thomas A. Daly of Spokane, Washington. Catholic Charities USA and the National Catholic Educational Association also signed the letter, along with Jewish, Muslim and other Christian associations. The measure changes standing policy to consider all providers of child care and prekindergarten programs "recipients of federal financial assistance," subjecting them to nondiscrimination provisions that currently do not apply to them.

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WEISHAR

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in our day's work we often run into roadblocks to peace and rest:

"We cannot achieve in each hour what we want, perhaps in none. We must contend with our own fatigue, unforeseen interruptions, shortcomings of the children, diverse vexations, indignities, anxieties."

I am reminded of the crowds who turned to John the Baptist with the question "What should we do?" (Lk 3:10). They thirsted for the One who would "baptize ... with the Holy Spirit and fire."

As they listened to John's call to leave behind old patterns of living, "the people were filled with expectation" for the Christ.

Their expectation is ours. Meeting the Lord in prayer, Stein says, gives us the strength to take the next step on our journeys with him:

"And it (the soul) sees clearly the next part of the path before it; it does not see very far, but it knows that when it has arrived at that place where the horizon now intersects, a new vista will then be opened."

This image feels so true to discernment. The path may sometimes seem steeped in fog. Though we dwell in a world of many uncertainties, Stein highlights our most brilliant certainty — our God, who is not only near but is "the support and ground of my own unsupported and groundless being."

Her confidence gives answer both to those still waiting for the Lord in the time of John the Baptist and to those awaiting his second coming both at the time of St. Paul and today.

In response to the various anxieties and uncertainties that populate our modern day, Stein gently presses into these tender places:

"And when he tells me through the mouth of the prophet that he stands more faithfully at my side than my father and my mother, yea that he is love itself, then I begin to understand how rational is my trust in the arm that carries me and how foolish is my fear of falling prey to nothingness."

He asks only that we abide with him. We may sometimes need to renew our yes hour by hour, but in saying yes, we open ourselves to his transformative love.

In this treasured time of the church year, where the extraordinary takes up residence in the ordinary of our lives, I pray our hearts may be oriented toward rest, toward the tranquility a more vivid confidence in his love brings.

May it embolden us to throw open the doors to him, to greet him at the thresholds of our hearts with joy.

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Weishar is a poet and freelance writer from the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois.

ACCEPTANCE

Continued from Page 7

and newlyweds.

St. Joseph was pious and subject to observing the religious laws of the time, which called for stoning a woman accused of adultery or — with later interpretations — a formal repudiation that had civil and criminal consequences for the woman, the pope said. But Joseph's "love for Mary and his trust in her suggested a way he could remain in observance of the law and save the honor of his bride. He decided to repudiate her in secret, without making noise, without subjecting her to public humiliation."

"How holy Joseph was," Pope Francis said. In contrast, "we, as soon as we have a bit of gossip, something scandalous about someone else, we go around talking about it right away!"

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him not to fear taking Mary as his wife and explaining the divine origin of and plan for her son.

God reveals "a greater meaning than his own justice. How important it is for each one of us to cultivate a just life and, at the same time, to always feel the need

for God's help to broaden our horizons and to consider the circumstances of life from an always different, larger perspective," the pope said.

Many times, he said, people feel "imprisoned" by what happens to them and are tempted to "close in on that pain, in that thought that good things never happen to us. And this is not good for us. This leads you to sadness and bitterness. A bitter heart is so ugly."

Often, "a providence is hidden that takes shape over time and illuminates the meaning even of the pain that has touched us," he said.

By taking this risk, Joseph "gives us this lesson: to take life as it comes. Has God intervened there? I accept it" and seek to follow God's guidance, the pope said.

During their engagement, Christian couples are called to witness to this kind of love that "has the courage to move from the logic of falling in love to that of mature love," the pope said. Mature love moves from infatuation and imagination to taking "responsibility for one's life as it comes."

It is demanding, but it will strengthen their love "so that it endures when faced with the trials of time," he added.

"Dear brothers and dear sisters, our every day who are required to recite this office. That would not be Solemn Vespers.

So, adding a congregation adds solemnity. Adding a choir and singing adds solemnity. Celebrating in a sacred space, with reverencing the altar with incense, bowing and other dignified action adds solemnity.

All of these things combined creates the public liturgy of the second-to-last ca-

lives are very often not what we imagine them to be. Especially in loving and affectionate relationships," Pope Francis said.

He repeated his advice to married couples, urging them to always make peace before the end of the day and never let arguments or bad feelings fester "because the cold war the next day is very dangerous. Don't let war begin the next day."

At the end of the audience, the pope recalled that Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day.

"It is an important occasion to remember the many people who are affected by this virus. For many of them, in some areas of the world, access to the necessary treatment is not available. My hope is that there might be a renewed commitment in solidarity to guarantee fair and effective health care," he said.

He also asked for prayers for his trip Dec. 2-6 to Cyprus and Greece to visit the people whose countries are "rich in history, spirituality and civilization."

"It will be a journey to the sources of apostolic faith and of fraternity among Christians of various confessions. I will also have the opportunity to draw near to a humanity wounded in the persons of so many migrants in search of hope: I will visit Lesbos. I ask all of you, please, to accompany me with your prayer," he said.

nonical hour of the day that can then be called Solemn Vespers.

Each Sunday, Vespers from the cathedral is streamed and recorded via the Diocese of San Angelo YouTube channel.

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This text was compiled by John Webber, Director of Cathedral Music Ministries, and draws in part from the Wikipedia article "Canonical hours."

having been captured, would you feel compelled to be part of helping them to experience freedom?" Archbishop Aquila said.

"This proclamation of what God has done in Christ, known in theological circles as the 'kerygma,' is meant to do more than be an interesting retelling of events that happened in the distant past," he explained.

Archbishop Aquila quoted from St. John Paul II's 1979 apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* in concluding his pastoral note:

"As this narrative is unpacked over these six weeks, my hope is that all Catholics in our pews have a chance to be 'overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust (themselves) to Jesus Christ by faith,' so that this story will begin to shape the way we see our lives and the entire world."

Advent, with its focus on waiting, "reminds us to be patient as we wait on the Lord," said a Nov. 24 message for the season posted by the Pennsylvania-based U.S. province of Congregation of the Holy Spirit on its website.

"In the meantime, we are encouraged to look back over our life to see how we have prepared a place for Christ to be born again in our lives and in the lives of those whom we love," it said. "We are watchful and alert! While we are waiting, come Lord Jesus!"

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Zimmermann is editor of the Catholic Standard, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington.

McGRADY

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If we can get back to the realization that Advent is fruitful because we have four weeks set aside to focus on hope in God's promises, peace in God's plan, joy in God's providence, and love of the Lord and others, then maybe we'll see it as gift of four weeks to slowly prepare for Jesus instead of a competition of liturgical living activities to complete.

If we can remember that it's the arrival of the newborn king, Emmanuel, that makes Christmas good, then maybe we'll realize all the other "stuff" (even stuff I've frantically purchased and set aside) are just extras, maybe helping make those days better, but certainly

not things required or necessary for the seasons we're approaching to matter.

Rather than fall prey to the belief that we have to do a dozen family devotionals and handcraft our Advent candles from beeswax kits because we will craft our way through the season (darn it!), maybe this Advent season can be one of intentional slowing down, and doing more with less.

Maybe this Christmas can be one focused less on presents under the tree and more on the presence of loved ones finally gathered together. Maybe we avoid running the "liturgical living rat race" by recognizing that we're not in competition with anyone else and the way they prepare for and live the holidays is not the way we have to do it.

I rushed to buy all the "stuff" (and bought it early) because I weirdly be-

lieved it would help me be more ready for a liturgical season that seeks to end our rushing and wants to change our misguided perceptions of readiness.

Rushing to have and do all the things and readying stuff to look at and cling to does nothing to help us let Christ rush into our lives and ready our hearts for the kingdom of heaven.

As we get ready for Advent (which began Sunday, Nov. 28), let's strive to slow down and intentionally and purposefully look to buy and do less so we can make room for more of the Lord in our lives.

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Katie Prejean McGrady is an international Catholic speaker and award-winning author and host of The Katie McGrady Show on Sirius XM. She lives in Louisiana with her family.

GARVEY

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walked by. He might even have looked my way; he would certainly have known my thoughts.

We sometimes forget that this is exactly what happens in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus is actually there, not in Jerusalem but in St. Vincent's Chapel or St. Matthew's Cathedral or Little Flower Church. The Mass is not an exercise in imaginary reconstruction. We receive him, body and blood, soul and divinity.

I found myself thinking about this recently when the Barna Group released a report saying that church attendance was down 30% to 50% from 2019.

When COVID-19 arrived, bishops

excused their flocks from their Sunday obligation. People went online instead, and often found better preaching there. Now that most are vaccinated, many still opt to attend Mass on their computers or have gotten out of the habit altogether.

To one who believes what the church professes, this makes no sense. A good sermon is an inspiring thing, even online, but it is not God present in our midst. No believing Catholic would trade the sacrament of the Eucharist for a video. So what explains the drop in attendance?

A Pew Research Center report released in 2019 indicated that 69% of Catholics believe that the bread and wine used at Mass are only "symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ."

If we really believed that Jesus was physically present at Mass, the way I

imagined him to be at the Hulda Gate, attendance would approach 100%. Maybe that's a bit high. The apostles who lived with him had their doubts too. But it would be way up there, even at daily Mass.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had its annual meeting last month, and one of the items on its agenda was a renewal of our belief in the sacrament of the Eucharist. I can't think of a more pressing concern. If we don't have that, our faith isn't as good as a trip to Jerusalem. It's not much better than a YouTube video.

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Garvey is president of The Catholic University of America in Washington. Follow him on Twitter @CatholicPres. Catholic University's website is www.cua.edu.

PRATT

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During our soul-searching in Advent, if we try to see ourselves as God sees us — as created in God's likeness and image, as being so precious to God that we are known by name — we might be able to identify and improve on details of our faith, for example, finding more quiet or better focus, without being so critical or judgmental that we lose sight of God's love.

The preparations for my friend's visit made me realize that welcome is work, but need not be toilsome, if we look beyond the "pain." The bending and stretch-

ing and balancing (as in, changing the lightbulb) benefited me as much as it would reflect my care for my friend and was pleasant, good exercise — another unexpected blessing!

So, too, each act of faith between now and Christmas can build our relationships with God and one another, sharing the "reason for the season" in a world where it is sometimes lost.

By the day of the visit, I'd made good progress on many things, but some things remained to be done. Those plants needed more than pruning, some could have used new pots. Another light went out just as the one I'd replaced was installed. The tea I'd have liked to have offered wasn't available at the store.

I started to play "should have ..."

I should have started sooner, I should have anticipated, I should have ...

Then, I remembered Luke's Gospel passage (10:38-42) about Jesus' visit with Mary and Martha. We hear about Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, listening, and Martha still distracted (10:40), working away beyond the time of Jesus' arrival. What a contrast! And how helpful for all who work hard to prepare.

There will undoubtedly always be things left to be done. Yet, once the guest of honor arrives, as with Christmas, it's time to put aside the work and enjoy!

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Pratt's website is www.maureen-pratt.com.

EDICTAL SUMMONS December 1, 2021 CASE: PEACOCK (LANG) -- LaGROUE NO.: SO/21/38

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking CHARLES RUSSELL LaGROUE.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 1st day of December 2021, to answer to the Petition of ALISA CAROL PEACOCK (LANG), now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, "Alisa Peacock (Lang) and Charles LaGroue, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage." Said Petition is identified as Case: PEACOCK (LANG) -- LaGROUE; Protocol No.: SO/21/38, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on the December 1, 2021.

Reverend Tom Barley, MSW, MBA, M. Div., JCL
Judicial Vicar

Member

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Father Rodney White, pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Midland, and the children of the St. Stephen's Homeschool Co-op celebrated Mass on Sept. 9, 2021, to mark the beginning of a new semester.

SARA DAVILA



Father Archibong named first Catholic chaplain for Sutton County Sheriff



COURTESY

Left: On Nov. 24, 2021, Father Felix Archibong was inaugurated as Sutton County Sheriff's Chaplain. He is the first Catholic priest to be named chaplain of the Sheriff Department since its existence in Sutton County.

COURTESY

Above: Father Felix Archibong and Bishop Michael Sis at the Sutton County Jail.