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WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas Volume 42, No. 1 January 2022



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

The seminarians of the Diocese of San Angelo volunteered delivering meals with Meals for the Elderly in San Angelo, Dec. 20, 2021.

Seminarians gather for fraternity, service, and learning

By Brian Bodiford
West Texas Angelus

Mike Elsner found himself in a new role during the recent winter gathering of seminarians, that of “big brother.” With last year’s ordination of Father Kevin Lenius, Elsner, in his third year of graduate-level theology studies, is the senior-most seminarian for the diocese. It’s a role he takes to naturally, speaking of the “good group of guys” that make up the current diocesan seminarian cohort. “It’s good to see them and encourage the new guys,” he said.

Gatherings of this type are usually held twice a year between semesters for the seminarians of the Diocese of San Angelo, organized by vocation director Father Ryan

Rojo and his assistant Kristie Garcia. In-person gatherings had taken a pause recently out of caution regarding the coronavirus pandemic. The tradition returned as the seminarians gathered at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo Dec. 18 to 21, 2021.

Encouraging one another, as Elsner mentioned, is an important aspect of these gatherings, but equally important is just seeing one another. Since the diocese does not have a seminary, young West Texas men who feel called to become a priest end up attending different seminaries around the country. Though they spend their academic semesters with others studying for the priesthood, these gatherings are intended to build their identity and fraternity

as those who share a specific common mission: to become priests for the Diocese of San Angelo.

Eight of the diocese’s 10 seminarians were able to attend this year’s gathering. Two, David Garcia and Mauricio Romero, are currently enrolled at the Pontifical North American College in Rome and were unable to attend. They were there in spirit — represented in the form of cardboard cutout heads on sticks for photos — and portions of the gathering were recorded for them. They were also able to join one session by Zoom.

Being back in the diocese itself is something the seminarians also enjoy. Jesse Ortiz of San Miguel Arcángel Parish in Midland, who has just completed his

first year of undergraduate seminary studies, said “just being with the people” was what would stay with him from the gathering. “I wanted to be a priest to minister to these people,” he said. “I love these people!”

Elsner, whose home parish is St. Stephen’s in Midland, also expressed a fondness for the local Catholic population, one he feels goes both ways. “A lot of people are rooting for us,” he said. “That’s really encouraging.” He described it further, noting “there is a closeness in this diocese that I think really comes from the top down,” beginning with Bishop Michael J. Sis, who expressed this closeness by

See GATHERING, Page 20

From the Bishop's Desk

Totus Tuus summer youth program

It is with great joy that I announce a new development that will be a tremendous blessing to young people in the Diocese of San Angelo. In June and July of 2022, we will host our first Totus Tuus Catholic summer youth program. Totus Tuus began in the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas, and it has been taking place in many dioceses around the U.S. for more than twenty years.

Some young adults in our diocese have traveled to other dioceses in order to serve as Totus Tuus team members. The only other diocese in Texas with this program is Amarillo, and now we are finally ready to bring it to parishes in the Diocese of San Angelo. We have seven local parishes committed with the potential to serve over 700 of our West Texas youth in one summer.

Our current diocesan pastoral plan consists of four priorities: form disciples, engage young adults, accompany youth, and nurture families. Totus Tuus is an initiative that touches upon all those priorities. It is dedicated to sharing the Gospel and promoting the Catholic faith through catechesis, evangelization, Christian witness, and eucharistic worship.

A team of four young adults (two young men and two young women) will travel throughout the diocese dedicating one week at a time to individual parishes, ministering to youth in grades 1 to 12. This five-day catechetical program assists parents and parishes in the evangelizing and catechizing of their youth by supplementing the work they are already doing. The week is filled with faith, fun, and friendship.

The foundation of the teaching in Totus Tuus is authentic catechesis, rooted in an orderly and systematic explanation of God's revelation of himself through the person of Jesus Christ. The program instructs young people in the basic tenets of the Catholic faith to cultivate both a firm intellectual grounding and a solid relationship with Jesus. All



Bishop Michael J. Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

the teaching aims to help young people grow in their understanding of Jesus Christ, strengthen their faith in him, and, most importantly, develop an intimate friendship with him.

Totus Tuus is not meant to replace Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs in parishes. This summer program is different from VBS. VBS is typically offered only to elementary-age youth, whereas Totus Tuus is offered to all youth from grades 1 through 12. Totus Tuus is deeply rooted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Many parishes in other dioceses have found that VBS can coexist alongside Totus Tuus, albeit on different dates.

The five marks of Totus Tuus are as follows:

1. Proclamation of the Gospel: to arouse faith
 2. Explanation: examination of the reasons for our beliefs
 3. Christian witness: an experience of Christian living
 4. Celebration of the sacraments: especially Holy Eucharist and confession
 5. Active witness: participating in the missionary spirit of the Catholic Church
- St. Paul VI wrote, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41). With this in mind, Totus Tuus team members are immersed in a life of prayer and give witness to the fruits of that experience of Christian living to the youth.

The five pillars of Totus Tuus are the

following:

1. The Eucharist
2. Marian devotion
3. Catechetical instruction
4. Vocational discernment
5. Fun

The four young adult team members receive orientation and formation to carry out their role of missionary discipleship. They are also expected to commit to a daily schedule that includes Mass, sacraments, and prayer. The celebration of the Mass is the central element of their daily schedule. Other prayer forms include the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, the Angelus, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The method, content, and structure of Totus Tuus are intended not only to teach the faith, but also to ignite the hearts of the team members and the young people they serve. The college-age teachers provide an authentic witness to the student participants. Their youthfulness, energy, and ability to witness to the faith make the teachers particularly effective with children and young people.

The name Totus Tuus is Latin for "totally yours." This phrase was used by St. John Paul II as his personal motto. He borrowed it from the Marian consecration prayer found in the 1712 book *True Devotion to Mary* by St. Louis de Montfort. The expression Totus Tuus also expresses the dedication of the team members to give their all to every young person they encounter. Through this example of joy and service, the youth attending the program see that these young adults are on fire with the Catholic faith. This often leads them to desire this same approach to life.

The mission of Totus Tuus is to inspire in young people a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for daily conversion, and an openness to their vocation by the constant challenge to give themselves entirely to Christ through Mary

and by continually strengthening their prayer lives in imitation of her. This program has resulted in the formation of young adults who continue to dedicate themselves to the church's mission of evangelization, and it has also led to many vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

The Totus Tuus team members are college-aged men and women who are hired for their energy, enthusiasm, love of the faith, commitment to spiritual growth, ability to work with a team, and desire to work with youth. The paid position is a temporary two-month commitment in June and July, which includes one week of training and a one-week break for the Fourth of July.

Totus Tuus strives to foster Christian vocations by encouraging young people to begin discerning God's call in their life to be married, a priest, a religious, or a consecrated single. Dozens of young men and women credit their time serving as a Totus Tuus missionary with inspiring and helping form their vocation. I have known several young adults who have participated in Totus Tuus. Some of them have even found their future spouse in the program. In many ways, it is a seedbed for vocations and discernment.

Totus Tuus is usually funded by the parishes who host the five-day program. Anyone wishing to donate is support of this diocesan effort may send contributions to the Vocation Office, c/o Rev. Ryan Rojo, Diocese of San Angelo, P.O. Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902.

I am very grateful to Father Ryan Rojo, our diocesan Vocation Director, who will be overseeing this summer experience. Anyone with questions about Totus Tuus in our diocese may contact Father Ryan Rojo at 325-651-7500 or at rrojo@sanangelodiocese.org. One can also learn more about Totus Tuus on the national website at totustuus.church. Much of the information in this article is found on that website.

The Prayer Square

Prayer for our college students

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

God our Father, please bless our students while they are away in college. Watch over them as they study, work, and play. Give them good and honorable friends, keep them safe and healthy, and draw them close to you in prayer. Send your Holy Spirit into their hearts and minds. Grant them wisdom to make good decisions, understanding to remain focused in their studies, strength to resist temptations, courage to defend their faith when it is challenged, humility to ask for help when they need it, grace to make the most of their opportunities, and gratitude for your many blessings. Whenever possible, bring them safely home to us, so we can give them a good meal and a warm hug. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A note on the new, expanded Angelus

You might notice the *West Texas Angelus* looks a little different this month than it has recently. Each page is about three inches taller.

Why the change? Put simply, this size of paper is just easier to come by. Given current demands on the supply chain, we anticipated running out of the smaller paper soon, so we decided to make the change with the first issue of the year.

You'll notice that the paper is also four pages shorter than it was last month. Don't worry though! Thanks to the expanded dimensions, we actually have more room for about 9% more content now. That means more Catholic news coming your way in 2022.

Wishing you blessings in the new year,
Brian Bodiford, Editor

At year's end, little change on the U.S. immigration front



Migrants near Tapachula, Mexico, walk in a caravan heading to the U.S. border Nov. 26, 2021.

CNS PHOTO | JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ, REUTERS

By Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — For most migrants and their supporters, 2021 looks as if it will end much like it started.

With the most recent blow by the Senate parliamentarian's ruling that immigration reform must be excluded from the president's proposed social safety-net bill to courts keeping in place a program preventing asylum-seeking migrants from entering the

country, the year has ended in much frustration on the immigration front.

There had been much hope and optimism among immigration supporters early on that President Joe Biden would do away in 2021 with some of the more controversial practices the Trump administration had instituted.

Almost immediately after he was sworn in Jan. 20, Biden announced he was pausing most deportations during his first 100 days in office. He also paused a policy that kept asylum-

seeking migrants in Mexico until their cases could be heard in U.S. immigration courts. He also said he would be aggressively pursuing a way to legalize as many as he could of the 11 million people who are in the country without legal permission.

Catholic organizations that had been against the restrictive measures and held little hope for reform during the Trump administration praised the new president, who had also involved

Programa juvenil de verano Totus Tuus

Es con gran alegría anunciar un nuevo acontecimiento que será una gran bendición para los jóvenes de la Diócesis de San Angelo. En junio y julio de 2022, ofreceremos nuestro primer programa juvenil católico de verano Totus Tuus. Totus Tuus comenzó en la Diócesis de Wichita, Kansas, y ha tenido lugar en muchas diócesis de los Estados Unidos durante más de veinte años.

Algunos adultos jóvenes de nuestra diócesis han viajado a otras diócesis para servir como miembros del equipo Totus Tuus. La única otra diócesis en Texas con este programa es Amarillo, y ahora finalmente estamos listos para llevarlo a las parroquias de la Diócesis de San Angelo. Tenemos siete parroquias locales comprometidas con el potencial de servir a más de 700 de nuestros jóvenes del oeste de Texas en un verano.

Nuestro plan pastoral diocesano actual consta de cuatro prioridades: formar discípulos, envolver a los adultos jóvenes, acompañar a los jóvenes, y nutrir a las familias. Totus Tuus es una iniciativa que toca todas esas prioridades. Se dedica a compartir el Evangelio y promover la fe católica a través de la catequesis, la evangelización, el testimonio cristiano, y el culto eucarístico.

Un equipo de cuatro adultos jóvenes (dos hombres y dos mujeres) viajará por toda la diócesis dedicando una semana a la vez a parroquias individuales, ministrando a los jóvenes en los grados 1 a 12. Este programa de catequesis de cinco días ayuda a los padres y parroquias en evangelizar y catequizar a sus jóvenes complementando el trabajo que ya están haciendo. La semana está llena de fe, diversión, y amistad.

El fundamento de la enseñanza en Totus Tuus es la auténtica catequesis, enraizada en una explicación ordenada y sistemática de la revelación de Dios de sí mismo a través de la persona de Jesucristo. El programa instruye a los jóvenes en los principios básicos de la fe católica para cultivar una base intelectual firme y una relación sólida con Jesús. Toda la enseñanza tiene como objetivo ayudar a



Obispo Michael J. Sis

Diócesis de San Angelo

los jóvenes a comprender mejor a Jesucristo, fortalecer su fe en él y, lo que es más importante, desarrollar una amistad íntima con él.

Totus Tuus no está destinado a reemplazar los programas de Escuela Bíblica de Vacaciones (VBS) en las parroquias. Este programa de verano es diferente a VBS. VBS se ofrece típicamente solo a jóvenes en edad de primaria, mientras que Totus Tuus se ofrece a todos los jóvenes en los grados 1 al 12. Totus Tuus está profundamente arraigado en el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*. Muchas parroquias en otras diócesis han descubierto que VBS puede coexistir junto a Totus Tuus, por cierto, en diferentes fechas.

Las cinco marcas de Totus Tuus son las siguientes:

1. Proclamación del Evangelio: despertar la fe
2. Explicación: examen de las razones de nuestras creencias.
3. Testimonio cristiano: una experiencia de vida cristiana
4. Celebración de los sacramentos: especialmente Eucaristía y confesión
5. Testigo activo: participar en el espíritu misionero de la Iglesia católica

San Pablo VI escribió: “El hombre contemporáneo escucha más a gusto a los que dan testimonio que a los que enseñan, o si escuchan a los que enseñan, es porque dan testimonio” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41). Con esto en mente, los miembros del equipo Totus Tuus son sumergidos en una vida de oración y dan testimonio de los frutos de esa experiencia de vida cristiana a los jóvenes.

Los cinco pilares de Totus Tuus son los siguientes:

1. La Eucaristía
 2. Devoción mariana
 3. Instrucción catequética
 4. Discernimiento vocacional
 5. Diversión
- Los cuatro miembros del equipo de jóvenes adultos reciben orientación y formación para llevar a cabo su papel de discipulado misionero. También se espera que se comprometan con un horario diario que incluya Misa, sacramentos, y oración. La celebración de la Misa es el elemento central de su horario diario. Otras formas de oración incluyen la Liturgia de las Horas, el Rosario, el Ángelus, la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia, y la Adoración al Santísimo Sacramento.

El método, el contenido, y la estructura de Totus Tuus están destinados no solo a enseñar la fe, sino también a encender los corazones de los miembros del equipo y de los jóvenes a los que sirven. Los maestros en edad universitaria brindan un testimonio auténtico a los estudiantes participantes. Su juventud, energía, y capacidad para dar testimonio de la fe hacen que los maestros sean particularmente eficaces con los niños y los jóvenes.

El nombre Totus Tuus en latín significa “totalmente tuyo”. Esta frase fue utilizada por San Juan Pablo II como su lema personal. Lo tomó prestado de la oración de consagración mariana que se encuentra en el libro de 1712 *Verdadera Devoción a María* de San Luis de Montfort. La expresión Totus Tuus también expresa la dedicación de los miembros del equipo para dar todo por cada joven que encuentran. A través de este ejemplo de alegría y servicio, los jóvenes que asisten al programa ven que estos jóvenes adultos están ardiendo con la fe católica. Esto a menudo los lleva a desear este mismo enfoque de la vida.

La misión de Totus Tuus es inspirar en los jóvenes un verdadero anhelo de santidad, un profundo deseo de conversión diaria, y una apertura a su vocación mediante el desafío constante de entregarse enteramente a Cristo a través de María y fortaleciendo continuamente su vida de oración

en imitación de ella. Este programa ha dado lugar a la formación de adultos jóvenes que siguen en dedicarse a la misión de la iglesia de la evangelización, y también ha dado lugar a muchas vocaciones al sacerdocio y a la vida religiosa.

Los miembros del equipo de Totus Tuus son hombres y mujeres de edad universitaria que son contratados por su energía, entusiasmo, amor por la fe, compromiso con el crecimiento espiritual, capacidad para trabajar en equipo y deseo de trabajar con los jóvenes. El puesto remunerado es un compromiso temporal de dos meses en junio y julio, que incluye una semana de formación, y un descanso de una semana para el 4 de julio.

Totus Tuus se esfuerza por fomentar las vocaciones cristianas animando a los jóvenes a comenzar a discernir el llamado de Dios en su vida para casarse, ser sacerdote, religioso, o soltero consagrado. Decenas de hombres y mujeres jóvenes atribuyen su tiempo al servicio como misioneros Totus Tuus por inspirar y ayudar a formar su vocación. He conocido a varios jóvenes adultos que han participado en Totus Tuus. Algunos de ellos incluso han encontrado a su futuro cónyuge en el programa. En muchos sentidos, es un semillero de vocaciones y discernimiento.

Totus Tuus generalmente es financiado por las parroquias que albergan el programa de cinco días. Cualquiera que desee donar para apoyar este esfuerzo diocesano puede enviar contribuciones a la Oficina de Vocaciones, c/o Rev. Ryan Rojo, Diocese of San Angelo, P.O. Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902.

Estoy muy agradecido con el Padre Ryan Rojo, nuestro Director de Vocaciones diocesano, quien supervisará esta experiencia de verano. Cualquiera que tenga preguntas sobre Totus Tuus en nuestra diócesis puede ponerse en contacto con el Padre Ryan Rojo al 325-651-7500 o al rrojo@sanangelodiocese.org. También se puede obtener más información sobre Totus Tuus en el sitio web nacional en totustuus.church. Gran parte de la información de este artículo se encuentra en ese sitio web.

Al final de 2021, poco ha cambiado en temas de inmigración



FOTO CNS | JOSÉ LUIS GONZÁLEZ, REUTERS

Por Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Al parecer, el año 2021 terminará como comenzó para la mayoría de los inmigrantes y sus defensores.

Primero vino el golpe más reciente del fallo de la parlamentaria del Senado diciendo que la reforma migratoria debe ser excluida del proyecto legislativo propuesto por el presidente. Otro golpe sucedió cuando tribunales ordenaron que se siga implementando un programa que impide

que los migrantes buscando asilo que ingresen al país. Con los dos obstáculos, el año ha terminado con mucha frustración en asuntos que afectan a inmigrantes.

Desde enero — mes que vio a Joe Biden asumir el cargo mas importante de la nación — hubo mucha esperanza y optimismo entre los defensores de la inmigración de que el nuevo presidente acabaría con algunas de las prácticas más controvertidas que había instituido la administración de su predecesor, Donald Trump.

Casi inmediatamente tras ser juramentado, Biden anunció una pauta para la

mayoría de las deportaciones durante sus primeros 100 días como presidente. También suspendió una política que mandaba a México a migrantes buscando asilo en EE.UU., hasta que sus casos pudieran ser escuchados en los tribunales de inmigración de Estados Unidos y anunció que respaldaría una reforma migratoria.

Organizaciones católicas — que se habían opuesto a medidas restrictivas y tenían poca esperanza de una reforma migratoria bajo la administración de Trump — aplaudieron al nuevo presidente, quien también les había animado a partici-

par en conversaciones con su equipo de transición sobre cómo colaborar en el camino.

Sin embargo, lo que parecía ser vientos de cambio se calmaron rápidamente. A medida que los migrantes comenzaron a dirigirse en mayor número hacia la frontera sur a principios de año, quizás animados por lo que inicialmente parecía ser un ambiente más amigable, los funcionarios del gobierno comenzaron a repetir un mensaje que sonaba como una

Espacio de Oración Oración por nuestros estudiantes universitarios

Por Obispo Michael J. Sis

Dios nuestro Padre, por favor bendice a nuestros estudiantes mientras que están en la universidad.
Vela por ellos cuando estudian, trabajan, y juegan.
Dales amigos buenos y honorables,
mantenlos seguros y saludables,
y acércalos a ti en la oración.
Envía tu Espíritu Santo en sus corazones y mentes.
Concédeles sabiduría para tomar buenas decisiones,
el entendimiento para permanecer enfocados en sus estudios,
fortaleza para resistir las tentaciones,
el valor para defender su fe cuando sea desafiado,
la humildad de pedir ayuda cuando la necesitan,
la gracia para sacar el máximo provecho de sus oportunidades,
y agradecimiento por sus muchas bendiciones.
Siempre que sea posible, tráelos a casa con nosotros,
para darles una buena comida y un cálido abrazo.
Te lo pedimos por Jesucristo nuestro Señor.
Amén.

José Francisco de Honduras lleva a su hija de 8 años, Zuabelin, de la mano el 22 de noviembre de 2021, mientras participaban en una caravana cerca de Villa Mapastepec, México, en rumbo a la frontera con Estados Unidos.

CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



January

- 2

Deacon Alfred Camarillo (B)
- 3

Deacon Antero Gonzalez (B)
- 4

Rev. Anthony Bala Govindu (O — 2015)
- 4

Rev. Kumar Jujjuvarapu (O — 2006)
- 5

Rev. Andrew Wueste (D — 2011)
- 7

Rev. Cornelius Scanlon, OMI (D — 2020)
- 9

Bishop Michael Sis (B)
- 10

Rev. Francis Beazley, OMI (D — 1992)
- 10

Deacon Arturo Casarez (B)
- 10

Rev. Joseph Choutapalli (B)
- 11

Deacon Paul Klein (D — 2015)
- 12

Rev. Angel Castro-Gonzales (B)
- 13

Rev. Laurent Mvondo (B)
- 13

Deacon Reynaldo Nuñez (B)
- 13

Rev. Joseph Walter (D — 1989)
- 14

Rev. Emilio Sosa (O —2006)
- 16

Rev. Charles Greenwell (B)
- 16

Rev. Msgr. Timothy Murphy (D— 2004)
- 16

Deacon John Specht (B)
- 16

Rev. Joseph Vathalloor (B)
- 18

Deacon Charles Evans (D — 2020)
- 18

Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (D — 1975)
- 18

Rev. Noel Britto (D — 2012)
- 19

Rev. Robert Kelly (D — 1999)
- 22

Deacon José Esparza (D — 2011)
- 22

Deacon Lorenzo Salazar (O — 2005)
- 22

Deacon Gerald Schwalb (B)
- 24

Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (D — 2009)
- 25

Deacon Paul Hinojos (B)
- 26

Deacon D.J. Goetz (D — 2003)
- 26

Deacon Jack Petersom (1987)
- 26

Rev. Anthony Sloan (B)
- 26

Rev. Cyril Lange (D — 1971)
- 27

Rev. Chinnapureddy Pagidela (O — 2002)
- 27

Deacon Daniel Peña (D — 2021)
- 27

Deacon Horacio Yanez (D — 2015)
- 28

Deacon Julio Carrasco (O — 1979)
- 28

Deacon Apolonio Gutierrez (O — 1979)
- 28

Rev. Knick Knickerbocker (O — 2009)
- 30

Deacon Bill Butler (B)
- 30

Deacon Federico Medina (B)

February

- 1

Deacon Daniel Shannahan (B)
- 2

Rev. Francis Onyekozuru (B)
- 2

Deacon Pedro Sanchez (D — 2013)
- 5

Deacon David King (D — 2006)
- 5

Deacon John Rangel (B)
- 6

Deacon Ignacio Cisneros (D — 2016)
- 8

Deacon Thomas Flores (B)
- 8

Rev. Bhaskar Mendem (B)
- 9

Rev. Albert Fuytinck, CSSR (D — 1997)
- 10

Rev. Terry Brenon (B)
- 10

Rev. Leo E. Lavoie (D — 1978)
- 11

Rev. Bernardito Getigan (B)
- 11

Deacon Ray Smith (D — 2014)
- 14

Rev. Martin Hubbs (B)
- 15

Deacon Victor Belman (B)
- 15

Rev. Frank Colacicco (D — 2006)
- 16

Rev. Msgr. Larry Droll (B)
- 20

Deacon Mark Reeh (D — 2005)
- 20

Deacon Sador Sotelo (B)
- 22

Rev. Francisco Lopez (D — 1994)
- 22

Rev. Ed Deeon, OMI (D — 2017)
- 26

Rev. Mamachan Joseph (B)
- 28

Rev. Lawrence Underdonk (D — 2004)
- 29

Rev. Msgr. Bernard Gully (B)

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

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 Re-treat 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 Per-sonnel Board meeting at 2:00 p.m.
- 20

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Hour for Life (livestreamed) at 7:00 p.m.
- 21

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Diocesan Pro-Life Mass at 6:30 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 Pen-sion 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

February 2022

- 1–2

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Priests’ Conference
- 2

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Deans’ Meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- 2

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass and Procession at 6:30 p.m.
- 3

MIDLAND, St. Ann’s Youth Activity Center, Knights of Columbus Clergy Appreciation Dinner at 6:00 p.m.
- 4

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Liturgical Commission Meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- 5

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, FOCUS SEEK 22 Conference
- 7–8

DALLAS, National Catholic Bioethics Center Bishops’ Workshop
- 9

ST. LOUIS, MO, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, Mass for the Installation to the Ministry of Candidacy at 5:00 p.m.
- 12

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Mass with Deacon Candidates at 11:00 a.m.
- 13

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Mass with Deacon Candidates at 11:00 a.m.
- 15

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Pastoral Plan Implementation Committee at 10:00 a.m.
- 19

MILES, St. Thomas, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
- 20

ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Adult Confirmation Mass at 4:00 p.m.
- 24

COLLEGE STATION, St. Mary’s Catholic Center, Mag-nify event
- 26–27

SAN ANTONIO, Oblate Renewal Center, Texas Mis-sion Council Meeting



Christ the King Retreat Center

January 2022

- 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
- 25

St. Ambrose RCIA
- 28–30

Engaged Encounter and Natural Family Planning

February 2022

- 1–2

Spring Priests Conference
- 6

Virtual Confirmation Retreat
- 11–13

Deacon Formation
- 13

Deacon Inquiry Session
- 18–20

Engaged Encounter & Natural Family Planning
- 24–27

Men’s Small Town ACTS Retreat
- 28–Mar 1

San Angelo Association of Realtors

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Father Onyekozuru to helm St. Mary Parish in Brownwood

Bishop Michael J. Sis has ap-pointed Father Francis Onye-kozuru as pa-rochial administrator of St. Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Brown-wood effec-tive Jan. 15, 2021.

Father Onyekozuru was pre-viously in full-time studies pursuing an advanced theology degree.



Midland groups help families celebrate Christmas

Groups from St. Stephen Parish and St. Ann Parish in Midland, as well as Holy Cross Catholic High School and Project Head Start, recently vol-unteered with Helping Hands of Mid-land to provide Christmas for 129 families, including 332 children.

Each family received certificates to HEB for Thanksgiving and Christ-mas meals. Each child received a new set of clothing, including shoes and jackets, and several toys. Many of the toys and clothing items were donated by St. Stephen and St. Ann parishio-ners.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to cre-ating and maintaining the safest pos-sible 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 Assis-tance Coordinator will assist in bring-ing 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 cual-quier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de traición o he-rido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayu-darle. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o es-

criba a la Diócesis de San Ángelo, Minis-terio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San Ángelo, TX 76902. Un intér-prete de español está disponible. Si el in-cidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a traer su preocupa-ción a la atención de la diócesis cor-respondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de re-portar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, y la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado.

Cathedral celebrates anniversary

West Texas Angelus

At evening Mass Dec. 21, Bishop Michael Sis stood before a group of faithful, asking why a date commemorating a moment in their home parish’s history would be a feast day for the other parishes in the diocese. Their San Angelo church, known as Sacred Heart, is not the oldest church in the diocese, nor is it the largest, nor many other superlatives that could describe a house of worship, the bishop said. But this church was dedicated as the cathedral church of the nascent Diocese of San Angelo on Dec. 21, 1964, making it the center of worship for the vast swath of West Texas that comprises the diocese. A feast day in other parishes, the day is to be celebrated as a solemnity at the cathedral itself. The anniversary was marked with solemn vespers on the evening of Dec. 20 and Mass on Dec. 21.

It is because of the cathedral’s importance to the diocese that this anniversary is commemorated in such a way. As Bishop Sis mentioned in his homily, the cathedral is the home of the cathedral, or the bishop’s teaching chair. It is also the site of the annual diocesan Chrism Mass, where sacred oils are blessed for use in sacraments throughout the diocese in the coming year. One such sacrament that also benefits the entire diocese is the sacrament of holy orders. Bishop Sis noted that all five of the concelebrating priests at the Mass were ordained in the very same cathedral: Father Lorenzo Hatch, Father Ryan Rojo, Father Josh Gray, Father Adam Droll, and Father Prem Thumma.

Five seminarians were also serving in the Mass, who the bishop noted, God willing, will also be ordained priests in the cathedral. “I think there are some of you in this assembly this evening who might have the same call,” he said.

Bishop Sis continued with a brief history of the church building, beginning with the gift to the church of a city block in downtown San Angelo in 1874 and through the various structures that have existed, culminating in the current cathedral church. “Today we give thanks to God for this holy place,” the bishop stated.

In the bishop’s homily, he noted ways in which a cathedral church stands apart from the other parishes in a diocese. The cathedral, he said, is a church for everyone as the mother parish of the entire diocese. Cathedrals are also a destination for travelers who come to see them because of their status. Reflecting on one of the day’s readings, Bishop Sis said of the cathedral, “It is still a place of pilgrimage just like the Temple in Jerusalem was.”

To conclude, the bishop made connections between the church and each of the members of the flock. The readings of the Mass included a line from the Gospel of John: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” Bishop Sis mentioned that the holiness of the cathedral building should remind Catholics of their own call to holiness. “This place where we are is holy ground because the Lord our God is holy, and this is the house of God,” he said. “You and I are called to be holy, too.”



The seminarians of the Diocese of San Angelo served at solemn vespers at the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, Dec. 20. Pictured are Sabastine Nwosu, Mike Elsner, Jessie Ortiz, Joshua Basse, cathedral cantor Frank Diaz (in good company, but not himself a seminarian), Blake Noonan, and Francisco Camacho.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Bishop Michael Sis delivered the homily at the Mass of the Solemnity of the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart Dec. 21.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Pro-Life activities in January

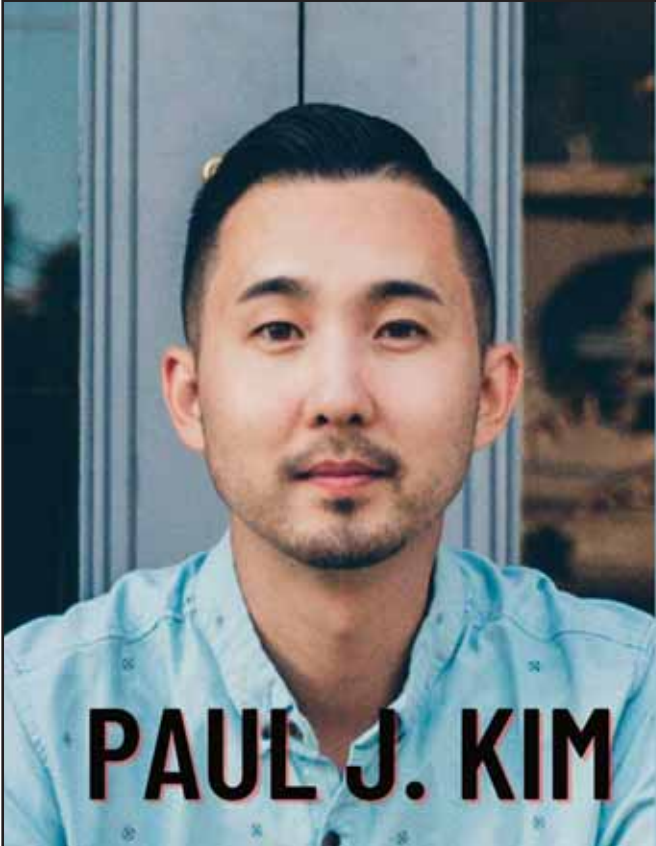
As the Jan. 22 anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade* approaches, opportunities abound for Catholics to pray together for an end to abortion.

On Jan. 20, Bishop Michael Sis will lead a holy hour for life at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo. The holy hour will be the first of several holy hours hosted overnight by bishops around the country, and will be live streamed as part of the National Prayer Vigil for Life. Everyone is welcome to join Bishop Sis at the cathedral at 7:00 p.m. or watch online at <https://sanangelodiocese.org/holy-hour-for-life-2022>.

The following day, Bishop Sis will celebrate a diocesan Pro-Life Mass at the cathedral, Jan. 21 at 6:30 p.m.

On Jan 22, busses from around the diocese will travel to Austin for the Texas Rally for Life. For more information on this trip, or to volunteer in local pro-life ministry, please contact your local pro-life coordinator:

- Director of Pro-Life Ministries: Jerry Peters, jmpoutdoorsmen@aol.com.
- Abilene-Area Coordinator: Jim Sulliman, sulliman@camalott.com.
- Midland-Area Coordinator: Faustino Rodriguez, tinorodriguez777@gmail.com.
- Odessa-Area Coordinator: Deacon Edward Gonzalez, egonzalez@sanangelodiocese.org.
- San Angelo-Area Coordinator: Stephanie Socha, stephaniesocha@yahoo.com.



PAUL J. KIM



ST. STEPHEN'S
CATHOLIC CHURCH

SAVE THE DATE

To The Heights

Young Adults Concert
&
Conference



May 6 & 7, 2022

St. Stephen's Catholic
Church

Midland, Texas

Early bird tickets begin
Feb. 2, 2022 for \$20
Ages 18 to 39

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Two ways to join:

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OR

2) Visit <https://app.flocknote.com/dosamail>

Social Media

Diocese of San Angelo on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/DioceseofSanAngelo>

Bishop Michael Sis on Twitter:
[@SABishopMike](https://twitter.com/SABishopMike)

On the Web

www.sanangelodiocese.org

2021: Looking back

Pope calls world to act on impact of climate change on poorest countries



CNS PHOTO | ANDREW BIRAJ, CATHOLIC STANDARD

In this 2019 photo, then-Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Washington joins students at St. Mary's School in Landover Hills, Md., in planting a tree in celebration of the school's 65th anniversary. On Aug. 16, 2021, the Washington Archdiocese launched an action plan to encourage local Catholics, parishes, schools and other institutions to implement Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical on caring for the environment.

By Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis invited Catholics — and anyone else interested — to join a seven-year journey to widen the reach of his 2015 encyclical on the environment in a time of global climate change.

Known as the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, the effort formally launched Nov. 14 in dioceses around the world.

The invitation came as communities globally experienced extreme heat and drought, massive flooding, intense and long-burning wildfires, rising sea levels and failed crops in 2021.

The pope introduced the platform in a video May 25, encouraging people to join the global grassroots movement to create a more inclusive, fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world.

Coordinated through the Dicastery for Integral Human Development, the platform is a "journey that will see our communities committed in different ways to becoming totally sustainable, in the spirit of integral ecology," the pope said.

He called for a "new ecological approach that can transform our way of dwelling in the world, our lifestyles, our relationship with the resources of the earth and, in general, our way of looking at humanity and of living life."

The initiative invited dioceses, parishes and individuals to build an integrated global effort to protect creation for future generations. The Vatican platform is meant to help those who want to increase their commitment to bringing the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on *Care for Our Common Home*, to life by committing through 2028 to carry out a set of actions they developed based on local needs.

In the United States, 17 dioceses and 58 parishes had committed to participating in the platform at its kickoff. More were expected to join, said Jose Aguto, executive director of the Washington-based Catholic Climate Covenant.

The platform calls for integrating actions across different sectors, such as universities, parishes, dioceses, religious orders, community organizations, neighborhoods, businesses and health care insti-

tutions.

"The covenant, we're really excited about the U.S. participation in the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform so far. We look forward to the seven-year journey as a big step," Aguto said Dec. 1.

The effort surrounding the platform began as the two-week 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference closed in Glasgow, Scotland. Representatives of more than 200 nations came together Oct. 31-Nov. 12 with the goal of agreeing to cut global carbon emissions by half by 2030 as part of efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

COP26, as the conference was known, was delayed a year because of the pandemic.

A Vatican delegation and several Catholic organizations and parishes were present throughout COP26. Vatican representatives joined high-level talks, while Catholics from other groups participated in sideline events.

Vatican representatives in a video message urged the conference to deliver on financing from wealthier countries to help poorer countries respond to climate change and to take urgent action to comply with the standards of the Paris Agreement.

The final agreement, however, fell short of those goals, disappointing Catholic environmental and development advocates. Action to limit temperature increases was pushed into 2022 and wealthier nations failed to deliver on needed climate finance to help poor countries respond and adapt to climate change.

Although promises and practical action fell short in the final agreement, "we are on the road from which there is no turning back," said Christine Allen, director of CAFOD, the Catholic international development agency in England and Wales, which joined the Vatican delegation in Scotland.

"The level of realization from right across the world that we need to act and act with urgency absolutely took place," Allen said.

Chloe Noel, the coordinator of the Faith Economy Ecology Project at the Washington-based Maryknoll Office for

Global Concerns, who joined the conference sideline activities online, told CNS Dec. 2 that while delegates from major fossil fuel-using countries began discussing reduction in such consumption, "there's not a clear plan about how that will be done and by when that will be done."

"We need more ambition to keep the temperature rise to even two degrees Celsius let alone to what the temperature really needs to be, which is 1.5 degrees Celsius," Noel said.

She also called for a more expansive financial commitment by the world's richest nations to help developing countries already feeling the negative effects of climate change.

"We will continue, as the climate movement, as the faith community, to push the U.S. government to address loss and damage at COP27," Noel said.

COP27 will convene in Egypt in November 2022.

In other events, the Catholic Climate Covenant teamed with Creighton University in July to convene the second of three planned biennial "*Laudato Si'*" and the U.S. Catholic Church" conferences. More than 2,700 participants joined a series of online programs to learn how to bring the encyclical's teaching on climate change more widely into the life of the church.

"We're continuing to grow the Catholic community (that is) concerned about climate. We're seeing steady increases in the number of Catholics being interested," Aguto told Catholic News Service.

"But we need to elevate our voices more. The science is becoming more significant and the divisions in our country are becoming more stark. We have to speak first of love of God and love of neighbor. We have to create a space for dialogue," he added.

A global campaign to divest from fossil fuels continued to gain adherents in the fall, with 72 institutions — 36 of them Catholic — announcing days ahead of COP26 that they will withdraw investments from carbon-based energy corporations. The institutions hold assets of \$4.2 billion.

Salesian Father Joshtrom Kureetha-

dam, coordinator of Ecology and Creation at the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, welcomed the announcement during an Oct. 26 video conference organized by leading divestment proponents.

The Vatican and Pope Francis have become increasingly vocal about shifting investment funds from fossil fuels toward clean energy alternatives. In 2020, as part of the *Laudato Si'* Year, the Vatican released guidelines for Catholics to implement integral ecology and other actions outlined in the pope's encyclical.

"In very strong language, divestment was recommended," Father Kureethadam told the online conference. "Last year we announced the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. Among the *Laudato Si'* goals there's ecological economics and it mentioned the need to divest. So the Vatican is supporting this journey."

The priest called the task of reducing the use of highly polluting fossil fuels a "huge challenge" but one that was possible. A large majority of climate scientists have concluded that the burning of fossil fuels as a leading cause of climate change.

Changes were afoot during the year in two leading Catholic environmental groups.

The Catholic Climate Covenant announced in September that Aguto would be its new executive director, succeeding Dan Misleh, who moved into the role of founder. Misleh helped establish the organization in 2006 and continues to play a leading role in its work in the United States.

In addition, the Global Catholic Climate Movement became known as the *Laudato Si'* Movement in July.

Movement leaders said the change better reflects the work of the six-year-old worldwide network and its connection to prayerful action on environmental protection and climate change.

The new name easily translates into other languages as well because it incorporates the Franciscan phrase *Laudato Si'*, which is Italian for "praise be to you," Lorna Gold of Ireland, who chairs the organization's board of directors, said at the time.

2021: Looking back

Despite vaccines, beating COVID-19 has shown to be tougher than expected



CNS PHOTO | MARCO BELLO, REUTERS

A student at St. Lawrence Catholic School in North Miami Beach, Fla., wears a protective mask on the first day of school Aug. 18, 2021, amid the coronavirus pandemic.

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The year is ending pretty much the same way it started, with the United States wondering whether it will experience a surge in COVID-19 cases when the calendar changes numbers.

A year ago, the urge to gather with family and friends at Christmas went hand in hand with a big spike in coronavirus infections. This time, families are likely to come together once more, but now in the shadow of the recently discovered omicron variant. Early indications say the variant seems to cause mild symptoms but is more transmissible, although not enough is yet known as to how much damage it can do.

Vaccines, which were approved on an emergency basis in the latter part of 2020, became widely available in 2021, first to the most vulnerable demographics, then to the general population. By spring, the vaccines were OK'd for use by middle and high schoolers, and by fall they had been approved for use for children as young as age 5.

That doesn't mean, though, that everyone got in a line with their sleeves rolled up for an injection. Despite a famous photo of Pope Francis getting a jab, millions of Americans have refused to be vaccinated.

Some have cited religious reasons related to how the vaccines were developed. In the U.S., the three currently being administered are the Pfizer and Moderna two-shot vaccines and the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines did not use abortion-derived cell lines in developing or producing their vaccines, but they did in lab testing. The one-shot Johnson & Johnson used abortion-derived cell lines in testing and producing its vaccine.

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a statement last December, saying: "All vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such

vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive."

The doctrinal congregation added, "It should be emphasized, however, that the morally licit use of these types of vaccines, in the particular conditions that make it so, does not in itself constitute a legitimation, even indirect, of the practice of abortion, and necessarily assumes the opposition to this practice by those who make use of these vaccines."

Politics may be another reason some Americans aren't getting inoculated. A Sept. 28 report from the Kaiser Family Foundation said 90% of Democrats had been vaccinated, compared with 68% of Independents and just 58% of Republicans.

There are still others who do not oppose the vaccine itself, but do oppose being forced to get it, like under mandates the Biden administration has imposed on the nation's health care workers and on companies with 100 or more employees. Biden's mandates were to go into effect Dec. 3 for health care workers and Jan. 4 for businesses, but by early December a number of federal courts put them on hold for now.

Several city and state governments have instituted vaccine mandates of their own for health care workers, police, firefighters and all other first responders.

The holidays weren't the only cause for spikes in COVID cases in 2021. As warmer weather spread throughout most of the country, people seemed to be more optimistic that COVID had been successfully beaten back. But by late July, the delta variant had become the predominant strain of coronavirus in the United States, and death rates exceeded the 2,000-a-day mark — equal to what it had been early in '21 — despite the widespread availability of vaccines.

As the 2021 calendar turned to December, there had been more than 48 million cases of COVID diagnosed in the United States — that's one for every seven people in the nation — with 780,000 deaths, with the daily death toll just under 1,000, despite vaccination levels. World-

wide, there have been 262 million cases confirmed and more than 5.2 million deaths.

A total of 8.02 billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide, just a bit better than one for each person. In the United States, 468.23 million doses have been given, close to one-and-a-half doses per person.

With the rise of the omicron variant the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reiterated their recommendation Americans get their booster shot no matter which COVID vaccine they received.

While vaccines have only recently been approved for children ages 5-11, children under 5 still cannot get immunized for COVID.

The global vaccine disparity has led to complaints by the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization, meeting Oct. 4-7, about vaccine inequity between the world's richer nations and its poorer ones, noting that high-income countries had 35 times as many doses available to them than low-income countries.

The advisory group warned the imbalance could come back to haunt the wealthier nations — pointing to delta variant, which was first recognized in India and has surged in Europe and the U.S. And now comes omicron, first discovered in South Africa.

And as people continue to wonder what a "new normal" may look like, memories of the old normal are fast fading.

Two drugmakers have submitted COVID-fighting pills for federal approval. Some have expressed queasiness about being injected with a needle. Pills also promise easier transportation and longer shelf life than the liquid vaccines, some of which must be stored at very low temperatures and are at risk of being tossed if not used before an early expiration date.

That U.S. deaths remained stubbornly high despite the wide availability of vaccines, which has led many, including President Joe Biden, to call it "a pandemic of the unvaccinated."

Many high-profile Americans who made a name for themselves refusing and

refuting vaccinations, and sometimes even mask wearing, have ultimately died of COVID. The latest such casualty was Marcus Lamb, a televangelist and "prosperity gospel" preacher, and founding president of the Daystar Network, a collection of nearly 100 mostly low-power television stations across the country. He used his airwaves to tout conspiracy theories behind the virus and the vaccine.

The Pew Research Center did not ask about COVID-19 specifically, but COVID was the impetus behind a survey about the nature and cause of suffering, according to Greg Smith, a senior research associate at Pew.

A Pew survey released in late November said Americans largely blame random chance — along with people's own actions and the way society is structured — for human suffering, while relatively few believers blame God or voice doubts about the existence of God for this reason.

Asked if they thought suffering was a punishment from God, only 3% of Catholics thought "all or most" suffering could be ascribed to the Almighty. Among white Catholics, less than 1% thought so; no demographic or religious group or subgroup had a percentage this small. Meanwhile 16% of Catholics said "some" suffering was God's punishment, while 23% said "only a little," and a majority of 55% said "none" of it was God sending his wrath down on his creation.

In this poll, the margin of error for Catholics was plus or minus 4.3 percentage points; for white Catholics, the margin of error was 4.8 percentage points.

Smith noted that due to the pandemic, the Pew staff is still largely working from home, with only rare small-group in-person get-togethers. He added they expect to be back at their desks in January, although the omicron variant could change the equation.

The return-to-office reverse exodus has only marginally materialized, as cities' downtown hubs still lack the buzz of activity that was their hallmark two years ago.

And, as many continue to wonder what a "new normal" may look like, memories of the old normal are fast fading.

2021: Looking back

U.S. bishops stress need for Catholics to deepen understanding of Communion



CNS PHOTO | CHRIS ALUKA BERRY, REUTERS

Deacon Tony King distributes Communion at SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Atlanta Feb. 14, 2021.

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Communion was a big topic in the Catholic Church this year, after the U.S. bishops initiated a discussion about the sacrament at their June meeting and then overwhelmingly approved a statement on it five months later.

But in the months in between, there was plenty of speculation about what the statement might say, specifically about denying Communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion.

Ultimately, the document did not call out these Catholic political leaders. Instead, it highlighted the seriousness of the sacrament frequently described as a gift to the church.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, told the bishops Nov. 16 during their fall assembly in Baltimore that the statement, "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church," is addressed to all Catholics in the United States and "endeavors to explain the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the church."

The bishop, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Doctrine, which drafted the statement, also said this work was meant to be a theological contribution to the bishops' upcoming eucharistic revival "by providing a doctrinal resource for parishes, catechists and the faithful."

The eucharistic revival, which begins next year and will end with a National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in 2024, will feature eucharistic processions and other events of adoration and resources for parishes to increasing Catholics' understanding of what the Eucharist really means.

Part of the impetus for both the statement on the Eucharist and the eucharistic revival was a Pew study in the fall of 2019 that showed just 30% of Catholics understand the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

This study, which some have faulted for its wording, struck a nerve with many U.S. bishops, who described this lack of understanding as a catechetical crisis.

"This should be a wake-up call to all of us in the church," said Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron of Los Angeles, founder of the Catholic evangelization organization Word on Fire, soon after the survey was published.

John Grabowski, associate professor of moral theology and ethics at The Catholic University of America, told Catholic News Service this summer he hoped efforts by the bishops, including the planned eucharistic revival, "can move the needle in a significant way so that more than just one-third of Catholics in the United States recognize the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist."

He said he viewed the Pew survey as a way to ultimately help Catholics, because the results provide an opportunity for the church to respond.

A few months before the bishops' document was presented, Timothy O'Malley, director of education at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, told CNS: "If you pay attention to what the bishops are saying to recent revisions and outlines of drafts of the document, you don't see it 'being sort of political.'"

"This is the source and summit of our faith. It's the source and summit of our commitment to the world and to each other," he said about Communion.

And in its final form, the bishops' statement, which is full of references from Scripture, prayers of the church and Second Vatican Council documents, specifically references this "source and summit of the Christian life" description of the Eucharist from the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*).

The bishops' statement also notes that, as Catholics understand what the Eucharist means, they should more fully

participate in Mass and also reach out to serve those in need, citing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which says: "The Eucharist commits us to the poor."

Toward the end, the statement mentions how Catholics should show reverence in receiving the Eucharist and also recognize that if they have "knowingly and obstinately" rejected the doctrines of the church or its teaching on moral issues, they should refrain from receiving Communion because it is "likely to cause scandal for others."

This section, while pointing out the seriousness of receiving the sacrament, does not specifically say the bishops will deny Communion to public officials, a topic that gained momentum among some bishops after the election of President Joe Biden, the second Catholic to be elected president.

A working group of bishops formed right after Biden's election said there needed to be a document "addressed to all of the Catholic faithful on eucharistic coherence."

As speculation increased during the year about the possibility of Biden being denied Communion over his support of legal abortion, a reporter asked the president after his Oct. 29 meeting with Pope Francis if this was discussed.

"We just talked about the fact he was happy that I was a good Catholic, and I should keep receiving Communion," Biden responded.

The pope, during a flight from Bratislava, Slovakia, Sept. 15, was asked about the possibility of U.S. bishops denying Communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion.

Pope Francis said that while there is no question that "abortion is homicide," bishops must take a pastoral approach rather than wade into the political sphere.

His message echoed what Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the

Faith, told the bishops in a letter sent to them prior to their spring meeting.

Cardinal Ladaria urged the bishops 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."

During that June meeting, which took place virtually due to the pandemic, some bishops said a strong rebuke of Biden should be included in their Communion statement, while others warned that this would portray them as partisan.

Their more subdued discussion during the November meeting about the Communion document was likely due to the work the bishops had put into the document between June and November.

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori said the initial discussion about the Communion document was a valuable one that led the bishops to "what kind of a document we actually needed and wanted, and it emerged clearly, for me at least, that it was to be pastoral document."

The lack of intense debate about the document during the November meeting didn't surprise Bishop John E. Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, who saw it already "moving in that direction."

He said there was a desire among the bishops for unity and that their executive session before the public sessions gave them the chance to discuss and work things out among themselves.

Archbishop Lori said that even though the issue of possibly denying Communion to Catholic politicians was highlighted in the media, the bishops' statement was much broader.

"This had an eminently pastoral intent and it deals with the question of worthiness to receive holy Communion in a way that applies to all of us," he said.

Follow Zimmermann on Twitter: @carolmaczim

2021: Looking back

Abortion, religious liberty, vaccine mandate cases top busy 2021 for court



CNS PHOTO | TYLER ORSBURN

Pro-life advocates are seen near the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 1, 2021, the day justices heard oral arguments in a case about a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of gestation.

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — This past year was busy for the nation's high court, particularly with issues of interest to Catholics regarding abortion, religious liberty, COVID-19 vaccine mandates and the death penalty.

This fall, all eyes were particularly on the court with its two cases looking at abortion laws in Texas and Mississippi.

After hearing oral arguments in November, the court ruled Dec. 10 that a new Texas law that bans most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy can stay in effect but that abortion clinics could continue to challenge it.

And at the start of December, the court took up its biggest abortion case in decades, examining Mississippi's abortion law which bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. This case is seen as having the potential to upend the court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

During oral arguments, the majority of justices seemed willing to allow the Mississippi law, which has been blocked by a federal judge, but it was unclear if they would take this further and overturn *Roe*.

If the court ultimately sides with Mississippi, it could lay the groundwork for abortion restrictions from other states because it would be the first time the court would allow an abortion ban before the point of viability — when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own.

The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that states cannot restrict abortion before viability, at around 24 weeks.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Mississippi's Catholic dioceses of Jackson and Biloxi supported the state's law in amicus briefs.

As the arguments got underway Dec. 1, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said in a statement: "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."

But while several Catholic leaders have spoken in favor of dismantling *Roe v. Wade*, Catholics across the board have not. Last year, a survey by the Pew Research Center showed 68% of U.S. Catholics said *Roe* should not be overturned and 56% said abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

This divide on abortion, also apparent across the country, was on full display on the steps of the Supreme Court the day of the oral arguments in the Mississippi case when people were chanting, shouting or holding aloft signs with messages that either called abortion murder or said it was an essential right.

A ruling on that case is not expected until next summer.

On Dec. 13, the Supreme Court turned down two emergency requests from health care workers in New York seeking religious exemptions from the state's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The workers' appeal — that the mandate violated their constitutional right to freely exercise their religion — was rejected by a federal court in New York.

The high court had denied a similar appeal in October from health care workers in Maine that had been rejected by lower courts. In both of these decisions, Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch said they would have allowed religious exemptions.

The court looked at another case from Maine this year in its review of a school choice program for students in rural areas that excludes schools that offer religious instruction.

Most of the justices seemed to think the program was discriminatory and found fault with how state education officials determined just how religious a school was in order to consider if the school could participate in the tuition program.

The state program remains in place because it had been upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit.

In a similar case, *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, the Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that states are not required to

subsidize private education, but they also can't exclude religious schools from receiving tuition funding simply because they are religious.

The USCCB praised that ruling, saying it means "that religious persons and organizations can, like everyone else, participate in government programs that are open to all."

The Maine case, *Carson v. Makin*, takes the Montana decision a step further, asking if the state can prevent students from using state funds to attend schools that provide religious instruction.

A ruling is expected in the summer and it could have a significant impact on tuition aid for religious schools.

In the court's examination of the death penalty this year, it also specifically focused on the role of chaplains in the execution chamber.

The plea to allow spiritual advisers to pray aloud with death-row inmates or place hands on them in prayer during executions faced an uphill battle as some of the justices questioned if this would open up other requests or impose a safety risk.

The nation's high court has looked at spiritual advisers accompanying inmates during executions four times in recent years with differing opinions.

Several spiritual advisers from different faith traditions joined an amicus brief in this case filed by the American Civil Liberties Union. The brief included Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Me-daille, who is a longtime opponent of the death penalty; Sister Barbara Battista, a Sister of Providence of St. Mary of the Woods in Indiana; and Benedictine Father Mark O'Keefe.

They said their role was "not simply to stand by mutely, but to minister to the prisoner as he meets death, providing spiritual comfort and a final opportunity for the individual to engage with his faith at the most critical time."

The USCCB similarly filed an amicus brief joined by the Texas Catholic Conference that said the role of spiritual advisers to prisoners "is of particularly grave importance at the moment of death."

In the summer, when the court handed down decisions from the previous term, one of its bigger decisions said a Catholic agency should not have been excluded from Philadelphia's foster care program for not accepting same-sex couples as foster parents.

Although the court said Philadelphia's anti-discrimination laws put an unfair burden on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Catholic Social Services, it did not issue a sweeping ruling on religious rights or overturn a previous decision involving religious liberty.

The case centered on the city of Philadelphia in 2018 suspending a contract with the Catholic agency that allowed it to provide foster care placement. The city excluded the agency because of its policy of not placing children with same-sex couples or unmarried couples because these unions go against church teaching on traditional marriage.

A year later the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit sided with the city, calling the agency's policies discriminatory.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who wrote the opinion for the unanimous decision in *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, said the service agency "seeks only an accommodation that will allow it to continue serving the children of Philadelphia in a manner consistent with its religious beliefs; it does not seek to impose those beliefs on anyone else."

He also said the city's actions of excluding the agency burdened its "religious exercise by putting it to the choice of curtailing its mission or approving relationships inconsistent with its beliefs."

Richard Garnett, law school professor at the University of Notre Dame and director of the university's Program on Church, State and Society, said the ruling will have a significant impact.

He called it "striking, and telling, that the court's more liberal justices" joined this decision, which he said points out that "respect for religious freedom should not be a partisan or left-right issue."

Follow Zimmermann on Twitter:
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COURTESY

Father Laurent Mvondo, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Coleman and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Winters, celebrated the 40th anniversary of his priesthood Dec. 5, 2021, at Sacred Heart Parish in Coleman.



COURTESY

Some of the youth of St. Patrick's Parish in Brady participated in the Heart of Texas Christmas Parade Dec. 11, along with coordinators of youth ministry Felix and Roxanne Gomez, Cindy Willmann, and Michael and Ingrid McDonald. The float is shown in the photo on the right.



ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sister Mary Elijah Guingon, OCarm, is one of the newest residents of the community at Our Lady of Grace Carmelite Monastery in Christoval. Sister Mary Elijah was invested on Nov. 21, 2021 (photo at left) and professed her simple vows on Dec. 8, 2021.



ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY



The participants of St. Margaret of Scotland Parish in San Angelo's Christmas pageant, Dec. 15, 2021.

COURTESY

A member of the crowd sits in rapt attention to Bishop Michael Sis during the 5:00 a.m. Misa de Gallo at St. Mary Parish in Odessa, Dec. 18, 2021.



COURTESY



COURTESY



COURTESY

The Guadalupanas from St. Ann Parish in Sonora recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of the organization's 1981 founding.

Beginning a new year by bringing about the family of God

New Year's celebrations can be a mixed experience.

On one hand, the holidays have brought us opportunities to be renewed in our relationships with family and friends. On the other hand, secular media can present this sort of "new year, new you" approach that may not really jive with our actual experiences.

We can feel this pressure for Jan. 1 to be a miraculous reset; all the struggles and sufferings of the previous year automatically at midnight lose their impact in our lives.

As we head into 2022, I wonder if this pressure is even more profound. We are carrying large individual and communal burdens into the new year.

Sister Josephine Garrett, CSFN
Catholic News Service

Faith Alive

How do we remain open to God's desire to make all things new and the inherent invitation in a new year to begin anew, and also be realistic about the fact that at the stroke of midnight our struggles will not automatically diminish?

I believe the answer is by looking to

the struggles, sufferings and heavy burdens that we are carrying with us over the finish line of 2021 and finding in them God's invitation.

Some of us are entering 2022 as COVID-19 long-haulers. Some of us are entering 2022 with more pronounced mental health struggles than before. Some of us need to be renewed in our physical health as our bodies manifest the stresses of the past two years.

Some of us are carrying the painful burdens connected to being Black or brown, American and Catholic, pains that have only increased over the past two years. Some of us, after the pandemic, have reprioritized family life.

Some of us have become disillusioned

with the world of "Catholic fame" and this grace-filled disillusionment has allowed us to set our sights back on the primacy of the present moment and context in which we find ourselves as the stuff of our sanctification and having the authority to bring about God's justice, love and peace.

Some of us have reached new horizons in our prayer and relationship with God, yet some of us have strayed from prayer and into a life of subtle pride and self-sufficiency, which is the fruit of a life lacking prayer.

Is there a thematic invitation to not only begin anew but strive for the newness that is the promise of the kingdom

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GRN RADIO PROGRAM SCHEDULE

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

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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

Thursday - *Face to Face* - Fr. Hezekias Carnazzo

Friday - *Back to the Father* - Dave Palmer

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St. Anthony of Egypt’s long life in the desert

Anthony was born in 251 in a small village in upper Egypt, and was living a life of ease and luxury. His parents were wealthy landowners and Christians. When he was about 18 or 20, his parents died and left him their large estate and a younger sister to care for.

One day in church, Anthony heard the words from the Gospel of Matthew (19:21): “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor ... then come, follow me.” Jenny Schroedel writes in the *Book of Saints* that Anthony felt those words were spoken directly to him. He sold all of his inheritance, placed his sister in the care of some pious women and retreated to the Libyan desert.

Malcolm Day explained in *A Treasury of Saints* that Anthony yearned to live a life that would imitate Christ in the wilderness. He became the disciple of a local hermit, but then retreated farther into the desert and lived a mostly solitary life for the next several years.

To emulate Christ, Anthony ate only after sunset — just some bread with salt and water to drink. He sometimes did not eat for three or four days. He spent his days in prayer, reading, and manual labor, cultivating a garden, and weaving mats, and became a model of humility, charity, and prayerfulness.

Although Anthony became committed to the solitary life, his was not an isolated existence. He was ac-



Mary Lou Gibson
Speaking of Saints

cessible to other hermits and to visitors. Bernard Bangley writes in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that many came to him for spiritual direction and advice. The emperor Constantine wrote requesting his prayers. His “words of wisdom” were preserved and were later published in “Sayings of the Desert Fathers” in Thomas Merton’s *Wisdom of the Desert*.

After about 20 years, Anthony came down from his mountain abode and founded his first monastery in the Fayum, a collection of hermits’ huts. Some years later he founded a monastery called Pispir in the desert. This scattered group of cells were the world’s first suggestion of a monastery.

Some years later, Anthony left the desert and made two visits to Alexandria to encourage the local church in a time of persecution. In 355, he journeyed to Alex-

andria to refute the Arians who were continuing to deny the divinity of Christ in defiance of the teaching of the Council of Nicaea (325). Richard McBrien writes in *Lives of the Saints* that he attracted crowds of faithful and pagans alike to his preaching, but he always returned to the desert from where he drew his strength.

As Anthony became older, he welcomed pilgrims who came to him seeking advice. His spiritual teaching has come down in a number of surviving letters. Paul Burns writes in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that he emerges as above all a teacher of charity, with strictness of principle softened by gentleness of application, and saw relationships with others as the key to the spiritual life.

St. Athanasius knew Anthony and wrote his biography, which became the most popular book in medieval monasteries, thereby making him the inspiration for countless monks.

Anthony died in 356 at the age of 105 after having lived an amazing 85 years in the desert. His feast day is January 17. He is known as the founder of monasticism and is revered in the East as the “first master of the desert and the pinnacle of holy monks.”

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

An abortion ...

The division that exists in our country today is greater than any time since our Civil War. It is precisely what Satan wants because it is exactly the opposite of what God wants for all his creations. While political, racial, and sexual division has been a part of America since its inception, there are no divergent viewpoints more significant than those regarding the aborting of children in their mother’s womb. In the *Roe vs Wade* Supreme Court decision it was declared that a woman had the “right” to terminate her pregnancy based on the spurious argument that it was subsumed under her right to “privacy.” This was just the beginning of deceptive arguments used to justify ending the life of a child. The “pro-killing” side has consistently based their rationale on a series of statements that appear to be quite solid and supportable on the surface but quickly crumble in the face of logic. There are many other examples.

“We ARE ... pro-choice!” is the slogan that is shouted at rallies to support child killings all across the country. In a nation that was founded on the freedom to choose one’s religion, form of government, and leaders, to deny someone else’s right to choose how they will live and what they will do seems to be completely anti-American ... but is it? Clearly not. A society cannot exist unless it puts restrictions on what its members can do or else there will be total chaos. It is what laws are all about, and they are countless. In the Harvard Law Library alone, there are more than two million volumes dedicated to the practice of law. Laws that restrict what someone can “choose” to do, thereby protecting others, like not allowing someone to drive 100 mph in a school zone. Hubert Humphrey once said, “the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped.” Years earlier, Pearl S. Buck wrote, “The test of a civilization is in the way that it cares for its helpless members.” St. Pope John Paul II forewarned that “a nation that kills its own children has no future.”

Those who support killing babies say that “A woman has a right to do whatever she wants with her own body!” It would seem to be something so basic that anyone who challenged it would have to be stupid, a woman hater, or both. But is it true? No, it isn’t. As a simple example, why can a man mow his lawn shirtless on a hot summer day but it is against the law for a woman to do that in all but a few communities? It is, after all, her body. One person’s rights end when they violate the rights of another or “community standards.” Killing someone is the ultimate violation.

“Don’t impose your religious beliefs on me!” is often used by pro-killing advocates, but does the “right to life” phrase come from a religious book? No, it comes from the American Declaration of Independence, which states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” The killing of children is a civil rights issue and is highly discriminatory. The majority of children who are killed in the womb are females and minorities! Keeping Black children from being born was an important goal of Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, who wrote that her goal was “the gradual suppression, elimination and eventual extinction, of defective stocks — those human weeds which threaten the blooming of the finest flowers of American civilization.” She enlisted Black ministers in her cause and wrote, “We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious



James R. Sulliman, PhD

members.” No organization “ends the life” of more children each year than the organization that Sanger founded: Planned Parenthood.

Another mantra of those in favor of killing children is “The right to have an abortion is a women’s health issue!” There is almost no situation where an abortion is necessary to save the life of the mother, and when there is, it is referred to as an “indirect abortion,” an unintended consequence of the “double effect.” For example, if the breaks fail on a bus with 45 children on it as it is going down a steep mountain road, the driver has a choice to make: either he goes off the cliff on the right side and everyone dies or he cuts across the left side and tries to slow the bus down by running it into the side of the mountain. As he heads towards the mountain, a guy riding a motorcycle is suddenly in his path. There is no way to avoid him ... the man’s death is an unintended consequence of saving children’s lives. To characterize the killing of a child as a “health care” procedure is preposterous. Perhaps, under a “Planned Parenthood health care system” no one would ever die from cancer again! The “cure” would be to immediately kill everyone who was first diagnosed with it. “Health care” few would accept.

Although pro-life advocates find abortions unacceptable and Planned Parenthood reprehensible, there is one statement on which the two strongly divided sides can find unity: “An abortion ends the life of a child after it has begun.” Pro-abortionists would be likely to dispute such a radical claim because it is so obviously a pro-life statement. They would be surprised to learn that the quote is from a Planned Parenthood publication in 1963, ten years before abortions became legal!

One might argue that *Roe vs Wade* is discriminatory. The Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004 views an embryo or fetus in utero as a legal victim if they are injured or killed. Further, the law describes the unborn child as “a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, at any stage of development, who is carried in the womb.” While this federal law applies only to crimes by or against federal employees, on federal properties, or federal offenses, there are 38 states that also protect the unborn child against harm, homicide, and feticide. In our country, only mothers have been given the “right” to kill their child.

Catholics must protect the innocent. If human life is compromised in the name of self-will, one’s free will will soon be reversed. Selfishness will not be tolerated by God, much less rewarded. Our country has embraced many perversions of the only laws that matter — God’s laws — especially this one: “You shall not kill” (Ex 20:13).

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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.

GARRETT

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contained in all that we will carry with us into the new year?

I believe there is. We sometimes struggle with the two-world stance that is required of a Catholic. Catholics must stand with a foot in the temporal world and with a foot in eternity.

We cannot place both our feet in whatever matter has garnered our attention over the past two years; be it the pandemic, cries for justice, political strife, family dynamics or whatever it has been for you. We will do ourselves a grave injustice.

If we are to begin anew this year, we must take a proper stance in all that we are facing as individuals and as a community of God's children.

One foot in the world, which is full of brokenness, and one in eternity, which is the source of constant conversion and renewal, even as we struggle. This renewal is always about bringing about the family of God.

For example, what did the pandemic prove to us? That we are painfully interconnected. As Pope Benedict XVI once said, "No one sins alone. No one is saved alone."

Likewise, cries for social justice over the past two years have been filled with the same message.

Black or brown skin, and the ethnicities and heritages that are paired with that skin, does not lessen the right of the individual to be a full heir of the kingdom of God and to proclaim to the church, as "servant of God" Sister Thea Bowman once said, "I bring myself, my Black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to become."

In humility, I would add; because this is my family; this church is as much my family as the next person's. We could take many other matters we will carry across the line from 2021 to 2022, and upon reflection, find at their root a matter of the family of God.

Whatever it is you are called to be renewed in with this coming year — physically, mentally or spiritually — let it be for and about encounter. To aid you in increasing your capacity to show up in the family of God, bringing your whole self as a gift to the family of God, come what may; in the midst of struggles and also joys.

We know that it is only through a sincere gift of ourselves that we will know ourselves, and it is only in this dimension of gift, as Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron once called it, that the family of God, which we long for, will be built up and realized.

The way we begin anew is to, in all things, in all our resolutions, keep our eyes fixed on the glory of the coming of the Lord and the building up of God's family in Christ.

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Sister Josephine Garrett is a Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth and a licensed counselor.

What are the laity supposed to be?

Back in the 1950s, Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, began to articulate a vision that was largely ratified at the Second Vatican Council. She said that the prevailing notion of a "commandments spirituality" for the laity and a "counsels spirituality" for the clergy was dysfunctional. She was referencing the standard view of the period that the laity were called to a kind of least common denominator life of obeying the ten commandments—that is to say, avoiding the most fundamental violations of love and justice—whereas priests and religious were called to a heroic life of following the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Lay people were ordinary players, and the clergy were spiritual athletes. To all of this, Dorothy Day said a rather emphatic no. Every baptized person, she insisted, was summoned to heroic sanctity—which is to say, the practice of both the commandments and the counsels.

As I say, Vatican II, in its doctrine on the universal call to holiness, endorsed this notion. Though the Council Fathers taught that there is a substantial difference between the manner in which clergy and laity incorporate poverty, chastity, and obedience, they clearly instructed all followers of Christ to seek real sanctity by incorporating those ideals. So, what would this look like? Let us take poverty first. Though the laity are not, at least typically, summoned to the sort of radical poverty adopted by, say, a Trappist monk, they are indeed supposed to practice a real detachment from the goods of the world, precisely for the sake of their mission on behalf of the world. Unless a lay person has interior freedom from an addiction to wealth, power, pleasure, rank, honor, etc., she cannot follow the will of God as she ought. Only when the woman at the well put down her water jug, only when she stopped seeking to quench her thirst from the water of the world’s pleasures, was she able to evangelize (Jn 4). Similarly, only when a baptized person today liberates himself from an addiction to money, authority, or good feelings is he ready to become the saint God wants



Bishop Robert Barron

Word on Fire Ministries

him to be. So, poverty, in the sense of detachment, is essential to the holiness of the laity.

Chastity, the second of the evangelical counsels, is also crucial to lay spirituality. To be sure, though the way that the clergy and religious practice chastity — namely, as celibates — is unique to them, the virtue itself is just as applicable to the laity. For chastity simply means sexual uprightness or a rightly ordered sexuality. And this implies bringing one’s sexual life under the aegis of love. As Thomas Aquinas taught, love is not a feeling, but rather an act of the will, more precisely, willing the good of the other. It is the ecstatic act by which we break free from the ego, whose gravitational pull wants to draw everything to itself. Like the drive to eat and to drink, sex is a passion related to life itself, which is why it is so powerful and thus so spiritually dangerous, so liable to draw everything and everybody under its control. Notice how the church’s teaching that sex belongs within the context of marriage is meant to hold off this negative tendency. In saying that our sexuality should be subordinated to unity (the radical devotion to one’s spouse) and procreation (the equally radical devotion to one’s children), the church is endeavoring to bring our sex lives completely under the umbrella of love. A disordered sexuality is a deeply destabilizing force within a person, which, in time, brings him off-kilter to love.

Finally, the laity are meant to practice obedience, again not in the manner of religious, but in a manner dis-

inctive to the lay state. This is a willingness to follow, not the voice of one’s own ego, but the higher voice of God, to listen (obedire in Latin) to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I have spoken often before of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s distinction between the ego-drama (written, produced, directed by, and starring oneself) and the theodrama (written, produced, and directed by God). We might say that the entire point of the spiritual life is to break free of the former so as to embrace the latter. Most of us sinners, most of the time, are preoccupied with our own wealth, success, career plans, and personal pleasure. To obey God is to break out of those soul-killing preoccupations and hear the voice of the Shepherd.

Catholics make up around twenty-five percent of our country. Imagine what would happen if, overnight, every Catholic commenced to live in radical detachment from the goods of the world. How dramatically politics, economics, and the culture would change for the better. Imagine what our country would be like if, today, every Catholic resolved to live chastely. We would make an enormous dent in the pornography business; human trafficking would be dramatically reduced; families would be significantly strengthened; abortions would appreciably decrease. And picture what our country would be like if, right now, every Catholic decided to live in obedience to the voice of God. How much of the suffering caused by self-preoccupation would be diminished!

What I am describing in this article is, once again, part of the great Vatican II teaching on the universal call to holiness. Priests and bishops are meant, the Council Fathers taught, to teach and to sanctify the laity who, in turn, are to sanctify the secular order, bringing Christ into politics, finance, entertainment, business, teaching, journalism, etc. And they do so precisely by embracing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

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

Reasons why people leave their churches

Why are so many people leaving their churches? There is no one answer to that question. People are complex. Faith is complex. The issues are complex.

Looking at the question, it can be helpful to distinguish among a number of groups. The Nones, the Dones, the Spiritual-but-not-Religious, the Indifferent, the Angry, and the Marginalized. While there is some overlap among these groups, each has its own set of issues with the church.

The Nones are those who refuse to identify with any religion or faith. Asked on a census form, “What is your faith or religion?”, they answer “none.” Theirs is an agnostic stance. They are not necessarily atheistic or hostile to faith, religion, and the churches. Rather, it’s that at this time in their lives they refuse to identify themselves with any explicit faith or church. Some are humble about it, others arrogant; in the end, the stance is the same, an agnosticism about religion and faith.

The Dones are those who, in their own words, are done with religion and often with explicit faith as well. Done with it! They can consider themselves done for any number of reasons, from having had a bad experience with religion growing up, to anger at the church, to the intoxicating power of a culture that can seemingly offer itself as a sufficient substitute for religion. They have been there, considered religion, and moved on.

The Spiritual-but-not-Religious are those who believe in the value of spirituality but not of any church. They have chosen to pursue a spiritual path outside of any ecclesial community, believing that (at least for them) the spiritual journey is best done outside of organized religion. There can be many reasons for this kind of attitude, not least the overpowering ethos of individuality and personal freedom pervading our culture. In one’s faith journey today, people prefer to trust only their own search and experience.

The Indifferent are just that, indifferent to religion



Father Ron Rolheiser

(while perhaps still nursing some faith). There can be a myriad of reasons why these folks feel indifferent to religion and perhaps also to faith. Our culture, for all its goodness, is also a powerful narcotic that can, for most of the years of our lives, swallow us whole in terms of anesthetizing our religious instincts and having us believe in what Charles Taylor calls a self-sufficient humanism. For long periods of our lives, our world can *seem* enough for us, and while this is the case, indifference to religion can be a real option.

The Angry are those who for reasons they can name, no longer go to church. Any number of causes can be at play here — clerical sexual abuse, the church’s treatment of women, racism, the church’s failure to live out the gospels credibly, their own church’s involvement or non-involvement in politics, a bad history with their church, a bad pastor, or personal mistreatment in a pastoral situation. Persons inside this group sometimes end up seeking a new ecclesial home inside another denomination, but many just stay at home on a Sunday morning.

The Marginalized are those who feel themselves outside the understanding, empathy, and spiritual scope of the churches. This includes everyone from many inside the LGBTQ community, to the homeless on our streets, to countless thousands who feel (consciously or unconsciously) that the messiness of their lives somehow ex-

cludes them from ecclesial community. They feel like outcasts to religion and our churches.

People are leaving their churches for a multitude of reasons and this begs some further questions. When people are leaving their churches, what actually are they leaving? And, where are they going, if anywhere?

In a recent book, *After Evangelicalism, The Path to a New Christianity*, David Gushee asks this question about those leaving their churches. Are they clear on what they are actually leaving? Do they know whether they are leaving church, leaving their denominations, leaving the faith, leaving Jesus, or just leaving?

More importantly, he asks, what will be their end-game? Will they end up in another denomination, or as Spiritual-but-not-Religious, or as agnostic, or just as disillusioned?

Perhaps that question is not so important for the Nones, the Dones, the Spiritual-but-not-Religious, the Indifferent, and for many of the Marginalized — but it is for the Angry, for those who feel alienated from their churches. Where do you go when anger keeps you away from your family table? Do you search for a more like-minded family? Do you give up on finding a family table? Do you just stay home on a Sunday morning? Are you okay to go to your deathbed still angry? Are you content to remain disillusioned?

Leaving church: two questions stare us in the face. Why are more and more people leaving their churches or simply not going to them? And, what’s the religious future of those who no longer go to church? The former is a question for the churches themselves, the latter a question to ponder for those no longer going to church.

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It's Christmas, give Jesus



Hosffman Ospino
Catholic News Service

Journeying Together

As far as memory and historical records go, gift-giving has been part of every culture. There is something ingrained in our human nature that prompts us to be generous and give.

In the Scriptures we find classic examples of people bringing gifts to others. The Arabian Queen of Sheba came to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem bringing "camels bearing spices, a large amount of gold and precious stones" (1 Kgs 10:2).

A most popular story in the New Testament about bringing gifts is that of the Magi visiting the newborn Jesus: "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh" (Mt 2:11).

Why do people give? We could answer this question in many ways.

People give because they love. Others like to please their friends and loved ones. Others give as a sign of gratitude. Others want to honor someone's dignity. Others give because they expect something in return. I bet you

can name a few other reasons.

It is wonderful that Christmas is perceived in our social imagination as the season of giving. I think it is. After all, it is a time of the year in which we remember God's most generous gift to humanity: Jesus, the savior.

We must be cautious, nonetheless. The word "season" is used in our society too loosely, often in association with rather arbitrary marketing strategies. Also, the idea of "giving" is often reduced to consumeristic practices.

Catholics and other Christians really need to reclaim the use of those two categories: season and giving. This is the least we can do if we want to preserve the religious dimension of Christmas.

Abandonar la iglesia

¿Por qué hay tanta gente que abandona sus iglesias? No hay una única respuesta a esta pregunta. La gente es compleja. La fe es compleja. Los problemas son complejos.

Al considerar la pregunta, puede ser útil distinguir entre varios grupos. Los ningunos, los acabados, los espirituales-pero-no-religiosos, los indiferentes, los airados y los marginados. Aunque hay alguno imbricado entre estos grupos, cada uno tiene su propia serie de problemas con la iglesia.

Los ningunos son aquellos que rehúsan identificarse con alguna religión o fe. Preguntados en un formulario de censo ¿cuál es tu fe o religión?, responden: “ninguna”. La suya es una postura agnóstica. No son necesariamente ateos ni hostiles a la fe, la religión y las iglesias. Más bien es que, en este momento de sus vidas, rehúsan identificarse con alguna fe o iglesia explícitas. Algunos son humildes en relación a esto, otros arrogantes; al fin, la postura es la misma: un agnosticismo sobre la religión y la fe.

Los acabados son aquellos que, en sus propias palabras, están cansados de la religión y frecuentemente de la fe explícita también. Acabados con ella. Pueden considerarse acabados por diversas razones, desde haber tenido una mala experiencia con la religión mientras crecían, hasta enfado contra la iglesia, hasta el intoxicante poder de una cultura que puede ofrecerse aparentemente como un sustituto suficiente de la religión. Han estado ahí, han considerado la religión y han continuado adelante.

Los espirituales-pero-no-religiosos son aquellos que creen en el valor de la espiritualidad pero no de alguna iglesia. Han optado por seguir un camino espiritual fuera de cualquier comunidad eclesial, creyendo que (al menos para ellos) el camino espiritual lo mejor es hacerlo fuera de la religión organizada. Puede haber muchas razones para esta clase de actitud, sobre todo la irresistible característica de la individualidad y la libertad personal que impregna nuestra cultura. Hoy, en el camino de la fe de uno, la gente prefiere confiar sólo en su propia búsqueda y experiencia.

Los indiferentes son sólo eso, indiferentes a la religión (mientras quizás aún estén alimentando alguna fe). Puede haber miles de razones por las que estas personas se sienten indiferentes a la religión y quizás también a la fe. Nuestra cultura, a pesar de toda su bondad, es también un poderoso narcótico que, durante el mayor número de años de nuestra vida, puede engullirnos enteros en términos de anestesiar nuestros instintos religiosos y hacernos creer en lo que Charles Taylor llama un humanismo autosuficiente. Durante largos periodos de nuestras vidas, nuestro mundo puede *parecer* suficiente para nosotros y, mientras este es el caso, la indiferencia a la religión puede ser una opción real.

Los airados son aquellos que, por razones que pueden señalar, ya no van a la iglesia. Cualquier número de causas puede estar en juego aquí: abuso sexual del clero, el trato a las mujeres por parte de la iglesia, el racismo, el fracaso de la iglesia a vivir la credibilidad de los evangelios, el envolvim-



Padre Ron Rolheiser

miento o no-envolvimiento de su propia iglesia en la política, una historia negativa con su iglesia, un mal pastor, o el maltrato personal en una situación pastoral. Las personas que están en este grupo a veces acaban buscando un nuevo hogar eclesial en otra denominación, pero muchas sencillamente se quedan en casa la mañana del domingo.

Los marginados son aquellos que se sienten fuera de la comprensión, la empatía y la finalidad espiritual de las iglesias. Esto incluye a cada uno de los muchos que están dentro de la comunidad LGBTQ, a los sin techo de nuestras calles, a incontables miles que sienten (consciente o inconscientemente) que la desorganización de sus vidas les excluye de alguna manera de la comunidad eclesial. Se sienten proscritos de la religión y de nuestras iglesias.

La gente está abandonando sus iglesias por muchas razones, y esto pide algunas preguntas más. Cuando la gente abandona sus iglesias, ¿qué está abandonando de hecho? Y ¿a dónde van, si es que van a alguna parte?

En un libro reciente, *Después del evangelismo: el camino hacia un nuevo cristianismo*, David Gushee hace esta pregunta sobre aquellos que abandonan sus iglesias. ¿Tienen claro lo que de hecho están abandonando? ¿Saben si abandonan la Iglesia, si abandonan sus denominaciones, si abandonan la fe, si abandonan a Jesús, o si abandonan, sin más?

Más importantemente, pregunta: ¿cómo finalizará eso? ¿Acabarán en otra denominación, o como espirituales-pero-no-religiosos, o como agnósticos, o solo como desilusionados?

Quizás esa cuestión no sea tan importante para los ningunos, los acabados, los espirituales-pero-no-religiosos, los indiferentes y para muchos de los marginados; pero sí es para los airados, para aquellos que se sienten alienados de parte de sus iglesias. ¿Adónde vais cuando la ira os mantiene lejos de vuestra mesa familiar? ¿Buscáis una familia de mentalidad más afín? ¿Renunciáis a encontrar una mesa familiar? ¿Permanecéis en casa la mañana del domingo? ¿Estáis de acuerdo en ir al lecho de muerte estando aún airados? ¿Estáis contentos de permanecer desilusionados?

Abandonar la Iglesia: dos preguntas nos saltan a la vista. ¿Por qué hay más y más gente que abandona sus iglesias o, simplemente, no van a ellas? Y ¿cuál es el futuro religioso de aquellos que ya no van a la iglesia? La primera es una pregunta para las iglesias mismas, la segunda es una pregunta para examinar a aquellos que ya no van a la iglesia.

Es Navidad, Jesús es el mejor regalo

Según nos alcanza la memoria y basados en lo que sabemos de la historia, el dar regalos ha sido parte de la experiencia de todas las culturas. Hay algo especial en nuestra naturaleza humana que nos impulsa a ser generosos y a dar.

En las sagradas Escrituras encontramos ejemplos clásicos de personas llevando regalos a otras. La reina de Sabá, procedente de Arabia, vino a visitar al rey Salomón en Jerusalén y trajo consigo "camellos cargados de perfumes, de muchísimo oro y de piedras preciosas" (1 Re 10:2).

Una historia muy popular en el Nuevo Testamento que habla de dar regalos es la de los sabios de oriente que vinieron a visitar a Jesús recién nacido: "Abriendo sus cofres, le ofrecieron dones, oro, incienso y mirra" (Mt 2:11).

¿Por qué las personas dan? Podemos responder esta pregunta de muchas maneras.

La gente da porque ama. Otros dan porque quieren complacer a sus amigos y seres queridos. Algunos dan en señal de gratitud. Otros quieren enaltecer la dignidad de alguien. Unos cuantos dan porque esperan algo. Seguramente ustedes pueden nombrar otras razones.

Qué hermoso es que la Navidad sea percibida en nuestro imaginario social como un tiempo para dar. Ciertamente lo es. Después de todo, es un tiempo del año en el que recordamos el regalo más generoso que Dios le ha concedido a la humanidad: Jesús, el salvador.

Sin embargo, tenemos que tener cuidado. La expresión "tiempo de Navidad" se usa en nuestra sociedad muy ligeramente, y con frecuencia asociado con estrategias arbitrarias de mercadeo. Al mismo tiempo, la idea de "dar" usualmente se reduce a prácticas consumistas.

Los católicos y otros cristianos realmente necesitamos volver a hacer nuestras esas dos categorías: tiempo de Navidad y dar. Es lo mínimo que podemos hacer si queremos preservar la dimensión religiosa de la Navidad.

Durante este tiempo del año escuchamos con frecuencia a muchos cristianos preocupados en cuanto a lo que se considera una "guerra contra la Navidad."

Al leer y escuchar lo que estas personas dicen sobre ello, da la impresión de que hay alguien en algún lugar -- individuos, grupos, organizaciones -- haciendo todo lo posible para que no haya Navidad.

Es posible que exista algo de verdad en la preocupación. No podemos negar los vientos de secularización que soplan de manera



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Caminando Juntos

rampante en nuestra sociedad, muchas veces con un ímpetu activista.

Sin embargo, creo que si hay una guerra, es más un conflicto interno: Nosotros como cristianos no estamos haciendo lo suficiente para celebrar Navidad con un espíritu religioso junto con nuestras familias, amigos y comunidades de fe.

Quiero proponer que al entrar en el tiempo de Navidad realmente nos propongamos hacer algo que como creyentes es fundamental e innegociable: dar a Jesús como regalo.

He aquí dos maneras sencillas en las que podemos dar a Jesús como regalo durante la Navidad, asegurándonos de que este tiempo se mantenga enfocado en nuestro salvador.

Primero, hagamos nuestra la Navidad celebrando este tiempo con nuestras familias y amigos durante el tiempo litúrgico destinado para ello. El tiempo litúrgico de Navidad comienza el 25 de diciembre y culmina con la fiesta del Bautismo del Señor.

No deja de sorprender que exactamente cuando comienza el tiempo de Navidad, muchas personas dejan de cantar villancicos, tiran las decoraciones, dejan de dar regalos y de alguna manera paran de hablar de Jesús. Los católicos podemos un mejor trabajo en este sentido.

Segundo, manteniendo vivo el espíritu de generosidad, demos algo que invite a los demás a entrar en una relación más cercana con Jesucristo. En otras palabras, demos algo que tenga un sentido religioso más explícito y se enfoque en Jesús.

Regalemos una Biblia, un libro de teología o espiritualidad, un objeto religioso, quizás un ícono. Escribamos una carta o un poema sobre Jesús. Invitemos a nuestros hijos o nietos a que dibujen algo sobre la vida de Jesús. Luego compartamos esto como regalo.

Es Navidad, un tiempo para ser generosos y para celebrar la generosidad de Dios. Jesús es el mejor regalo.

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Papa lanza proceso sinodal para discernir llamado del Espíritu Santo

Por Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

Basándose en los principios rectores de su papado, el papa Francisco invitó este año a los católicos — tanto aquellos en la corriente principal de la vida de la iglesia como aquellos en los márgenes — a expresar sus sueños, ideas, y preocupaciones en preparación para el Sínodo de los Obispos en 2023.

La invitación del Santo Padre a discernir un camino para adelante para la iglesia se deriva de su creencia de que el Espíritu Santo inspira a todos sus miembros a ser discípulos misioneros, compartiendo creencias cristianas fundamentales al salir al mundo.

El papa inauguró formalmente el

proceso sinodal en el Vaticano en un evento del 9 al 10 de octubre. El mismo fue inaugurado en diócesis en todo el mundo el 16 y 17 de octubre.

Bajo el tema "Por una Iglesia sinodal: Comunión, participación, y misión", el Sumo Pontífice ha llamado a la iglesia a practicar la sinodalidad, es decir, no solo a oír sino a escucharse unos a otros en todas las facetas de la vida de la iglesia, explicaron coordinadores del esfuerzo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos.

La inauguración de octubre "es solo el primer paso en un proceso más amplio y a largo plazo para incorporar realmente los frutos del Vaticano II y convertirnos en una iglesia sinodal", expresó Julia McStravog, ex empleada de la USCCB que es

consultora de los obispos en el proceso.

"Vamos a tener consultas. También será un proceso de aprendizaje sobre cómo participar realmente de una manera sinodal", explicó McStravog.

El lanzamiento comenzó un proceso de dos años que culminará en el Sínodo de los Obispos en octubre de 2023. Se espera que el sínodo adopte un documento final que guíe el desarrollo continuo de una iglesia sinodal hacia el futuro.

El llamado del Sumo Pontífice a la sinodalidad tiene sus raíces en su profunda participación como cardenal en 2007, en la redacción de un documento sobre la vida de la iglesia para el CELAM, un consejo episcopal latinoamericano que se reunió en Aparecida, Brasil. El documento emitió repetidos llamados a una "misión continen-

tal", una iglesia que salga en busca de formas de anunciar el Evangelio a todos.

En la primera fase que está en marcha, las diócesis y parroquias han comenzado a convocar debates, o consultas, en las que se ha invitado a participar a personas de toda la iglesia. Estas sesiones de escucha continuarán hasta junio.

Se ha solicitado a cada diócesis enviar un informe resumido a la USCCB — o la oficina correspondiente de la conferencia episcopal — que tendrá hasta el 15 de agosto para presentar un informe al Sínodo de Obispos en el Vaticano.

El proceso presenta oportunidades para dar la bienvenida al Espíritu Santo para guiar las discusiones, indicó Richard Coll,

Resolutions for today

I think New Year’s resolutions are silly. Under the guise of “get healthy” and “better yourself” we establish arbitrary (and often unrealistic) goals to eat less, move around more, spend less time on our phone, etc.

One year, I resolved to use a paper planner to keep track of my to-do lists and meetings. I gave up the practice within two weeks because it just wasn’t a useful habit for me. But even though I knew I needed to quit on my resolution, I was frustrated by my giving it up.

Left with just one other resolution for the year: Go to bed by 9 p.m. That one lasted just a couple weeks beyond the first.

In a furious fit, I resolved to never make resolutions again, at least not new year ones. Because, it was obvious I waiting to make necessary changes in my life — and build good, healthy, holy habits — until the first of a new year.

Rather than doing what I knew needed to be done when I realized it needed to be done, I’d procrastinate the new habit: “Oh, after the new year I’ll do that” and just set the habit or task on a never-ending to-do list labeled “Someday,” knowing good and well “someday” was never really coming.

We do this with far more than just healthy eating or closet organization or bedtime routines. We set resolutions for our spiritual life on a “someday” list all too often.

“Someday I’ll start going to daily Mass.”
“Someday I’ll pray Liturgy of the Hours.”
“Someday I’ll invite Father over to dinner.”
“Someday I’ll volunteer to lector on Sunday.”
“Someday I’ll make that silent retreat.”
“Someday I’ll pray the rosary every night before bed.”

They sit there on that “someday” list — these hopes and habits with no real direction, and therefore no real resolve. Even though we know they are noble, worthy, good practices, they simply become these platitudes with no path to living them out.

These “someday” resolutions, promised at the start of a new year because it’s what everyone else is doing, are not realistic behaviors we can put into practice and thus develop holy habits. They’re these generalized promises made to no one, least of all ourselves.

So perhaps our mindset to these generalized resolutions for the new year that we’ll forget in a matter of weeks can be made more specific, more purposeful, more immediate and, most of all, more tangible.

Perhaps we name in a very intentional way what it is we hope to achieve, and then make the resolution a practice we can reasonably begin to do in our lives.

“I hope to grow closer to the Lord” means I resolve to attend a weekday Mass at least one day a week.

“I hope to learn more about sacred Scripture” means I resolve to pray evening prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours at least two nights a week.

“I hope to become more comfortable in my parish community” means I resolve to invite Father over to dinner at some point before Lent begins.

“I hope to serve my church” means I resolve to finally call the parish secretary and ask about volunteering to become a lector.

The Lord doesn’t ask us to “do” things for him at the beginning of a new year simply because every diet blog and health care website and each gym in town is screaming at you to “make big changes” and “resolve to do better.”

The Lord invites us to hope and dream about how close we are to him and resolve to make the changes we need to make to grow closer to him whenever we need to, and not just wait for the beginning of the new year or “someday.”

Every time we go to confession we make a resolution when we pray our act of contrition. We "firmly resolve with the help of thy grace" to change how we live, to avoid sin as best we can, to grow closer to Jesus.

Perhaps this is the year we firmly resolve to hope in new ways, and live and act in new ways, so we can see the fulfillment of those hopes, to ultimately be resolute in our resolve to someday grow closer to the Lord.

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Katie Prejean McGrady
Catholic News Service

Window Seat Wisdom

By Mary Marrocco
Catholic News Service

I remember once hearing a speaker marveling at the "gentleness of God." My reaction was incredulity. Gentleness? Many in that very room were experiencing great anguish, while around us swirled life's turbulence and trouble.

Of all things one could assert about God, this one seemed the most indefensible. What good could gentleness do, anyway, in a harsh and chaotic world? What is needed is strength and power to assist people whose lives and dilemmas are anything but gentle.

A priest, for example, was told to leave the community house where he resided because he was not a member. There was nothing gentle about the cold note left under his door, informing him he must be out before Christmas, or the terror that gripped his heart since he had no place to go.

Surely firmness, not gentleness, would be the antidote in situations like this. Some kind of power is needed when the inn door is firmly closed in your face, you have no money or friends and your baby needs a place to be born.

Yet I could not forget the speaker's conviction that at the heart of it all is a gentle divine presence. The speaker's own stance, voice and look were gentle in expressing it. Gentleness is a power of its own and can work its way into places where power cannot help.

We can easily overlook this kind of power. Nature's ferocity and fragility, not its gentleness, tend to make the news.

People often seem anything but gentle and one needs to learn to be tough to survive the world. When chaos and turbulence reign, it's difficult even to want God to be gentle, let alone look for it.

And yet, in the midst of the storms, God is gentle. This reality challenges us to look, listen, stop. As does a newborn baby in a manger.

Or in a drain, like the newborn child found by police after a caller tipped them off; gently they plucked her out of the sewage water she lay in and called her back to life. Did she make them gentler, too? Did she have a power that called out a different kind of power in them?

If we miss God's gentleness, we will be fooled by things that are not God. They will convince us they are to be worshipped.

We don't need to pretend away the other things;

A gentle God

but we need to learn to see them as they are, and we cannot do so if we do not learn to receive gentleness. The trick is that, in the process, we will discover gentleness at the heart of our own selves, and then nothing will be the same.

Even so the great ones ("Magi"), as Matthew's Gospel recounts, encountered the cunning, cruelty and raw power of the king.

No wonder, when their star led them away from powerful King Herod to a gently wrapped child with his mother, they rejoiced with great joy.

Here was real power. Their hearts were opened, they did homage to the baby and gifts poured forth.

The hidden gem of gentleness does not pretend away the bleakness of the human capacity for selfishness and cruelty.

God's gentleness shines out, all the more bright and beckoning by contrast, like the first little star that breaks the night. It will draw forth our own gentleness, and as with the Magi, our praise and worship of the one true God.

But if you discount this hidden gem, you will be misled. You might end up thinking the church resides in the cold harsh note of the dismissive community, rather than the weeping heart of the outcast guest.

It was a star that drew the "great ones" from their faraway home, bridging the far-flung reaches of the Earth with an infinitesimally tiny spot in a little town of a small people, to meet a tiny child.

God comes among humanity. And from their lips comes forth praise. Their praise and worship unveil the truth of the gentle child and mother.

Amid the hustle of modern life, it's easy to forget that the night sky has always been crowded and studied with tiny lights, a splendid shifting tapestry of beauty and mystery that has mesmerized humans through the ages.

We can forget to wonder at the wondrous vastness of the stars.

What seems so tiny to us, pinpricks of light easily outshone, really is immense beyond what we can absorb — unimaginable by us because we are unimaginably tiny.

Praise God for the star that leads to the manger.

Praise God for our littleness, by which we can absorb the greatness of God's gentleness.

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From fear to love

Throughout Advent and the Christmas season, I like to revisit the infancy narratives of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. There is so much profound food for thought and opportunity for growth in faith that I never tire of reading over these beloved texts, and this year is no exception.

During this time of new opportunities and challenges, in my rereading, I have been struck by how often God, through angels, brings assurance just before someone embarks on a particularly difficult action, a journey of faith, an act of love.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, for example, Joseph is about to divorce Mary "quietly" because he has learned she is with child before they have lived together (1:18-19).

An angel of the Lord comes to him in a dream and tells him, "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home" and reveals to him the identity of the holy son she carries (1:20). With such assurance, Joseph accepts Mary and sets off on a God-inspired path of marriage.

In Luke 1:8-25, Zechariah is chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and there "the angel of the Lord (Gabriel) appeared to him." Zechariah is "troubled," and "fear" comes "upon him."

But, as with Joseph, the angel tells him, "Do not be afraid," and assures him that his prayer has been answered; his wife, Elizabeth, although "advanced in years," will bear a son.

Zechariah questions Gabriel, too fervently perhaps, and the angel tells him he will be "unable to talk" until the pronouncement proves true.

But, even with this perhaps gentle chiding, in the end, the blessed event takes place. Elizabeth conceives a son, John, who will leap in her womb when Mary visits, carrying Jesus (Lk 1:41).

The same angel, Gabriel, assures Mary, too, when she is "greatly troubled" at his surprise appearance and greeting, "Hail, favored one!"

Gabriel's words, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God," pave the way for her to receive the angel's message, say yes, and change the course of human history through humble obedience (Lk 1:26-38).

At each of the moments of decision or action in



Maureen Pratt
Catholic News Service

Living Well

Catholic Voices

My Advent pilgrimage to the gravesite of Sister Thea Bowman

On Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021, the third day of Advent and the last day of Black Catholic History Month, I visited the historic Elmwood Cemetery in my hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, and gazed upon the gravesite of "Servant of God" Sister Thea Bowman, one of six African Americans currently under consideration for sainthood.

Although I grew up Black and Catholic, I did not learn about the existence of African American nuns until 2007, while enrolled in graduate school.

Two years later, a conversation in Memphis with then-Bishop J. Terry Steib directed me to the principal's office of the diocese's Holy Names of Mary and Jesus School for an interview with Sister Donna Banfield.

During our meeting, Sister Donna, who led Holy Names from 2006 to 2010, informed me of Sister Thea's final resting place in the city.

I also learned that Sister Donna, a former president of the National Black Sisters' Conference, led her students on an annual trip to Sister Thea's gravesite to pay their respects and bear to witness to the lived reality of Black Catholic saints in our midst.

Inspired by Sister Donna's leadership, I decided to make my own pilgrimage to Sister Thea's gravesite but not until I completed my planned book on the largely hidden history of the nation's Black sisters. I wanted the visit to be special, and it truly was.

Reflecting on Sister Thea's short but powerful epitaph, "She tried," etched onto her family's headstone, I thanked her for championing the intellectual, spiritual and cultural gifts of the African American community in the face of discrimination and resistance in our church. I also thanked Sister Thea for being a model of excellence and compassion for all humankind.

"Be woman. Be man. Be priest," Sister Thea liked to say. "Be single, be married. ... Be Irish American, be Italian American, be Native American, be African American, but be one in Christ."

In these trying times, one can only wonder what Sister Thea, an unapologetic champion of Black life, mothers, families and social equality, might say about the current state of our bitterly divided nation and church.

From the various attempts to stop the teaching of Black history and the nation's original sins of racism and colonialism to the global climate crisis to the current attempts to roll back the civil rights victories



Shannen Dee Williams
Catholic News Service

The Griot's Cross

of the middle decades of the 20th century — especially voting rights — I also wonder what advice Sister Thea, a member of the pioneering generation of Black Catholic women and girls who desegregated the nation's white sisterhoods, would give those fearful of the uncertain future ahead.

In her final years, Sister Thea, a Mississippi native who was also the granddaughter of enslaved people, made it clear where she stood on all forms of injustice. "I will never reconcile myself with ... racism ... sexism ... classism ... anything destructive," she stated.

Too often those who champion Sister Thea and her canonization cause erase her clear understanding of the interconnected dimensions of oppression.

In so doing, they do a terrible disservice to her and other freedom fighters, who always understood that any demand for racial and educational justice not connected to the larger fight for human rights and justice was insincere and illegitimate.

As this nation seems poised with a return to a society that Sister Thea, and so many Black sisters like her fought to bury, I pray for the strength and grace to meet the stark challenges ahead.

During this Advent season, I also pray for the wisdom to remember Sister Thea's great sacrifice for her beliefs and the courage to seek new ways of living that no longer require martyrdom to convince opponents of human equality to uphold the church's most basic social teaching of affirming the lives and dignity of all people.

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Shannen Dee Williams is a cradle Catholic and associate professor of history at the University of Dayton. She is the author of Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle, which will be published by Duke University Press on May 27, 2022. Follow her on Twitter at @BlkNunHistorian.

What if every parish was a pro-life safe haven?

My track record as a predictor of Supreme Court abortion decisions took a hit years ago when I wrote an editorial predicting that Planned Parenthood v. Casey would overturn Roe v. Wade.

Thanks to Justice Anthony Kennedy, I was quite obviously wrong.



Greg Erlandson
Catholic News Service

Amid the Fray

So I'll be cautious about predicting the result of the Mississippi abortion case Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health, whose arguments were just heard by the Supreme Court. It sure looks like change is coming, however. Just what kind of change is something else entirely.

Despite the efforts of pro-lifers who have been resisting the legalization of abortion nationwide for more than 50 years, the forthcoming court decision will not mean the end of abortion, but a new chapter in the struggle.

Anything short of the court's complete rejection of the Mississippi abortion law banning abortions in virtually all cases after 15 weeks will mean that the battle returns to the states.

There will be 50 battlefields, and the abortion divide will continue in our nation for the foreseeable future, trench warfare in virtually every state house in virtually every state.

While abortion's more vocal supporters and opponents will continue to yell at each other as they did outside the Supreme Court while the jurists weighed the merits of the Mississippi case, there is much more going on in pro-life circles that is worthy of attention.

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, who recently stepped down as head of the U.S. bishops' pro-life committee, has been working for three years on a program known as Walking with Moms in Need. In a speech to his brother bishops in November, he described the program as "a parish-based, yet nationwide, initiative to better serve pregnant and parenting mothers facing difficulties."

The program's vision, he said, "is that a pregnant or parenting mother in need can turn to any local Catholic parish and be connected with the life-affirming assistance and accompaniment that she needs."

See ERLANDSON, Page 19

Waiting for God

For nearly 30 years, I lived on a street called Oceanview Drive in Anchorage, Alaska.

To faraway friends, the name conjured sand, sailing and striking coastal views.

In reality, while some folks on the other side of the street had sea views, I had to stand on tiptoes in my living room in the winter when all the trees were bare to catch a glimpse of Cook Inlet, the 180-mile arm of water that stretched up to Anchorage from the Gulf of Alaska and the Northern Pacific Ocean.

And there was no sand. Instead, there was a very long stretch of shrunken trees and then mud flats leading to the water.

Alaska is a wild place, even in urban areas, and every year it seemed someone was rescued from the dangerous mud flats of the inlet, usually farther downtown where the coast was more accessible. People died in the deceptive mud, similar to quicksand.

Nevertheless, my street yielded beautiful views of the inlet. I could walk to a spot on the hill and look out past the lazy little railroad track that snaked below along the coast.

With chilly waters glistening under an Alaskan sun, a strange feeling of impermanence would sometimes overtake me: I need to savor this beauty because someday I will no longer walk here.

Advent is a time of waiting, of joyful expectation. And yet, it's also a time of wistful remembrance and of acknowledgment of the passage of time. It's a moment of paradox.

Who among us does not remember the Christmases of their childhood and the people, the parents or grandparents or lost siblings, who once populated those Christmases?

What parent fails to recall the delight of a child, now grown, who once glimpsed his first Christmas lights? Who feels a pang at the thought of the homes, now memories, where love was born?

Who sees the Child swaddled by his young mother and doesn't see the shadow of the Cross?

This Christmas, I'm once again near an ocean, this time the Atlantic as my husband and I house hunt while



Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

For the Journey

renting a beach home near our East Coast daughters. It's a nomadic feeling, our belongings in storage, our address temporary. My beloved creche and Christmas decorations are in a warehouse far away.

When I walk to the ocean now, there are no mud flats, just sand where my footprints make an imprint today and are washed away tomorrow.

If you sometimes feel wistful during Advent, don't feel alone and don't feel guilty.

Perhaps, like me, you might find consolation in Psalm 42.

"As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God." The psalmist is far from Jerusalem and his community. Yet he waits on God. Waiting for God is, after all, our faith history and our Advent calling.

The psalmist expresses his deep feelings, both of trust and of sorrow, by describing water.

"Deep calls to deep in the roar of your torrents and all your waves and breakers sweep over me."

His words convey God's infinite power. God is with us, whether in the inlet mud flats or the breaking waves of the Atlantic or the currents of the Missouri or Mississippi Rivers. God's love for us is deep and strong.

In this Advent paradox, we experience the joy of Christ's coming, yet yearn for his presence. We remember our Jewish ancestors awaiting the Messiah, as we long for the completion of his kingdom in this broken world.

Wait for God, the psalmist writes. Just be silent, be patient, be awake and wait.

Cartoon Corner



IMMIGRATION

Continued from Page 2

them in talks with his transition team as to how to move forward.

But what had seemed to be winds of change quickly died down.

As migrants began heading in greater numbers toward the southern border early in the year, perhaps encouraged by what had initially seemed to be a friendlier environment, administration officials began a message that sounded like the continuation of President Donald Trump's immigration policies.

"The border is closed. We are expelling families. We are expelling single adults," said U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on national Sunday news show in March.

It was followed by a similar message from Kamala Harris during her first official trip as vice president to Guatemala and Mexico.

"Do not come. Do not come," Harris said June 7 in a message in Central America. "The United States will continue to enforce our laws and secure our borders. If you come to our border, you will be turned back."

Since then, there have been court battles over the administration's efforts to do away with certain restrictions as well as mounting political obstacles blocking any chance at granting legal reprieve to those in the country illegally and those trying to enter.

The Migrant Protection Protocols, one of the policies the Biden administration tried to do away with — often referred to as "Remain in Mexico" because it keeps asylum-seekers on the other side of the border — has recently been restarted.

Though the government ended it, it was forced to implement it again in early December after a court said Biden administration officials had not ended it properly. The Supreme Court agreed. On Dec. 13, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals shut down the latest appeal by the Biden administration to end it.

And though immigration advocates had seen a ray of hope for reform built into Biden's ambitious Build Back Better legislation, the Senate parliamentarian, a nonpartisan interpreter of standing rules of how a provision can be used in Senate legislation, dealt the latest blow to the plan Dec. 16.

Democrats had hoped to include immigration reform provisions in the budget reconciliation bill process. Though the provisions would have stopped short of granting permanent residency, a step before citizenship, they would have allowed temporary work permits for almost 7 million people who are in the country without legal permission, prevented them from being deported and allowed them to travel.

But the parliamentarian said what Democrats submitted was not much different from other proposals she had previously rejected.

"These are substantial policy changes with lasting effects just like those we previously considered and outweigh the budgetary impact," wrote Elizabeth MacDonald, explaining the latest ruling against the plan.

A chorus of immigration supporters that once carefully measured words of disappointment against an administration that many called an "ally" have taken to publicly criticize what some now see as a continuation of former president Trump's policies, this time by Biden officials.

In early December, more than 80 Catholic women religious marched out-

side the White House protesting the continuation of the immigration restrictions as the president's motorcade passed nearby.

"As justice seekers, as Americans, but especially as Catholics, we are ashamed that President Biden has locked the door at our southern border to our immigrant siblings," said Ronnate Asirwatham, government relations director of the Catholic social justice lobby Network, who had joined the women religious Dec. 3 in their demonstration.

In October, immigrant advocates walked away from an online meeting with Biden administration officials to let their discontent be known about the decision to restart the Remain in Mexico policy.

They also criticized and expressed outrage at the treatment of Haitian migrants at the southern border in September, after videos circulated of border agents on horses trying to get a group of mostly Haitian immigrants to return to the Mexico side along a river.

Catholic immigrant advocates have used Advent as an occasion to call out the administration on its expulsions, particularly of Haitians, comparing those seeking entry into the U.S. to the Holy Family seeking safety.

Franciscan Sister Marie Lucey, associate director of the Franciscan Action Network, implored the Biden administration Dec. 17 to provide Haitian families "refuge from horrific situations."

"Yes, the increase of migrants present at the border is challenging. But the United States is not a small, helpless country. We can meet the challenges if we have the will," she said.

But some wonder whether the administration has the political will to deal with a possible backlash that might result from immigration reform.

The Welcome With Dignity Campaign, a coalition that includes faith groups, previously said the government is playing politics with people's lives. Some wonder whether Democrats and the administration worry about their chances of winning seats in the midterms next year if they seem too soft on immigration.

But Sen. Richard J. Durbin, a Democrat from Illinois, who has been working on the immigration reform plan, said the fight is not done yet. And he said the party would continue trying to find a road via the social spending bill.

"We will pursue every means to achieve a path to citizenship in the Build Back Better Act," he said in a Dec. 17 news release.

But when Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said Dec. 19 that he could not support the bill, even without immigration reform in it, chances of any action for 2021 dimmed.

The bipartisan American Business Immigration Coalition, in a Dec. 17 news release, urged Congress to do something quick, saying "labor shortages and rising costs to consumers in the current economy will only worsen unless immigration reforms are passed immediately."

Bob Worsley, the organization's co-chair and a former Republican state senator from Arizona, told the Democrats to "grow a spine and do this."

"Disregard the parliamentarian and get this bill done. This is going to kill us in the real world, with inflation and a lack of workers in almost every field — in hospitality and health care — everywhere, we're hurting for workers. They need to get this done," he said.

But as 2021 comes to an end, only uncertainty looms on the horizon about what the new year will bring.

INMIGRACIÓN

Continúa de Página 3

continuación de las políticas de inmigración del presidente Donald Trump.

"La frontera está cerrada. Estamos expulsando familias. Estamos expulsando a adultos solteros", indicó Alejandro Mayorkas, secretario del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de Estados Unidos, en un programa nacional de noticias dominicales en marzo.

A este mensaje le siguió uno similar de Kamala Harris durante su primer viaje oficial como vicepresidenta a Guatemala y México.

"No vengán. No vengán", expresó Harris el 7 de junio en Centroamérica. "Estados Unidos seguirá aplicando nuestras leyes y asegurando nuestras fronteras. Si vienen a nuestra frontera, tendrán que retroceder".

Desde entonces, han habido batallas judiciales sobre los esfuerzos de la administración para eliminar ciertas restricciones, así como crecientes obstáculos políticos a la reforma.

Recientemente, se restituyó los Protocolos de Protección al Migrante — a menudo conocida como la política "Quédate en México" porque mantiene a solicitantes de asilo en territorio mexicano — una de las políticas que la administración trató de eliminar.

Aunque el gobierno había puesto fin a esta norma, se vio obligado a reiniciarla nuevamente a principios de diciembre después de que un tribunal dijera que los funcionarios no lo habían terminado correctamente. La Corte Suprema estuvo de acuerdo con el fallo; el 13 de diciembre, la Corte de Apelaciones del Quinto Circuito de Estados Unidos bloqueó el esfuerzo más reciente de la administración de Biden para ponerle fin.

Aunque había nacido un rayo de esperanza para la reforma migratoria incorporada en la ambiciosa legislación

social de Biden, la parlamentaria del Senado, Elizabeth MacDonald, una intérprete no partidista de reglas sobre cómo se puede utilizar una disposición en la legislación del Senado, asestó el 16 de diciembre un nuevo golpe al plan migratorio.

Los demócratas esperaban incluir reforma migratoria en el proceso del proyecto de ley de reconciliación presupuestaria. Aunque las disposiciones no hubieran llegado a otorgar la residencia permanente, un paso antes de la ciudadanía, una de las propuestas hubiera permitido permisos de trabajo temporales para casi 7 millones de personas que se encuentran en el país sin permiso legal. Se hubiera impedido que fueran deportadas y se les hubiera permitido viajar.

Pero la parlamentaria dijo que lo que demócratas presentaron no era muy diferente a otras propuestas que ella había rechazado anteriormente.

"Estos son cambios sustanciales de política con efectos duraderos, como los que consideramos anteriormente, y superan el impacto presupuestario", escribió MacDonald, explicando el último fallo en contra del plan.

Defensores de inmigración que alguna vez midieron cuidadosamente sus palabras de decepción contra una administración que muchos consideraron como compañeros en la lucha ahora han criticado públicamente lo que ven como una continuación de las políticas del ex-presidente Trump; esta vez por parte de funcionarios de Biden.

A principios de diciembre, más de 80 religiosas católicas marcharon frente a la Casa Blanca, protestando la continuación de las restricciones a la inmigración mientras la caravana del presidente pasaba cerca.

"Como personas que buscan justicia, como estadounidenses, pero especialmente como católicos, nos avergüenza que el presidente Biden haya cerrado la puerta de nuestra frontera sur a nuestros hermanos inmigrantes", señaló Ronnate

Asirwatham, directora de relaciones gubernamentales de Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, quien se unió a las religiosas en su manifestación del 3 de diciembre.

En octubre, los defensores de los inmigrantes abandonaron una reunión en línea con funcionarios del gobierno de Biden para dar a conocer su descontento por la decisión de reiniciar la política "Quédate en México".

Ellos también criticaron y expresaron su indignación por el trato a los migrantes haitianos en la frontera sur en septiembre, luego de que circularan videos de agentes fronterizos a caballo tratando de hacer que un grupo de inmigrantes, en su mayoría haitianos, regresaran al lado mexicano a lo largo de un río.

Defensores católicos de los inmigrantes han utilizado el Adviento como una ocasión para reclamar a la administración sobre sus expulsiones, particularmente de haitianos, comparando a aquellos que buscan ingresar a Estados Unidos con la Sagrada Familia.

La hermana franciscana Marie Lucey, directora adjunta de la Red de Acción Franciscana, imploró a la administración de Biden el 17 de diciembre que otorgue a las familias haitianas "refugio de situaciones horribles".

"Sí, el aumento de migrantes presentes en la frontera es un desafío. Pero Estados Unidos no es un país pequeño e indefenso. Podemos enfrentar los desafíos si tenemos la voluntad", acotó.

Sin embargo, algunos se preguntan si la administración tiene la voluntad política para lidiar con una posible reacción que podría resultar de la reforma migratoria.

La campaña Welcome with Dignity (Bienvenida con Dignidad), una coalición que incluye grupos religiosos, dijo anteriormente que el gobierno está jugando a la política con la vida de las personas. Algunos se preguntan si los demócratas y la administración está pre-ocupados que perderán escaños en las

elecciones intermedias del próximo año, si es que parecen demasiado blandos con temas de inmigración.

Sin embargo, el senador Richard J. Durbin, un demócrata de Illinois, que ha estado trabajando en el plan de reforma migratoria, dijo que la lucha aún no ha terminado. Y dijo que el partido seguiría intentando encontrar un camino a través del proyecto legislativo de gasto social.

"Buscaremos todos los medios para lograr un camino hacia la ciudadanía en la Ley Build Back Better", expresó en un comunicado de prensa del 17 de diciembre.

Pero cuando el senador Joe Manchin, demócrata de West Virginia, dijo el 19 de diciembre que no podía apoyar el proyecto, incluso sin una reforma migratoria, las posibilidades de que se tomara alguna medida para ayudar a inmigrantes en el 2021 terminaron.

La coalición bipartidista de inmigración empresarial estadounidense, conocida como ABIC por sus siglas en inglés, en un comunicado de prensa del 17 de diciembre, instó al Congreso a hacer algo rápido, no por ayudar pero por razones económicas.

En el comunicado, la organización dijo que "la escasez de mano de obra y el aumento de los costos para los consumidores en la economía actual solo empeorarán a menos que las reformas migratorias se aprueben de inmediato".

Bob Worsley, el copresidente de la organización y ex senador estatal republicano de Arizona, les dijo a los demócratas que buscaran la fuerza moral para avanzar.

"Ignoren a la parlamentaria y consigan que se apruebe este proyecto de ley. Esto nos va a matar en el mundo real, con inflación y falta de obreros en casi todos los campos, en hoteles, atención médica, en todas partes, estamos sufriendo por mano de obra. Necesitan hacer esto", dijo.

Pero a medida que 2021 termina, solo la incertidumbre aparece en el horizonte sobre lo que traerá el nuevo año.

PROCESO

Continúa de Página 15

director ejecutivo del Departamento de Justicia, Paz y Desarrollo Humano de los obispos y quien está coordinando el esfuerzo para la USCCB.

"El Sínodo de los Obispos está diciendo que no se enfoquen en cuál será el producto final. Concéntrese en el proceso en sí y en cómo el Espíritu guiará a la iglesia, representada, en parte, a través de la subsidiariedad en el trabajo que están haciendo a nivel diocesano", señaló Coll.

Las consultas diocesanas también son una invitación a la creatividad, agregó McStravog.

"Este es un momento para ser co-creadores con el Espíritu . . . Es una oportunidad para revitalizar una comunidad comprometida a través de la creatividad y el llamado a estar abierto. Existe la oportunidad de reafirmar lo bueno y reimaginar algunas cosas que podrían ser mejores", ella explicó.

El obispo Daniel E. Flores de Brownsville, Texas, reiteró la invitación del papa a la creatividad mientras se dirigía los obispos en su asamblea general de otoño en Baltimore en noviembre.

"Nadie carece de importancia en este

tiempo de escucha", acotó, animando a los obispos a recordar que la primera fase del proceso debe implicar la participación de toda la iglesia, "escuchando juntos, orando juntos, discerniendo juntos" la voz del Santo Espíritu.

"El papa Francisco nos ha pedido que invitemos a la gente, que escuchemos a la gente, incluyendo aquellos que no se presentan en nuestras parroquias", dijo el obispo Flores, quien, al concluir la asamblea, comenzó un mandato de tres años como presidente del Comité de Doctrina de los obispos.

Él describió el proceso sinodal como un "camino deliberado y un estilo de comunión".

Para facilitar el esfuerzo, el Sínodo de los Obispos, al mando del cardenal Mario Grech, secretario general, presentó documentos para orientar el trabajo que se está realizando en las diócesis. La USCCB también desarrolló un documento complementario.

El documento principal del Vaticano es un "vademécum", o manual, que ofrece apoyo a los equipos diocesanos "para preparar y reunir al pueblo de Dios para que puedan dar voz a su experiencia en su iglesia local".

El documento de la USCCB define aún más los materiales del Vaticano. Dicho documento incluye una lista de ac-

ciones necesarias, un cronograma propuesto para que las diócesis lo sigan, y una lista de materiales de antecedentes para ayudar a las parroquias y diócesis a recorrer el proceso inicial y garantizar una amplia participación.

Un apéndice, desarrollado por el Comité de Culto Divino de los obispos de Estados Unidos, ofrece ideas para que las celebraciones litúrgicas puedan marcar la apertura y el cierre del proceso sinodal en las diócesis; también ofrece sugerencias para lecturas y temas musicales.

Cuando comenzó la primera fase, varios prelados estadounidenses dijeron que este esfuerzo es una oportunidad para involucrar mejor a las personas en la vida de la iglesia.

En San Diego, el obispo Robert W. McElroy expresó que espera que la diócesis se vuelva más sinodal en su funcionamiento a medida que se desarrolle la primera fase — mucho antes de que el Sínodo de los Obispos y el papa Francisco obtengan sus conclusiones en octubre de 2023.

"Espero que esta sea una oportunidad no solo para que evaluemos el nivel de sinodalidad, que ya está presente en la vida de nuestra iglesia local, sino para desarrollarlo aun mas", indicó.

Mientras tanto, el obispo Frank J. Caggiano de Bridgeport, Connecticut,

convocó a un equipo de 260 delegados que han sido encargados de salir y reunirse en oración con la gente. Desde reuniones en el consejo parroquial hasta conversaciones individuales, los delegados escucharán a la gente sobre preocupaciones, heridas, y esperanzas, expuso.

"Al final, no estamos tratando de resolver un problema. Lo que estamos tratando de hacer es discernir la solución que ya está ahí. El Espíritu Santo ya sabe cuál es la solución", explicó.

Para varias otras diócesis, el proceso se basará en sínodos locales que aborden las prioridades locales, incluidos los adultos jóvenes, la vida familiar, y el ministerio a los miembros latinos.

Cuando el Vaticano reciba los informes sintetizados de las reuniones diocesanas de las conferencias episcopales de todo el mundo, la Secretaría del Sínodo de los Obispos redactará para el otoño de 2022 el "instrumentum laboris", o documento de trabajo, para guiar las asambleas eclesiales continentales o regionales que tomarán lugar hasta marzo de 2023.

Esas asambleas producirán otro conjunto de documentos que ayudarán en la redacción de un segundo documento de trabajo para el Sínodo de los Obispos de octubre de 2023.

ERLANDSON

Continued from Page 17

It is an ambitious vision, one that would reflect Pope Francis' idea of accompaniment, walking with mothers in need of assistance and support. The genius of the program is that it could bring together the pro-life and social justice wings of the church, which surely should be united in helping any struggling mother and mother-to-be.

The archbishop cited statistics showing that women seeking abortions are primarily "poor, young and unmarried." Too often, abortion is not a desired outcome, but one forced on women by circumstances and a lack of options.

In Texas, a pro-life mom named Tere Haring sees this reality every day. She runs a pro-life outreach called the Allied Women's Center, and she is helping one mom at time with diapers and rental assistance. "Diapers save a lot more babies than ultrasounds," Haring told The Washington Post.

"I always said abortion is the lack of an option," Haring said. "They feel like they have nowhere to go, that there's nobody for them. It's about the help. It's about being there for them."

Archbishop Naumann's vision is that Catholics -- you and me in our parishes -- will be there for the moms in need. The parish would connect them with resources, with mentors, with helping agencies.

This kind of assistance, the archbishop said, "directly confronts the false, yet popular, narrative that the Catholic Church merely condemns abortion," but doesn't help the women.

Whatever the court decides next spring, the needs of the poor, the pregnant and the abandoned will remain. Walking with Moms in Need is the kind of grassroots program that could change lives: both those of the moms and of the parishioners who help them.

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Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.

OSPINO

Continued from Page 14

During this time of the year, it is common to hear many Christians raising concerns about a "war on Christmas."

As I read and listen about what people say in this regard, there seems to be a perception that someone out there — individuals, groups, organizations — is working hard to get rid of Christmas.

There may be some elements of truth about this. We cannot deny the winds of secularization that blow rampant in our society, some with activist impetus.

Yet, I think that if there is a war out there, it is more an internal one: We Christians are not doing enough to celebrate Christmas as a religious time with our families, friends and faith communities.

I want to propose that upon entering the season of Christmas, we become truly intentional in doing something that should be a nonnegotiable for us as believers: Give Jesus.

Here are two simple ways in which we can give Jesus to one another during Christmas, ensuring that the season re-

mains focused on our savior.

One, reclaim Christmas by celebrating this time with your family and friends during the actual season. The liturgical season of Christmas begins on December 25th and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

It is striking, yet disappointing, that exactly at the time when Christmas begins, many people stop singing carols, throw away their decorations, stop giving gifts, and go somewhat silent about Jesus. Catholics should do better.

Two, while keeping the spirit of generous giving, give something that invites others into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, give something with explicit religious meaning and focused on Jesus.

Give a Bible, a theology or spirituality book, a religious object, perhaps an icon. Write a letter or a poem about Jesus. Have your children or grandchildren draw something about Jesus' life. Then share these as gifts.

It's Christmas, a time to be generous and to celebrate God's generosity. Give Jesus.

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Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.

September 2022 date set for beatification of John Paul I

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis will beatify Pope John Paul I Sept. 4, 2022, at the Vatican, according to Stefania Falasca, a journalist and vice postulator of the late pope's sainthood cause.

In October, Pope Francis had signed a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Pope John Paul I, clearing the way for his beatification. At the time, a date for the ceremony was not announced.

Writing Dec. 23 in *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper owned by the Italian bishops' conference, Falasca said the date had been set.

Pope John Paul I, an Italian who was born Albino Luciani, served only 33 days as pontiff; he died in the papal apartments

Sept. 28, 1978, three weeks shy of his 66th birthday, shocking the world and a church that had just mourned the death of St. Paul VI.

The miracle approved in his cause involved a young girl in Buenos Aires, Argentina, who developed a severe case of acute encephalitis, experienced uncontrollable and life-threatening brain seizures, and eventually entered septic shock.

After doctors told family members her death was "imminent," the local priest encouraged the family, nurses and others to pray to the late pope for his intercession, according to the website of the Congregation for Saints' Causes. A panel of experts studying the cause determined there was no scientific explanation for her complete recovery in 2011 and that it could be attributed to the late pope's intercession.

Although his was one of the shortest

papacies in history, Pope John Paul I left a lasting impression on the church that fondly remembers him as "the smiling pope."

Born in the small Italian mountain town of Canale D'Agordo Oct. 17, 1912, the future pope and his two brothers and one sister lived in poverty and sometimes went to bed hungry.

He was ordained a priest in 1935 and was appointed bishop of Vittorio Veneto in December 1958 by St. John XXIII. More than 10 years later, he was named patriarch of Venice by St. Paul VI and was created a cardinal in 1973.

His surprise election, after St. Paul VI's death, did not sway him from continuing his humble manner of living, such as rejecting the use of the traditional papal tiara and calling his first Mass as pope the "inauguration" of his papal ministry rather than a coronation.

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GATHERING

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attending many of the gathering’s activities with the seminarians.

Blake Noonan, whose home parish is the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, also noticed a “unique Catholic identity that’s tied to geography.” He was heartened throughout the 4-day gathering by “making connections in the church that are centered in prayer, especially by placing Jesus in the Eucharist at the center of everything.”

That description could be applied to the schedule for the gathering itself. Punctuated by prayer in the mornings and evenings, Masses, and a holy hour for vocations, the gathering was busy, but always focused on faith. That’s not to say there weren’t other activities. An evening with families, a trip to see the local ballet’s performance of the Nutcracker, volunteering with Meals for the Elderly, learning sessions, business meetings, and one-on-one visits with the vocation director. That may sound like a lot, but as one used to the rigors of seminary studies, Francisco Camacho of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Midland had a different take. “It was a pretty chill weekend, honestly,” he said.

Camacho was excited by the opportunity to reunite with old friends and see some of his brother seminarians who go to different schools. He also found volunteering with Meals for the Elderly to be “a different experience than going to the elderly just for prayer,” adding that it was “a good opportunity to meet new people.”

Sabastine Nwosu, a seminarian from St. Ann’s Parish in Midland, also found the service to Meals for the Elderly fruit-

ful. “These are the people we should assist,” he said. “They should feel welcome. We should make them our number one priority.” Overall, the gathering brought joy. “The last few days have been joyful for me,” he said.

Ortiz also had a positive experience delivering meals. “It was good being able to provide for them physically, even if it was just dropping off food and saying a few words,” he said.

For a diverse crowd that includes recent high school graduates as well as men who have had other careers before hearing the call to attend the seminary, it’s not surprising that different parts of the gathering stood out for different seminarians. For Joshua Basse, a graduate theology student from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Odessa who previously worked as a teacher, it was a presentation on Dec. 20 that he particularly remembered. “For the life of a priest, our meeting with Dr. Les Maiman was very helpful,” he said, referring to diocesan CFO Les Maiman’s presentation on personal finances, in which the seminarians were introduced to topics including personal saving and retirement planning. “It’s really important, especially for the younger guys,” Basse said. “I know my first few years as a teacher I didn’t think about it much.”

The first night of the gathering was family night. Many of the seminarians mentioned meeting their peers’ families as an enjoyable part of the weekend. For Humberto Diaz, graduate theology student from St. Vincent Pallotti Parish in Abilene, it was a highlight. “It’s important to show that we are family-oriented,” he said. “We will serve families, we come from families. It’s a beautiful thing, as we get ready for Christmas we reflect on the Holy



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS
Mike Elsner, Sabastine Nwosu, Kaleb Chacon, Joshua Basse, and Kristie Garcia collected meals from the staff of Meals for the Elderly to be delivered to clients in San Angelo Dec. 20.

Family.”

As these ten young men build brotherly bonds, the diocesan seminarian family looks strong. Several seminarians mentioned that the gathering was fun, and one gets the sense this is more because of the company than the particulars of the activities. “I think with this group, if Father Ryan [Rojo, vocation director] told us to go out back and dig a ditch, we’d have a good time,” said Elsner.

As the next in line for transitional diaconate ordination (next summer at St. Stephen’s), Elsner has fewer of these gatherings left than his brothers. On the other end of the spectrum is Kaleb Chacon of

Holy Family Parish in Abilene, who has the unique experience of attending a gathering before actually taking a single class at seminary. He’s been accepted and will begin in January. Chacon speaks of “wanting to be close to God and wanting to do his will.” About exploring his will in the seminary, Chacon said, “I’m excited. I’m thankful. I don’t really have any doubts about whether it’s the right decision to go. I know it’s going to be hard, but I’m prepared for that.”

With the guidance of his new brothers and the prayers and support of the people of West Texas, the road ahead will be a bit easier.

Anniversaries abound in Wall

St. Ambrose Parish celebrates 80 years for church, 30 for priest



Dec. 5, 2021, the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the dedication of the parish.



The dedication of St. Ambrose Parish in Wall, Dec. 7, 1941, with Bishop Laurence Julius FitzSimon of the Diocese of Amarillo.
COURTESY



Father Joseph Choutapalli was also honored on the 30th anniversary of his ordination in the Dec. 5 Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Sis.
COURTESY



Members of St. Ambrose Parish who joined the church in the parish’s first 25 years, between 1941 and 1966.
COURTESY