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WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas

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Praying for the souls of the departed



BECCA NELSON SANKEY

Deacon Pete Madrid distributed Communion at a Mass at Calvary Catholic Cemetery in San Angelo on Nov. 2, All Souls' Day.



BECCA NELSON SANKEY

Bishop Michael Sis prayed over the graves of loved ones with gathered faithful at Calvary Catholic Cemetery in San Angelo before Mass at the cemetery Nov. 2.

By Becca Nelson Sankey

After mixing up last year's dates commemorating All Souls Day in Calvary Catholic Cemetery, Steven Rodriguez, of Vick, was determined not to miss this year's event. On Thursday, Nov. 2, he waited in a folding chair next to his pickup truck, parked near the graves of his mother and aunt. "I try to come every year," he said of All Souls Day, adding of his mother, "I also come on the day she died and her birthday."

All Souls Day, which follows All Saints Day on Nov. 1, is commemorated locally every year at Calvary Catholic Cemetery, owned and maintained by the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo. Some of the diocese's clergy, including Bishop Michael Sis, divide the cemetery into quadrants so each can pray over and bless specific graves at the request of parishioners.

"All Souls Day is a day Catholics around the world visit cemeteries and pray for the dead. Today's a day we pray specifically for the souls of those who have died

who are not in heaven," Sis explained as he walked through his assigned quadrant of the cemetery, searching for individuals requesting blessings for their deceased loved ones. "We pray that through God's mercy they'll pass through the process of purification that is purgatory and enter into heaven for eternity."

"It's also a wonderful chance for people to just remember, like Steve (Rodriguez). He really captured it. He goes to the cemetery on his mother's birthday and date of death because he wants to remember his mom because he loved her. It's an expression of love for somebody that he lost. That's the key human dynamic in coming here."

Barbara Garza Dominguez, of St. Mary's Parish, said every All Souls Day she visits the graves of her husband and his family.

"I do this for him and his whole family because his whole family's gone — his mom, his dad, his sister," she said. "So I don't have any of them. I just have my two girls and then some cousins."

As a Catholic, it's important to pray

for the souls of those who have died before us, she said. "We pray they're not in purgatory, that they're going to heaven to be with our Lord."

If they are already in heaven with God, it's an act of love that brings Dominguez — and those for whom she prays — peace.

Her gift to them, she said, is "coming here and praying for them and spending time with them."

After having their loved ones' graves blessed, parishioners gathered before the altar, set up in front of the cemetery's mausoleum, for an outdoor Mass led by Sis.

Morgan Knobloch, of North Texas, has lived in San Angelo for four years as a FOCUS missionary at the Newman Center on the Angelo State University campus. Each year, she too, has attended the Mass following the blessing. "It's a beautiful way to pray for the souls in purgatory and our deceased loved ones," she said just before the Mass began. "It's also cool to do something a little different like having Mass outside at the cemetery."

All Souls Day was perhaps particularly poignant for Sis, whose father died in

July. In his homily, he said, "We remember our loved ones who have died, we give thanks to God for their role in our lives, we acknowledge that we miss them, and we ask God's grace to help us to mourn our losses. We also ask God for the gift of inner healing. And we pay our respects to them, and we pray for the repose of their souls."

No one knows how long we will live, he added, a point driven home by the dates of birth and dates of death on each cemetery headstone and marker.

"Some of them lived long lives, and some very short," Sis said. "As we reflect on that reality, we should conclude that therefore we should live our lives in such a way that we're always ready."

Every human being who has ever lived eventually stands before the judgment seat of God, he said.

"We need to think when we come and pray in a moment like this, 'How am I living my life? Am I ready for the final judgment?'"

"How we live today makes a difference for eternity."

From the Bishop's Desk

The ongoing habit of gratitude

Once upon a time, two angels were sent from heaven to earth, each with a basket. They traveled all over the planet – to homes, churches, schools, sports arenas, ranches, oil fields, and businesses. Then they came back to heaven with what they had collected in their baskets. The basket of one of the angels was heavy and overflowing. The basket of the other angel was very light and almost empty. The angel with the light load asked the angel with the big load, “What do you have in your basket?” He answered, “I was sent to collect the prayers of petition of all the people who said, ‘I want this’ and ‘Please give me that.’ But, hey, your basket looks pretty empty. What were you sent to bring back?” The angel with the light load replied, “I was sent to collect their prayers of thanksgiving.”

Gratitude is one of the greatest spiritual medicines of all time. It is a remedy for many different spiritual problems. It is one of the most powerful antidotes for self-pity, envy, resentment, and pride. Nothing frustrates the devil more than a human being who is grateful to God.

There are three basic steps in gratitude:

- First, we recognize that we have received something.
- Next, we say the words. We take the time to say, “Thank you.”
- Finally, we do our part, either by returning the favor or by paying it forward. We reach out to others in actions that express love.

Gratitude is not just a spontaneous feeling that comes over us. Gratitude is a choice we make, and act of the will. We choose to be grateful. We're not born grateful. We have to learn it. This is why parents have to teach their children, constantly reminding them to say “thank you.”

It is not enough to express gratitude only at Thanksgiving time in November. It is something that ought to happen throughout the year. The art of gratitude is a good habit that we need to practice so that it develops into a virtue. A virtue is a stable part of our character, an enduring part of who we are, an ongoing disposition of our life.

How can we grow in our attitude of gratitude? Here are some examples of acts of gratitude.

The more we practice these habits of thankfulness, the more the virtue of gratitude will become engrained in us:

1. When you wake up in the morning, thank God for another day of life. Then, at the end of each day, look back over the day, and thank God for the gifts received that day.
2. Recognize the lavish gift giving of God, rejoice in the giftedness of others, and humbly acknowledge your own personal gifts.
3. Be grateful for your parents. Despite whatever imperfections they might have, through them God gave you the precious gift of life.
4. Be thankful for the food you eat. Thank God that you are not going hungry.
5. Whenever you drink a simple glass of water, or take a shower, or wash your hands, thank God for the gift of clean, healthy water. Sometimes we complain about the



Bishop Michael J. Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

quality of our water here in West Texas, but most people in the world do not have access to a clean, healthy water supply.

6. When you are participating in any game or competition and you do not win, give thanks to God for the opportunity to grow in humility.
7. When you are stopped by the police and you receive a traffic ticket, thank the officer for taking risks every day to keep our society safe and secure.
8. When you are in Mass or in an airplane and you hear a crying baby, be thankful that their parents accepted the precious gift of new life. Children are our future.
9. Practice the courteous habit of writing actual thank you notes to others.
10. When confronted by your own personal weakness, limits, and lack of ability, pray in thanksgiving to God with the insight expressed by St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:5-10: “When I am weak, Christ is strong in me.”
11. Thank God for the boulders that you must climb over in the path of your life, because they make you stronger. St. James says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (James 1:2-4).
12. On those occasions when you suffer without deserving it, or go through any kind of hardship, be grateful for the privilege of sharing in the afflictions of Our Lord Jesus. The cross that you bear draws you closer to him. When you join your sufferings with his, you are thereby participating in a small, humble way in his redeeming sacrifice. St. Paul says, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).

These are merely a few examples of the many ways we can express thanksgiving. By intentionally practicing steps like these, the attitude of gratitude will come to be an enduring aspect of our personal character. St. Paul writes, “In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Th 5:18). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving” (no. 2638).

Pope Francis repeatedly teaches on the importance of giving thanks. He says, “Gratitude, the ability to give thanks, makes us appreciate the presence in our lives of the God who is love, and to recognize the importance of others, overcoming the dissatisfaction and indifference that disfigure our hearts. It is essential to know how to

say, ‘thank you.’ Please, let us not forget this key word” (Francis, Homily, Oct. 9, 2022).

The greatest prayer of gratitude in the world is the Mass. In the first Mass, when Jesus was celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles, he “gave thanks” with the bread and the wine (Lk 22:7-20). In that biblical text, the Greek verb for giving thanks is *eucharistein*. That is where we get the English word “Eucharist.” It literally means “thanksgiving.” The Mass is one big prayer of gratitude. Individually and collectively, we give praise and thanks to God the Father for his saving action through Jesus Christ.

Here I would like to point out some key moments in the Mass when we express thanks to God. After the proclamation of the Scripture readings, we respond, “Thanks be to God.” At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer, in the Preface Dialogue, we say, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and just.” After receiving Communion, we kneel and give thanks to God for what we have received. At the end of the Mass, we say, “Thanks be to God.” We are not saying thanks that the Mass is over, but rather giving thanks for what God has done for us. After the closing song, and before we leave the church, it is a good practice to kneel down for a little personal prayer of thanksgiving.

In this time of Eucharistic Revival in the Catholic Church in the United States, we are seeking to live more fully as eucharistic people. Quite literally, this includes living out the virtue of gratitude as an ongoing habit of our heart. St. Paul expresses this beautifully in Colossians 3:15-17: “Be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, ... singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

The Prayer Square

Thanksgiving Prayer

Father all-powerful,
your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite; as we come before you on Thanksgiving Day with gratitude for your kindness, open our hearts to have concern for every man, woman, and child, so that we may share your gifts in loving service.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Roman Missal, Thanksgiving Day, Collect Prayer

Synod synthesis shows agreement, divergences, including on 'synodality'

Por Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A report summarizing discussions at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops said the church may need more welcoming pastoral approaches, especially to people who feel excluded, but also acknowledged fears of betraying traditional church teachings and practices.

Among the topics addressed in the report were clerical sexual abuse, women's roles in the church, outreach to poor and the concept of "synodality" itself.

The assembly, with 364 voting members — 365 counting Pope Francis — met in working sessions six days a week Oct. 4–28 after a three-day retreat outside of Rome.

After the voting on the synthesis concluded, the pope said he wanted to remind everyone that "the protagonist of the synod is the Holy Spirit." He briefly thanked the synod officers and joined members of the assembly in giving thanks to God.

The assembly's discussions set the stage for a year-long period of reflection that will culminate in the second and final synod assembly in late 2024 on the same topic.

The 41-page synthesis report, voted on paragraph-by-paragraph Oct. 28, described its purpose as presenting "convergences, matters for consideration and proposals

that emerged from the dialogue" on issues discussed under the headings of synodality, communion, mission and participation.

Every item in the report was approved by at least two-thirds of the members present and voting, synod officials said. They published a complete list of the votes.

Within the synod topics, members looked at the role of women in the church, including in decision making, and at the possibility of ordaining women deacons. The report asked for more "theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate," including a review of the conclusions of commissions Pope Francis set up in 2016 and 2020.

The paragraph, one of several on the theme of women deacons, was approved 279-67, which was more than the needed two-thirds support but still garnered among the highest negative votes.

Among members of the assembly, the report said, some thought the idea of women deacons would be a break with tradition, while others insisted it would "restore the practice of the early church," including at the time of the New Testament, which mentions women deacons.

"Others still, discern it as an appropriate and necessary response to the signs of the times, faithful to the Tradition, and one that would find an echo in the hearts of many who seek new energy and vitality in the church," it said. But, the report added, some members thought that would "marry



CNS PHOTO | VATICAN MEDIA
Members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops use tablets to vote on the gathering's synthesis document Oct. 28, 2023, in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican.

the church to the spirit of the age."

The paragraph on how different members explained their support of or opposition to women deacons also was approved by more than two-thirds of the voting members, but it received more negative votes than any other item, passing 277 to 69.

Assembly members also discussed pastoral approaches to welcoming and including in the life of parishes people who have felt excluded, including the poor, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ Catholics and Catholics whose marriages are not

El hábito constante de la gratitud

Había una vez dos ángeles enviados del cielo a la tierra, cada uno con una canasta. Viajaron por todo el planeta: a hogares, iglesias, escuelas, estadios deportivos, ranchos, campos petroleros, y empresas. Luego regresaron al cielo con lo que habían recogido en sus canastas. La canasta de uno de los ángeles estaba pesada y rebosante. La canasta del otro ángel estaba muy liviana y casi vacía. El ángel de la carga liviana le preguntó al ángel de la carga grande: “¿Qué tienes en tu canasta?” Él respondió: “Me enviaron a recoger las oraciones de petición de todas las personas que decían: ‘Quiero esto’ y ‘Por favor, dame aquello’. Pero bueno, tu canasta parece bastante vacía. ¿Qué te enviaron a traer? El ángel con la carga más vacía respondió: “Fui enviado a recoger sus oraciones de acción de gracias”.

La gratitud es una de las mayores medicinas espirituales de todos los tiempos. Es un remedio para muchos problemas espirituales diferentes. Es uno de los antídotos más poderosos contra la lástima de sí mismo, la envidia, el resentimiento, y la soberbia. Nada frustra más al diablo que un ser humano agradecido a Dios.

Hay tres pasos básicos para la gratitud:

- Primero, reconocemos que hemos recibido algo.
- A continuación, decimos las palabras. Nos tomamos el tiempo para decir: “Gracias”.
- Finalmente, hacemos nuestra parte, ya sea devolviendo el favor o pagándolo adelantado. Nos acercamos a los demás con acciones que expresan amor.

La gratitud no es sólo un sentimiento espontáneo que nos invade. La gratitud es una elección que hacemos y un acto de voluntad. Elegimos estar agradecidos. No nacemos agradecidos. Tenemos que aprenderlo. Por eso los padres tienen que enseñar a sus hijos, recordándoles constantemente que digan “gracias”.

No basta con expresar gratitud solo en el Día de Acción de Gracias en noviembre. Es algo que debería suceder durante todo el año. El arte de la gratitud es un buen hábito que debemos practicar para que se convierta en virtud. Una virtud es una parte estable de nuestro carácter, una parte duradera de quiénes somos, una disposición continua de nuestra vida.

¿Cómo podemos crecer en nuestra actitud de gratitud? A continuación, se muestran algunos ejemplos de actos de gratitud. Cuanto más practiquemos estos hábitos de agradecimiento, más se arraigará en nosotros la virtud de la gratitud:

- Cuando te levantes por la mañana, agradece a Dios por un día más de vida. Luego, al final de cada día, repasa el día, y dale las gracias a Dios por los regalos recibidos ese día.
- Reconoce los regalos espléndidos de Dios, regocíjate en los dones de los demás, y reconoce humildemente tus propios dones personales.
- Agradece a tus padres. A pesar de las imperfecciones que pudieran tener, a través de ellos Dios te dio el precioso regalo de la vida.
- Agradece la comida que comes. Gracias a Dios que no pasas hambre.
- Cada vez que bebas un simple vaso de agua, te bañas, o te laves las manos, agradece a Dios por el regalo del agua limpia y saludable. A veces nos quejamos de la

calidad de nuestra agua aquí en el oeste de Texas, pero la mayoría de la gente en el mundo no tiene acceso a un suministro de agua limpia y saludable.

- Cuando estés participando en algún juego o competencia y no ganes, dale gracias a Dios por la oportunidad de crecer en humildad.
- Cuando un policía lo para y recibe una multa de tráfico, agradezca al oficial por tomar riesgos todos los días para mantener nuestra sociedad segura y protegida.
- Cuando estés en Misa o en un avión y escuches a un bebé llorar, agradece que sus padres aceptaron el precioso regalo de una nueva vida. Los niños son nuestro futuro.
- Practique el hábito cortés de escribir notas de agradecimiento a los demás.
- Cuando te enfrentes a tu propia debilidad, límites, y falta de capacidad personal, ora en acción de gracias a Dios con la idea expresada por San Pablo en 2 Corintios 12:5-10: “Cuando me siento débil, me cubre la fuerza de Cristo.”
- Dale gracias a Dios por los peñascos que debes superar en el camino de tu vida, porque te hacen más fuerte. Santiago dice: “Hermanos, estimen como la mayor felicidad el tener que soportar diversas pruebas. Ya saben que, al ser probada nuestra fe, aprendemos a ser constantes” (Santiago 1:2-4).
- En aquellas ocasiones en las que sufras sin merecerlo, o pases por cualquier tipo de dificultad, agradece el privilegio de compartir las aflicciones de Nuestro Señor Jesús. La cruz que llevas te acerca a él. Cuando unes tus sufrimientos a los de él, participas de manera pequeña y humilde en su sacrificio redentor. San Pablo dice: “Ahora me alegro cuando tengo que sufrir por ustedes, pues así completo en mi carne lo que falta a los sufrimientos de Cristo para bien de su cuerpo, que es la Iglesia” (Col 1:24).
- Estos son sólo algunos ejemplos de las muchas maneras en que podemos expresar acción de gracias. Al practicar intencionalmente pasos como estos, la actitud de gratitud llegará a ser un aspecto duradero de nuestro carácter personal. San Pablo escribe: “Y den gracias a Dios en toda ocasión; ésta es, por voluntad de Dios, su vocación de cristianos” (1 Tes 5:18). El *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* enseña: “Todo acontecimiento y toda necesidad pueden convertirse en ofrenda de acción de gracias” (núm. 2638).
- El Papa Francisco enseña repetidamente sobre la importancia de dar gracias. Dice: “La gratitud, la capacidad de dar gracias, nos hace apreciar la presencia en nuestra vida del Dios que es amor y reconocer la importancia de los demás, superando la insatisfacción y la indiferencia que desfiguran nuestro corazón. Es fundamental saber decir ‘gracias’. Por favor, no olvidemos esta palabra clave” (Papa Francisco, Homilía, 9 de octubre de 2022).
- La mayor oración de gratitud en el mundo es la Misa.



Obispo Michael J. Sis

Diócesis de San Angelo

En la primera Misa, cuando Jesús celebraba la Última Cena con sus apóstoles, “dio gracias” con el pan y el vino (Lc 22:7-20). En ese texto bíblico, el verbo griego para dar gracias es *eucharistein*. De ahí proviene la palabra “Eucaristía”. Literalmente significa “acción de gracias”. La Misa es una gran oración de gratitud. Individual y colectivamente damos alabanzas y gracias a Dios Padre por su acción salvadora a través de Jesucristo.

Aquí me gustaría señalar algunos momentos clave de la Misa en los que expresamos gracias a Dios. Después de la proclamación de las lecturas de las Escrituras, respondemos: “Te alabamos, Señor”. Al comienzo de la Plegaria Eucarística, en el Diálogo del Prefacio, decimos: “Demos gracias al Señor, nuestro Dios. Es justo y necesario”. Después de recibir la Comunión, nos arrodillamos y damos gracias a Dios por lo que hemos recibido. Al final de la Misa decimos: “Demos gracias a Dios”. No estamos agradeciendo que la Misa haya terminado, sino más bien dando gracias por lo que Dios ha hecho por nosotros. Después del canto fina, y antes de salir de la iglesia, es una buena práctica arrodillarnos para una pequeña oración personal de acción de gracias.

En este tiempo de Avivamiento Eucarístico en la Iglesia Católica en los Estados Unidos, buscamos vivir más plenamente como pueblo eucarístico. Literalmente, esto incluye vivir la virtud de la gratitud como un hábito continuo de nuestro corazón. San Pablo expresa esto bellamente en Colosenses 3:15-17: “Sean agradecidos. Que la palabra de Cristo habite en ustedes con todas sus riquezas, ... con el corazón agradecido, canten a Dios salmos, himnos y alabanzas espontáneas. Y todo lo que puedan decir o hacer, háganlo en el nombre del Señor Jesús, dando gracias a Dios Padre por medio de él.”

Espacio de Oración

Oración de Acción de Gracias

Dios todopoderoso,
cuyos dones de amor son incontables
y cuya bondad es infinita,
venimos ante ti, en este Día de Acción de Gracias,
para agradecer todas tus bondades
y pedir que dispongas nuestro corazón
para que sirvamos a nuestros semejantes;
haz que seamos capaces
de compartir generosamente
los dones que de ti hemos recibido.
Por nuestro Señor Jesucristo, tu Hijo,
que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo y es Dios por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

Misal Romano, Día de Acción de Gracias, Oración Colecta

La síntesis del Sínodo muestra acuerdos y divergencias, incluso sobre la ‘sinodalidad’

Por Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Un informe que resume los debates de la asamblea del Sínodo de los Obispos afirma que la Iglesia puede necesitar enfoques pastorales más acogedores, especialmente para las personas que se sienten excluidas, pero también reconoce el temor a traicionar las enseñanzas y prácticas tradicionales de la Iglesia.

Entre los temas abordados en el informe figuran los abusos sexuales cometidos por parte del clero, el papel de la mujer en la Iglesia, la ayuda a los pobres y el propio concepto de la "sinodalidad".

La asamblea, con 364 miembros con derecho a voto — 365 contando al Papa Francisco — se reunió en sesiones de trabajo seis días a la semana, del 4 al 28 de octubre, tras un retiro de tres días fuera de Roma.

Tras concluir la votación de la síntesis, el Papa dijo que quería recordar a todos que "el protagonista del sínodo es el Espíritu Santo". Dio brevemente las gracias a los responsables del Sínodo y se unió a los miembros de la asamblea para dar gracias a Dios.

Los debates de la asamblea preparan el terreno para un periodo de reflexión de un año que culminará en la segunda y última asamblea sinodal, a finales de 2024, sobre el mismo tema.

El informe de síntesis de alrededor de 41 páginas, votado párrafo por párrafo el 28 de octubre, describe su propósito como la presentación de "las convergencias, las cuestiones que deben abordarse y las propuestas surgidas del diálogo" sobre cuestiones debatidas bajo los epígrafes de sinodalidad, comunión, misión y participación.

Todos los puntos del informe fueron aprobados por al menos dos tercios de los miembros presentes que tenían derecho a voto, según informaron los responsables del Sínodo. Publicaron una lista completa de los votos.

Dentro de los temas del sínodo, los miembros examinaron el papel de la mujer en la Iglesia, incluida la toma de decisiones, y la posibilidad de ordenar mujeres diáconos. El informe (cuya versión oficial fue publicada en italiano) pedía más "investigación teológica y pastoral sobre el acceso de las mujeres al diaconado", incluyendo una revisión de las conclusiones de las comisiones que el Papa Francisco creó en 2016 y 2020.

El párrafo, uno de muchos párrafos que tocaron el tema de las mujeres y el diaconado — fue aprobado por 279 votos a favor y 67 en contra, más de los dos tercios necesarios, pero aún así fue uno de los párrafos que obtuvo uno de los votos negativos más elevados.

Entre los miembros de la asamblea,



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El Papa Francisco da su bendición al concluir la asamblea de la última sesión de trabajo del Sínodo de los Obispos, el 28 de octubre de 2023, en el Aula Pablo VI del Vaticano.

según el informe, algunos pensaron que la idea de mujeres diáconos sería una ruptura con la tradición, mientras que otros insistieron en que "restauraría una práctica de la Iglesia primitiva", incluso en la época del Nuevo Testamento, que menciona a las mujeres diáconos.

"Otros ven en este paso una res-

puesta adecuada y necesaria a los signos de los tiempos, fiel a la Tradición y capaz de encontrar eco en los corazones de muchos que buscan una renovada vitalidad y energía en la Iglesia", decía el informe. Pero,

CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



November

- 10 Rev. James Coleman (D — 2002)
- 12 Rev. Robert Vreteau, OMI (D — 2013)
- 13 Deacon Floyd Schwartz (B)
- 19 Deacon Abel Fernandez (B)
- 19 Rev. Frank Zimmerman, CM (D — 1999)
- 20 Deacon Billy Garcia (B)
- 23 Rev. Ariel Lagunilla (B)
- 23 Deacon Jesse Guajardo (D — 2020)
- 23 Rev. Colm Mulligan, MSC (D — 2003)
- 24 Deacon Leroy Beach (D — 2016)
- 25 Rev. Fernando Bonilla (B)
- 26 Rev. Fabian Rosette (B)
- 27 Rev. Michael Dwyer, MSC (D — 1997)

December

- 1 Rev. John A. Pierce (D — 1979)
- 1 Rev. Joseph Uecker (B)
- 2 Rev. Juan Lopez (B)
- 4 Rev. Thomas Manimala (B)
- 4 Rev. Larry Cyr, CPPS (D — 2017)
- 5 Deacon Alonzo Landin (B)
- 5 Rev. Laurent Mvondo (O — 1981)
- 5 Rev. Angel Vizcarra, OP (D — 2004)
- 7 Deacon Arturo Casarez (O — 2002)
- 7 Deacon Michael Kahlig (O — 2002)
- 7 Deacon Michael LaMonica (O — 2002)
- 10 Rev. Francis Njoku (B)
- 12 Rev. James Aaron (D — 1999)
- 12 Rev. Romanus Akamike (D — 2015)
- 12 Deacon Jose Gallegos (B)
- 12 Deacon Nestor Perez (D — 1993)
- 12 Deacon Lorenzo Salazar (B)
- 14 Rev. Albert Ezeanya (B — 1974)
- 14 Rev. Bernardito Getigan (O — 1985)
- 15 Rev. Peter Vaitonis (D — 1968)
- 17 Rev. Joseph Vathalloor, CMI (D — 2020)
- 17 Rev. Lazaro Hernandez (B)
- 19 Deacon Salvador Primera (B)
- 20 Deacon Julio Carrasco (B)
- 20 Rev. John Waldron (D — 1995)
- 21 Rev. Thomas Manimala (O — 1995)
- 21 Bishop Michael Pfeifer (O — 1964)
- 21 Rev. Bala Anthony Govindu (B)
- 23 Rev. Yesuratnam Mulakaleti (O — 2004)
- 27 Rev. Mark Woodruff (B)
- 28 Rev. Nicholas Femenia, CM (D — 1999)
- 28 Rev. Knick Knickerbocker (B)
- 29 Deacon Miguel Lopez (B)
- 30 Rev. Joseph Choutapalli (O — 1990)
- 30 Rev. John Hoorman, CPPS (D — 1995)
- 30 Deacon Alfonso Moreno (B)

B = Birthday | O = Date of Ordination
D = Date of Death
(Dates of birth and ordination given for living clergy; date of death for deceased.)



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

November 2023

- 1 ABILENE, Abilene Christian University, Lighthouse meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 2 SAN ANGELO, Calvary Cemetery, Blessing of the graves at 4:30 p.m., Mass at 6:00 p.m.
- 4 ABILENE, Holy Family, Installation of Pastor Rev. Nilo Nalugon at 5:30 p.m.
- 5 ABILENE, Sacred Heart, Youth and College Mass at 11:30 a.m.
- 8 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 12:10 p.m.
- 9 BALLINGER, St. Mary, Priests’ Day of Reflection at 10:00 a.m.
- 11–17 WASHINGTON, Bishop’s Fall General Assembly
- 18 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 4:00 p.m. followed by dinner with Guadalupanas
- 19 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Deacons’ Retreat Mass at 11:00 a.m.
- 19 ABILENE, Holy Family, SEARCH Retreat Closing Mass at 2:00 p.m.
- 21 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Pension Administrative Committee meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 27 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 12:10 p.m.
- 29 SAN ANGELO, First Methodist Church, Advent Luncheon Service at 12:00 noon
- 30 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 12:10 p.m.

December 2023

- 1 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Joint Meeting of Finance Council and College of Consultors at 11:00 a.m.; Presbyteral Council meeting at 2:00 p.m.
- 1 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Priests, Deacons, Religious Annual Advent Party at 5:00 p.m.
- 2–3 SAN MARCOS, Knights of Columbus State Leadership meeting
- 5 SAN ANGELO, Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 11 SAN ANGELO, Cathedral Endowment Board meeting at 11:30 a.m.
- 12 ELDORADO, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mass at 6:00 p.m.
- 14 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Diocesan Staff Annual Advent Dinner, Social 6:30 p.m., Dinner 7:00 p.m.
- 15 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Diocesan Review Board meeting at 10:00 a.m.
- 15 MENARD, Sacred Heart, Rehearsal at 7:00 p.m.
- 16 MENARD, Sacred Heart, Dedication of Restored Sacred Heart Church at 10:00 a.m.
- 16–19 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Seminarian Gathering
- 19 SAN ANGELO, St. Joseph, Mass at 6:00 p.m., followed by Posadas at 7:00 p.m.
- 21 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 12:10 p.m.



Christ the King Retreat Center

November 2023

- 1 Closed in Observance of the Solemnity of All Saints
- 8 Shannon Volunteers
- 13 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 17–19 DOSA Deacons Retreat 2
- 22 DOSA Staff Meeting, Mass & Lunch
- 23–24 Closed in Observance of Thanksgiving
- 27 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

December 2023

- 1 Bishop’s Annual Party for Clergy
- 6 Staff Advent Morning of Reflection
- 8–10 Deacon Formation Pre-Candidacy Retreat
- 14 Bishop’s Annual Advent Party for Staff
- 16–19 Seminarian Winter Gathering
- 25 CKRC Offices Closed in Observance of Christmas
- 29 CKRC Offices Closed in Observance of the New Year

Special collection Nov. 19: Catholic Campaign for Human Development

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is the national anti-poverty program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, working to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ "to bring glad tidings to the poor ... liberty to captives ... sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free" (Lk 4:18). The belief that those who are directly affected by unjust systems and structures have the best insight into knowing how to change them is central to CCHD. CCHD works to break the cycle of poverty by helping low-income people participate in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities. CCHD offers a hand up, not a handout. CCHD has made over 9,000 grants to support people living in poverty break the cycle of poverty, and over 200 organizations are supported each year through the annual collection taken up in dioceses. CCHD's rigorous review process includes the recommendation and approval of the local bishop as well as a grant agreement. Hundreds of smaller projects are funded through the 25 percent share of the CCHD collection retained by dioceses. These grants have significantly changed the lives of the poor in the United States.

4 p.m. on Sunday fulfilling the obligation. However, attending a Mass after 4 p.m. on Sunday only fulfills the obligation for Sunday or for Christmas, not for both. Between Saturday evening and Monday, a Catholic should attend both a Sunday Mass and a Christmas Mass.

Sunday, Dec. 31 - Obligation
It’s Sunday. Go to Mass!

Monday, Jan. 1 - No obligation
When the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, falls on a Monday, it is not a holy day of obligation in the U.S. There is never a bad time for Mass, though, especially if you have the day off of work.

Father Benito Rojas begins service in DOSA

For the benefit of the people of God in West Texas, Bishop Michael J. Sis has appointed Father Benito Rojas Barrón, MSP, as parochial administrator of St. Joseph Parish in San Angelo and St. Therese Parish in Carlsbad, effective Nov. 3, 2023. Father Juan Fernando Bonilla-Sanchez, MSP, former pastor of St. Joseph and St. Therese, has begun an assignment outside the diocese.

This is Pope Francis’ prayer intention for November

By Francesca Pollio Fenton
Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis’ prayer intention of the month of November is for himself — the pope.
“Pray to the Lord that he will bless me,” Pope Francis said in a video released Oct. 31. “Your prayer gives me strength and helps me to discern and to accompany the church, listening to the Holy Spirit.”
“The fact that someone is pope doesn’t mean they lose their humanity,” he added. “On the contrary, my humanity grows each day with God’s holy and faithful people.”
The Holy Father called his role as pope “a process.” He explained that throughout the process, a pope “learns how to be more charitable, more merciful, and, above all, more patient, like God Our Father, who is so patient.”
“I can imagine that at the beginning of their pontificate, all the popes had this feeling of trepidation, apprehension, knowing that he will be judged harshly,” he said. “For the Lord will ask us bishops to give a serious account.”
Pope Francis asked the faithful to “judge benevolently” and to “pray that the pope, whoever he might be — today it is my turn — may receive the help of the Holy Spirit, that he may be docile to that help.”
He concluded with a prayer: “Let us pray for the pope, so that in the exercise of his mission, he may continue to accompany in the faith the flock entrusted to him by Jesus, always with the help of the Holy Spirit. And pray for me! Favorably!”

Mass obligations for Christmas and the New Year

With Christmas and the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, both falling on Mondays this year, Catholics may wonder how these holy days affect obligatory Mass attendance. Here is a breakdown to help you with your holiday planning.

Sunday, Dec. 24 - Obligation
As with every Sunday of the year, Catholics are expected to attend Mass if they can. Any Mass after 4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 23 or any time on Sunday fulfills this obligation.

Monday, Dec. 25 - Obligation
Here is where things get tricky. Christmas is a holy day of obligation in the church, with vigil Masses after

IN MEMORIAM



Sister Phyllis Ann Bunnell, CDP

January 1, 1938 – October 16, 2023

Sister Phyllis Ann Bunnell (formerly Marie Bernard), CDP, entered eternal life on October 16, 2023, at the age of 85. She was born January 1, 1938, in San Angelo, Texas, to Francis Patrick and Marie Christina (Droll) Bunnell. She was the middle child of three girls. Sister Phyllis admired the Sisters of Divine Providence (CDPs) great dedication as educators and answered God’s call to follow their example on June 21, 1958. She spent 56 years of her 64 years of vowed life as an educator.

Sister Phyllis’ early education took place in the local Catholic school until her mother, who was taught by the Sisters of Divine Providence, enrolled her in St. Joseph’s Academy in Abilene, Texas. It was a boarding school where the CDP taught. She was to stay for one year while her older sister adjusted.

However, Phyllis attended from third grade to her high school graduation because she enjoyed being with the sisters. Sister was happy to have Sister Amata Regan (later Superior General of CDP) as her teacher. Shortly after graduation, she accepted the invitation to join the convent. That was the beginning of her devoted life to teaching.

Sister Phyllis excelled in her own education having earned a Bachelor of Science from Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU), San Antonio, Texas, and both a Master of Arts and PhD from the University of North Texas, Denton, Texas. Starting her ministry in 1960, she would span states and curriculums, from elementary schools in Shreveport, Louisiana, to high schools in Ennis, Texas, culminating as an Assistant Professor of English at her alma mater, Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. “In my humble opinion, there can be no better life than that of a sister and no better ministry than teaching,” she once declared. Her love for Latin and English was particularly profound, noting, “As much as I enjoyed teaching English, Latin provided me with an extra jolt of excitement.” Her final mission lasted 13 years at Providence High School, San Antonio, Texas, a sponsored institution of the congregation. She taught the girls English and Latin. The boys from Central Catholic High School were included in her Latin classes for four of those years.

Her influence extended beyond the classroom. Sister Phyllis served two terms on the Liturgy Commission of the Parish Council in Denton, Texas, and actively participated in various congregational roles, echoing the importance of evolving faith and community. Reflecting on her journey, she insightfully remarked about Vatican II, “It’s our church. We’re responsible for it, and we need to work to make Jesus known to the world.”

Her peers and superiors held Sister Phyllis in high regard, with the Graduate Dean of North Texas State University lauding her as an “influence for good” and “never too busy to help someone who needs it” among both students and faculty. Her vibrant spirit touched all. Her resilience, adaptability, and unwavering faith in the face of change remain an inspiration to many.

She is survived and loved by her Bunnell and Droll cousins, and the Sisters of Divine Providence. She was preceded in death by her parents Francis Patrick and Marie Christina (Droll) Bunnell and siblings Patricia Bunnell and Sister Nicole Bunnell, CDP.



Sister Carolyn Pelzel, CDP

April 30, 1945 – October 7, 2023

Sister Carolyn (aka Sister Monica Rose) Pelzel, CDP, entered eternal life on October 7, 2023 at 78 years of age. She was surrounded by various family members, and a close friend, Cindy Ford. Carolyn was born April 30, 1945, in Olfen, Texas, to Wilburn Paul and Ruby (Halfmann) Pelzel. She was the oldest of their six children. Carolyn answered God’s call to become a Sister of Divine Providence on August 1, 1964. She professed first vows on August 2, 1965.

Sister Carolyn was inspired to enter religious life by the Sisters of Divine Providence who taught her. However, she chose the Congregation of Divine Providence because of her conversations with her middle school teacher, Sister Marie de Chantal. Their discussions on world news, and

social and justice issues mirrored the foundation set by her parents. These interactions also showed Carolyn the vibrancy and meaningfulness of religious life.

Sister Carolyn earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the institution founded by her congregation: Our Lady of the Lake University, in San Antonio, Texas. She later earned her Master of Arts in Religious Studies from the University of the Incarnate Word, in San Antonio, Texas. Aside from these degrees and other certifications, Sister Carolyn pursued her learnings in Israel, Fordham University, New York, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. All of these experiences inspired, enlightened, and enhanced her ministries.

Sister Carolyn began her ministry as a first-grade teacher in various schools in Texas and Louisiana. For over 25 years she served as Director of Religious Education, and Pastoral Associate in various schools and parishes in Texas and Louisiana. She began her service in the medical field in 1999 in Austin, Texas, as a voice for the disabled, a sitter with those who were saved from suicide, a liaison between family members and medical staff, and an office assistant in the Seton Family of Hospitals. Her final ministry was in St. Louis Parish, also in Austin, Texas, where she volunteered and was present to its Women of Faith group. She recently began a card ministry with this group and remained very close to its members.

In appreciation of her 50th jubilee, she shared a picturesque description of her religious life. “The bayous, the desert, the mountains, the oil fields, the hill country all reflected God’s unique love. In each place, I became enriched in ways I would have never dreamt possible. In each place, I felt very blessed by the vibrancy of God working among so many diverse people.” Sister Carolyn’s family, friends, and Sisters of Divine Providence can also appreciate the beauty of God’s love by having known her.

She is survived by her siblings Donnie (Marcie) Pelzel, Larry Pelzel, Judy (Nelson) Lange, Alan (Mary Lee) Pelzel, aunts and uncles Kay Halfmann, Jeanie and Charles Looka, Carol Pelzel, Fred and Nancy Pelzel and James Pelzel, numerous nieces and nephews and her Sisters of Divine Providence. She was preceded in death by her parents Wilburn and Ruby Dell Pelzel and sister and brother-in-law Linda and Stanley Eggemeyer.

Teen Scouts exploring religious vocations invited to participate in St. George Trek

ROCIADA, NM — The National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) is encouraging high-school aged Scouts in a Boy Scouts of America (BSA) program to apply for the 2024 St. George Trek. The Trek is a 16-day adventure, including 11 days of backpacking in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. Teens experience the sacraments and the church’s life of prayer as they explore the majesty of God’s creation — and their vocation. The next St. George Trek is July 3–18, 2024. The deadline for a \$300 early registration discount is Oct. 31, 2023. All eligible teens need to do to get started is apply online.

“Catholic Scouting encourages young people to dig deeper into their faith and form a real relationship with Jesus, truly discerning what God is calling them to do in their life. Sometimes this leads to a religious vocation,” said NCCS Chair John Anthony. “We know of 12 St. George Trek participants who have entered semi-

nary formation over the past decade — and three have been ordained to the priesthood. We also know of several Trek participants who have begun formation with religious orders.”

Due to NCCS sponsorship and the generosity of supporters, the 16-day St. George Trek only costs \$1,575. In many cases, local Catholic Scouting committees pay some or all of the Trek fee. Scouts are responsible for personal gear like hiking boots, as well as transportation from their home city to Albuquerque. Male or female Scouts can apply. The Trek is not co-ed; there are separate hiking groups for male and female teens. View eligibility requirements and additional details, plus access the participant application form at: <https://nccs-bsa.org/saint-george-trek/>.

There is evidence that young people involved in Catholic Scouting are more likely to remain engaged in the church and to consider a religious vocation. For example, being involved in Scouting is something many

recent men ordained to the priesthood have shared. Since 2006, 30% of ordinands to the priesthood in the U.S. were active in BSA Scouting growing up, according to a survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University.

NCCS is a church committee of concerned Catholic laity and clergy, which is advisory to the BSA and relates to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) through its Episcopal Liaison. NCCS-sponsored Catholic Scouting is the only Scouting program sanctioned by both the USCCB and BSA. Catholic Scouting offers more than 50 Religious Activities as well as a range of Religious Emblems programs. Catholic Scouting supports service projects that help young people learn about the value of volunteering and leadership in service of their community, school, Scouting and the church. Catholic Scouting welcomes boys and girls starting in kindergarten and features whole family activities.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for our children and vulnerable adults. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you need a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church, we are here to help you. To report incidents, call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609 (cell), or write Diocese of San Angelo, Victim Assistance Mini-

stry, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the incident occurred outside this diocese, our Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate diocese. Please keep in mind that one always has the right to report abuse to civil authorities, and civil law requires that any abuse of a minor must be reported. To report about a bishop, the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service can be accessed by visiting ReportBishopAbuse.org or by calling 800-276-1562 (national hotline).

Reportar Abuso Sexual

La Diócesis Católica de San Ángelo está firmemente comprometida a crear y mantener el ambiente más seguro posible para nuestros niños y adultos vulnerables. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por cualquier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de traición o herido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarle. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Ángelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San

Ángelo, TX 76902. Un intérprete de español está disponible. Si el incidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a traer su preocupación a la atención de la diócesis correspondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de reportar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, y la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado. Para reportar sobre un obispo, se puede acceder al Servicio de Reportes de Abuso de Obispos Católicos visitando ReportBishopAbuse.org o llamando al 800-276-1562 (línea directa nacional).

Christ the King Retreat Center celebrates ruby anniversary

By Tom Burke

It is our ruby anniversary! Christ the King Retreat Center has been in service to God's people in the Diocese of San Angelo for 40 years! In those 40 years, tens of thousands of people have come through our doors and have renewed their faith. Families, parish members, communities of faith, work places, young and old transformed because our Catholic diocese kept a commitment it made decades ago to offer a place where people of all denominations could gather in Christ's name. Truly, it is a hidden treasure. The story of Christ the King Retreat Center is the story of the people of West Texas ... a story of God's people investing in God's people.

What is our mission?

Our retreat center is a special place that fosters spiritual renewal. It is a place to be present to the presence of God. It is a place that strives to nurture and deepen one's faith in God through Jesus Christ. It is a place that builds community (ACTS or Walk to Emmaus groups). It is a place where people retreat from the world and are renewed in the Holy Spirit. It is a place to learn about one another (Engaged Encounter). And, it is a place where people discern and learn about ministry (Deacon Formation, Parish Staff Development Day, etc.). It is a place where the old go to grow young again and where faith is passed along from one generation to the next. It is a place for organizations to gather and conduct business (Shannon Hospital Volunteers, San Angelo Realtors, and Texas Region XV New Principals). It is a place for Bishop Sis to host other priests and guests from different regions like the Tex-Mex Border Bishops. We are a retreat center that invites everyone to be at home with God and we are much more.

In mid 1979, then-apostolic delegate of St. Pope John Paul II, Archbishop Jean Jadot, visited the Diocese of San Angelo. Archbishop Jadot encouraged the faithful throughout the Diocese of San Angelo to build a retreat center. He stated that a retreat center is an essential ministry in every diocese. Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, the fourth bishop of our diocese, made construction of a retreat center one of his priorities. Christ the King Retreat Center was consecrated to the service of our Lord on June 9, 1983, and the first retreat held was an Engaged Encounter weekend, June 10-12.

Prayerfully, it was decided that Christ the King Retreat Center would be ecumenical in its mission. Because of that decision, our retreat center has been something like a flagship for our diocese and our church. Non-Catholics experience Catholicism through hospitality and an abiding faith in Jesus Christ. For many non-Catholics, our retreat center has been their first experience of our Catholic Church.

During these 40 years of ministry, the Retreat Center has experienced two major renovations. The first was undertaken by Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, in 2003 and 2004 with the assistance of then director, Rev. John Castro, OMI. At that time, the renovations included the lobby, conference room, public restrooms, kitchen and serving area, dining room (expansion), and two guest rooms that were renovated to meet the needs of those with physical challenges.

A second renovation began in 2008. Receiving a post-humous financial gift from the estate of Gerald and Edith Crawford of Midland and securing additional grants, the entire complex and grounds were addressed. Others saw our efforts to restore God's house and contributed. For example, Msgr. Louis Moeller gave a generous financial gift and our chapel was renovated with new paint, carpet, upholstery for chairs, sacred vessels and vestments. Over



the years, the Art and Eva Camuñez Tucker Foundation has blessed us with monies to replace guest room air conditioning units and mattresses and box springs, install security cameras, update our key lock system with a coded keypad system, and many other projects. Members of local parishes donated their time and talent to remove old carpet and tired mattresses, saving us additional costs. Local councils of the Knights of Columbus felled and removed trees along our prayer path, taking seven tractor-trailer loads of timber from our property and enhancing our grounds.

When COVID-19 brought our ministry to a slow crawl, Bishop Sis stood with us and supported us. When the winter freeze of 2021 burst our water pipes, 28 guest rooms were restored. Our mission and the spirit of our staff have not dimmed.

The vision of Archbishop Jadot, Archbishop Fiorenza, Bishop Pfeifer, and Bishop Sis to provide and maintain this ministry has been, is, and will continue to be a blessing for the people of West Texas for decades to come.

If you live in San Angelo or are just passing through, I invite you to stop and experience Christ the King Retreat Center. If you would like to view a video of our facility, please visit our diocesan website and click on "Retreat Center."

I ask for your prayers for our guests and the continuance of our ministry on this, its 40th "ruby" anniversary. May God continue to bless the faithful in the Diocese of San Angelo who have entered through our doors and, in a special way, those who have offered generous support over these decades. May God bless all who come here to renew and deepen their faith in Jesus Christ. May Christ's reign hold sway in the lives of all who cross our threshold.

Tom Burke is the director of Christ the King Retreat Center.

A giving opportunity

If you wish to become part of our story, our next major project has revealed itself: plumbing. We are in need of \$188,000.

Though intact, several sections of our sewer pipes (covered under concrete sidewalks) have shifted downward; thereby, what should be a linear pipe that moves contents away from the buildings now has become something akin to a holding area in certain spots. We will need to cut concrete sidewalks, dig, and create new earthen support. This labor-intensive project will cost us more than we expected.

On May 2, during an annual event named "San Angelo Gives" and through the generosity of the community, we raised \$24,185.62 for this project. Our goal is to raise the total amount and complete this project, all the while serving God's people.

I appeal to you to make a financial commitment to help continue God's work through our ministry. If you are able to give toward our mission, there are four convenient ways to make your donation:

- 1) Visit our website at <https://sanangelodiocese.org/retreat-center-donations>;
- 2) Make a pledge with monthly installments;
- 3) Mail a donation to at 802 Ford Street, San Angelo, TX 76905; or,
- 4) Call us at (325) 651-5352.

With your help, Christ Jesus will continue to be proclaimed and glorified through this ministry for forty years to come ... and many more.

Hispanic ministry leaders find hope, challenges in new U.S. bishops' pastoral plan's implementation

By James Ramos

HOUSTON (OSV News) — Thirty years ago, a group of Hispanic ministry leaders from around the U.S. gathered in Houston to discuss plans and initiatives to minister to the Hispanic and Latino Catholics living in the U.S.

This Oct. 10-13, the National Catholic Association of Diocesan Directors for Hispanic Ministry's annual conference returned to Houston, gathering 250 Hispanic ministry leaders from 109 dioceses in the U.S. The national conference — which took place at the tail end of this year's Hispanic Heritage Month, observed Sept. 15-Oct. 15 — also gathered some six bishops, several who lead U.S. bishops' committees on Hispanic ministry and cultural diversity in the church.

The NCADDHM conference focused on the new "National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry," a new document, approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2023, that was

developed through a process of consultation, discernment and leadership over multiple years.

The plan is a response to the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry (V Encuentro) process to help Hispanic laypeople and church leaders to meet the needs of the fastest growing demographic of the Catholic Church in the U.S.

At the Houston conference, Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, assistant director of USCCB's Subcommittee for Hispanic Affairs and national coordinator for the V Encuentro, said the pastoral plan was a direct reflection and response to the "priorities, needs and aspirations" of Hispanic and Latino Catholics and has "the potential to transform the church in the United States."

The Encuentro was a multiyear series of diocesan, regional and national meetings involving tens of thousands Hispanic and Latino leaders that culminated with a national gathering in Grapevine, Texas, in

2018, and identified key pastoral priorities for Latino Catholics.

Among the 10 priorities highlighted in the pastoral plan was the engagement of youth and young adults, vocations, faith formation, accompaniment of families, ministry to the marginalized, and immigration and policy advocacy.

During the conference, leaders heard from speakers, bishops, and theologians who talked about the implications of the pastoral plan. In addition to daily Mass and presentations, participants broke into small groups at different times to share how the new plan would look like in their ministries and their regions.

For Olga Lucía Villar, executive director of the Miami-based Southeast Pastoral Institute — which coordinates and assists Hispanic ministries in 30 dioceses of the Southeastern United States — and one of many speakers at the conference, the new pastoral plan could not come soon enough.

She sees the pastoral plan as helping the church become more sensitive to the

multicultural reality of the present Catholic Church in the U.S. "Especially at times where it is difficult, where there are more issues that might divide us racially, I think that the plan is placing us at a good point to continue healing the processes of reconciliation and focus on belonging and being sent off by Christ," she told OSV News.

Villar saw a parallel between the Encuentro process and the more recent synod effort led by Pope Francis and said that "the plan walks us toward being a synodal church."

Since the first Encuentro was held in 1972, Villar said, the efforts have been bringing the church together to reflect, dialogue and look together for ways to move forward as Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. That continues to be the case although the demographic landscape has changed.

Since 1972, the number of Hispanics in the U.S. has increased sevenfold, from

FOCUS marks 25 years of missionary-driven university student evangelization

By Kiki Hayden
OSV News

"FOCUS' mission statement is simple: It's to know Christ Jesus and fulfill the great commission," said Curtis Martin, founder of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students. Based in Denver, FOCUS lives out that mission in that order: For its campus missionaries, "divine intimacy" and the pursuit of holiness come first, before their evangelization efforts, Martin said.

FOCUS has grown greatly in the 25 years since launching in 1998. Now with about 981 missionaries, the student-focused missionary outreach serves 193 college and university campuses in the United States, nine international campuses, nine digital campuses and 23 parishes. Most U.S. states have multiple university campuses served by FOCUS missionaries.

On its website, the organization underscores its vision, which it calls its "main thing": "Inviting college students into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and his church, inspiring and equipping them for a lifetime of Christ-centered evangelization, discipleship and friendship in which they lead others to do the same."

Knowing Jesus wasn't always central for Curtis or his wife, Michaelann. By their late teens, both had rejected their Catholic faith. However, through evangelical Christian Bible studies in college, each rediscovered Christ and recommitted to Catholicism.

With a burgeoning love for Scripture, in 1988 Michaelann joined a young adult Bible study Curtis started with about 65 to 70 people in his parents' living room.

She and Curtis "became friends almost instantly," Michaelann recalled. The evening they met, they talked about "how Our Lady brought us back to Jesus in the Eucharist."

The following November, Curtis and Michaelann Martin were married. They felt called to help others experience Scripture as they had in college, but in a Catholic context.

While Michaelann was pregnant with their first son,

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Bishop Michael Sis on X (formerly Twitter): @SABishopMike

On the Web

www.sanangelodiocese.org

the Martins met Scott Hahn, a former Presbyterian minister who had recently converted to Catholicism. After hearing about their dream to minister to college students through Catholic Bible studies, Hahn invited Curtis to study with him at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio.

In February 1998, Martin traveled to Benedictine College in Kansas to lead a retreat with his friend, Benedictine professor Edward Sri. Believing the pair were called to start something larger than that single retreat, Sri worked that semester with students as a part-time leader for FOCUS.

That summer, Martin and Sri trained two part-time missionaries who were rising seniors at Benedictine as well as two full-time missionaries who would serve with Martin at the University of Northern Colorado. Ever since, FOCUS has been sending missionaries to college campuses to be disciples among students.

By strategically focusing on American universities, FOCUS has an opportunity to connect with and evangelize rising leaders from all over the world, Martin said.

When Curtis Martin had the opportunity to share his ideas that year with St. John Paul II, the pope responded: "Be soldiers." This meeting was the first of several encounters with popes and influential Catholic leaders — encounters that the Martins believed confirmed they were doing God's will, they told OSV News.

FOCUS sends full-time missionaries to campuses and parishes to support local Catholic volunteers. "You can be impacted by a webpage or some great materials, but the webpage and materials can't love you, whereas our missionaries can," Martin said.

Those missionaries receive training based on St. John Paul's 1992 apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis (I Will Give You Shepherds)*, which was written for the formation of priests. FOCUS' two-year training emphasizes the same pillars of formation as seminarian formation, he said.

An ideal missionary candidate is someone who is faithful to the church, eager to learn and who is "contagious," or lives their life in a way that attracts others, said Martin, who served under Pope Benedict XVI as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization and whom Pope Francis named in April to the Dicastery for Evangelization.

FOCUS missionaries spend their days leading Bible studies, praying together, attending Mass, and getting to know the students and others around them, offering deep friendships and delving into important topics, especially what it means to follow Jesus. Personal spiritual growth is central for all FOCUS team members, who have access to spiritual direction.

FOCUS helps each missionary fundraise their salary, while FOCUS subsidizes with benefits. "We walk with our people," Martin said.

FOCUS hosts annual SEEK conferences for university students, with this year's event drawing nearly 19,000 attendees to St. Louis in January to learn about evangelization and other faith-related topics. Like many of FOCUS' endeavors, SEEK conferences provide opportunities to encounter Christ through Mass and Eucharistic adoration.

Online, FOCUS provides free formation materials, such as Bible study guides and YouTube videos on topics ranging from saints to dating, at its website focusequip.org.

Trevor Jin, FOCUS' formation specialist whose work emphasizes formational media, described FOCUS' digital outreach as "providing air support to that in-person mission."

Jin, 30, grew up Catholic in St. Louis. But he knew more "about" Jesus than he knew the Lord's love for him, he said. After being invited to a FOCUS Bible study while attending The University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, Jin quickly discovered a desire to spread the good news about Jesus' love.

During the summer before his senior year of college in 2015, Jin worked for a bank developing a mobile app. But his passion project that summer was making an app for his Newman Center. "I found a deep love for building

things for the church," he said.

When he realized that as a FOCUS missionary he could evangelize full time, joining the team was a natural next step.

After two years as a missionary, Jin moved to Denver to join the national team to support missionaries. He's stayed with FOCUS in part because of the atmosphere of prayer in the Denver FOCUS support center, where there is easy access to priests and chaplains, confessions, spiritual direction and daily Mass.

"We all pray the Divine Mercy chaplet every day together, there's a rosary said every day here, there's a culture of prayer here," Jin said. Meanwhile, "Professional development is very important here for ... being more effective in spreading the kingdom."

Jin has recently worked on a unique project: a documentary on Michelle Duppong, a servant of God whose cause for canonization is underway in the Diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota. After encountering FOCUS as a student at North Dakota State University in Fargo, Duppong served as a FOCUS missionary for several years. But that's not the central theme of her story: Jin said his main takeaway is that "heroic virtue and sanctity is for everyone."

Like Jin, Amy Chang was extremely successful at what she studied, but found her passion in spreading the Gospel, eventually choosing to work for FOCUS as a missionary. Seeing FOCUS' growth gives Chang, 28, hope for the future.

Raised in a family that practiced Buddhism only on holidays and visits to South Korea, Chang grew up without much knowledge of religion. During her freshman year at The University of Tulsa in 2013, she was invited into friendship with a FOCUS missionary and FOCUS student leaders. Chang described her friends at FOCUS as "radically available," something she had not experienced in previous friendships.

One Friday evening, she found herself in a eucharistic adoration chapel alongside 30 other students. "It was really there that I think the Lord invited me to encounter him for the first time," she told OSV News.

Chang was baptized, confirmed and received her first Communion her freshman year. During her junior year, she traveled to India on a FOCUS mission trip. It was "one of the most transformative trips I have ever been on," she said.

FOCUS leaders invited her to apply to become a missionary after college. Instead, she worked for a Fortune 500 company, but ultimately felt lonely and unfulfilled. She recalled how different things felt when she had been involved with FOCUS during college.

Chang called FOCUS and described her struggles. The FOCUS hiring manager said the organization's offer wasn't about FOCUS needing a certain number of missionaries, but rather "we gave you an offer because we believed in you, and we still believe in you." She accepted.

After two years of serving as a FOCUS missionary, Chang joined the missions management team in Denver. FOCUS, she said, wants to help their team members be "fully alive."

To celebrate FOCUS' 25th anniversary, all missionaries were invited to the same summer training at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's campus. Thinking about all the hundreds of missionaries together "gives me goosebumps," Chang told OSV News.

The 25th anniversary also gives Chang "great hope and great faith that there are a lot of ... young people that are answering the call to the new evangelization, and just how many more souls are being brought along."

Within the next 15 years, FOCUS hopes to reach half of U.S. college campuses and 5% of U.S. parishes, Martin said.

While FOCUS boasts impressive numbers — such as 1,206 priestly and religious vocations inspired by FOCUS and more than 70,000 missionary and student alumni — Martin said FOCUS has its eyes on each individual.

"The value of a single soul is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ," he said.

Kiki Hayden writes for OSV News from Texas.

'La oración de ustedes me da fuerzas', dice el Papa

Por Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Regularmente a la gente que rece por él, y en octubre dijo bromeando a un grupo de monjas por qué: "Este trabajo no es fácil; de hecho, es un poco 'fastidioso'".

Pero como la Red Mundial de Oración del Papa, antes conocida como Apostolado de la Oración, ha pedido a los católicos de todo el mundo que recen por el Santo Padre durante el mes de noviembre, él dio una respuesta más seria en el vídeo mensual del Papa que comparte la red.

"La oración de ustedes me da fuerzas y me ayuda para que pueda discernir y a acompañar a la Iglesia, escuchando al Espíritu Santo", dijo en español en el vídeo difundido el 31 de octubre.

"Por el hecho de que alguien sea Papa uno no pierde su humanidad", dijo. "Al contrario, mi humanidad cada día crece más con el pueblo santo y fiel de Dios".

El Papa Francisco también explicó que, si bien ser elegido por los cardenales en un cónclave hace que un cardenal sea el Papa, en realidad ser el Papa "también es un proceso".

"Uno va tomando conciencia de lo que significa ser pastor", dijo. "Y en este proceso, aprende a ser más caritativo, más misericordioso y, sobre todo, más paciente, como es nuestro Padre Dios, que es tan paciente".

"Puedo imaginar todos los papas al empezar su pontificado, tuvieron esa sensación de susto, vértigo, del que sabe que va a ser juzgado con dureza", dijo el Papa, porque Dios pedirá a cada obispo una seria rendición de cuentas de su ministerio.

Seahawks offensive tackle loves the game, but Catholic faith is his 'focal point'

By Jean Parietti

SEATTLE (OSV News) — In his second year as an offensive tackle for the Seattle Seahawks, Abraham "Abe" Lucas is living his childhood dream. Even so, it's faith, not football, that's the most important thing for this self-described "hard-core Catholic."

"It's my focal point, it drives everything that I do — my faith and my relationship with Jesus Christ," said Lucas. "It's my purpose."

At 6-foot-6 and 322 pounds, Lucas is someone you wouldn't want to tangle with on the football field. Off the field, he's been described as a "gentle giant," considerate and loyal. Currently on injured reserve, Lucas, who turned 25 on Oct. 25, is approachable, open, and honest — willing to share his struggles in life and eager to talk about being Catholic.

"He's experienced his own crosses, his own sufferings, but Christ has always been at the center of his life and how he tries to live his life," Father Paul Heric, Lucas' pastor at the St. Thomas More Catholic Student Center at Washington State University, said in a video.

Lucas said he considers his whole life a ministry, and believes football is what he's "called to do at this moment."

He never misses weekend Mass, and he tries to pray the rosary daily (sometimes on the team plane), go to confession weekly and attend weekday Mass as often as he can.

He doesn't shy away from sharing his faith in the locker room. Lucas recalled a great conversation in the sauna with a teammate — a strong nondenominational Christian — about the differences in their beliefs. "To hear him talk about his faith, I love it, it's fantastic," he said.

Lucas feels called "to spread the Word of God as much as possible" — never pushing, "but if the conversation gets opened up and someone is curious about it, I'll absolutely share what it is that I know."

Lucas is "so grounded in his faith that he can bravely walk into conversations and say exactly what we're all about" without offending anyone, said Deacon Dennis Kelly, who was campus minister at Archbishop Murphy High School in Everett, Washington, during part of Lucas' time there. "He's just a great evangelist."

And Lucas speaks volumes about being Catholic through the images tattooed on his arms.

They include Christ crowned with thorns, the Virgin Mary, St. Michael the Archangel fighting the devil, a skull representing human mortality and Christ's victory over death, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha, is the first Native American to be canonized. (His paternal great-grandmother was part Native, and he admires St. Kateri's commitment to God.)

When teams interviewed Lucas before the 2022 NFL draft, some asked where football falls on his list of priorities. Probably third, he told them, after his faith and his family.

"This is my job now ... and I love what I do and I'm thankful for it," Lucas told *Northwest Catholic*, the publication of the Seattle Archdiocese. "But if I had to pick between God and football, I would pick God 10 times out of 10. It's not that hard of a decision to make. Some people don't understand that because not everybody has faith."

The seeds of Lucas' faith were planted and nurtured by his parents, Kelly and Julie, longtime members of St. Thomas More Parish in Lynnwood, a Seattle suburb.



OSV NEWS PHOTO | STEPHEN BRASHEAR, NORTHWEST CATHOLIC
Abraham "Abe" Lucas, an offensive tackle for the Seattle Seahawks, prays during Mass at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Lynnwood, Wash., Sept. 3, 2023.

The second oldest, Lucas grew up with four sisters and two brothers. (Another sibling, Joseph Michael, was lost to miscarriage at 18 weeks, Julie said.) Lucas was baptized on All Saints' Day and attended Catholic schools — St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Bothell for Montessori, then St. Thomas More and on to Archbishop Murphy.

Attending school as a youngster was a mixed bag of experiences. Lucas said he was not only "a squirmer," but he also was a bigger kid and felt a lot of people "didn't really get me." But attending St. Thomas More "was instrumental in building the faith," he said.

At home, the family prayed the rosary every night. His parents also emphasized "receiving the sacraments as much as possible, especially the Eucharist," Lucas said. The family went to confession at least once a month; today Lucas tries to go to confession before receiving Communion.

"We're not perfect, of course, but it's my opinion that you want to be as clean as you can ... when you are literally consuming the body of Christ," he said. "We need that intimate relationship with God through Communion. So I gotta get to confession so that I can receive Communion."

Sports also were big in the Lucas household, whether it was the kids participating in athletics or Kelly watching lots of football. But sports never won out over going to Mass on Sundays, Julie said. Lucas' first sport was soccer, then came baseball, football and basketball, which became his favorite sport, she said. He played both basketball and football at Archbishop Murphy, where Lucas said he had "a great experience."

"The good thing about Catholic schools is that they require you to do service," he said, and while at first he "didn't get it," doing acts of service "was a big teaching point for me."

The other was learning the what and why of church teaching on subjects such as abortion and capital punishment. He enjoyed history — his college major — and theology classes, especially the junior-year class that explored church history, and the senior-year class focused on discussion, "bringing different views to light and what does God say about these things," he said.

Lucas also was an active participant in campus ministry. "Whenever I would do adoration or the rosary, he

would be there," Deacon Kelly said. And when he arrived to pray with the football team before their games, it was Lucas who settled the players "into a prayerful space."

When time for confirmation rolled around, Lucas' parents let him make the decision. "I remember my mom saying to me, 'If you're not going to take it serious, don't do it.' She actually said the church doesn't need lukewarm Catholics, it needs people who are going to try as much as they can to keep the sacraments and commandments and such."

Lucas was all in and he was confirmed at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church.

When his family dropped him off for his first year at WSU, Lucas realized that keeping his faith strong was now up to him.

It was something his parents had emphasized to their kids as they grew up: "When you get out into the real world, don't lose (the faith) because there's a lot of distractions," Lucas said.

He finally understood what they were talking about as he dealt with all the distractions and temptations that come with college life. He decided to preserve his faith, picking up where he left off at home by going to Mass every weekend.

Sometimes things were going great with his faith life, but when they weren't, Lucas said it was hard to admit he couldn't handle it alone and needed to seek spiritual guidance. After Father Heric was assigned to the Newman Center, Lucas began spending more time there, going to adoration, confession and daily Mass, something Father Heric suggested.

In the busy, difficult months leading up to the 2022 NFL draft, Lucas experienced a lot of anxiety and uncertainty, but "attacked it relentlessly and got through it," he said in a WSU Newman Center video with Father Heric. "It also was an opportunity for me to deepen my faith even more and to just trust in God."

Lucas held his draft day party at the Newman Center; he was drafted 72nd overall — which happened to be his jersey number in high school and college (and is the one he now wears as a Seahawk).

Beyond faith, family and football, Lucas enjoys playing guitar and listening to all kinds of "complex" music, from heavy metal (favored for his pregame playlist) to jazz to classical.

And he's finding ways to give back. In June, he hosted a youth football camp at Archbishop Murphy. In July, he traveled with some of the Seahawks staff to Anchorage, where he visited patients at a children's hospital, gave donated shoes to kids and helped put on a flag football camp.

Living a Catholic life isn't always easy, he said, and he may not always feel motivated or succeed in his efforts. But serving God by living his faith "is nothing more than my duty to God on this earth."

"The beauty of it," Lucas added, "is that I only get closer and closer to God and his heavenly kingdom when I live in the way I've been called."

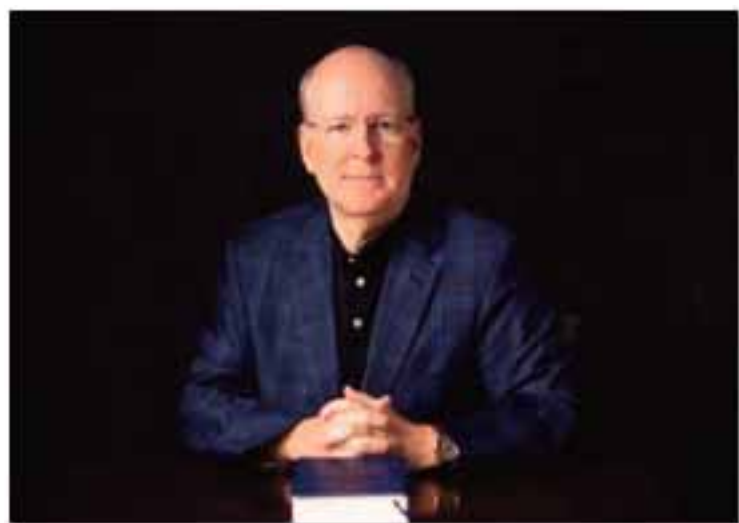
Jean Parietti is features editor for Northwest Catholic, the publication of the Archdiocese of Seattle.



OSV NEWS PHOTO | STEPHEN BRASHEAR, NORTHWEST CATHOLIC
Seattle Seahawks No. 72, offensive tackle Abraham "Abe" Lucas — a self-described "hard-core Catholic" — is pictured in 2022 during a game against the Atlanta Falcons.

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COURTESY



COURTESY

St. Joseph Parish in Rowena recently held a teen vehicle blessing event for the 11th and 12th grade students in the parish youth group. Father Ariel Lagunilla prayed over the teens and blessed their vehicles, as well as a St. Christopher medal for each vehicle's visor.



COURTESY

The confirmation class at Holy Spirit Parish in Sweetwater Oct. 14, 2023.

Bishop Michael J. Sis was in Andrews Oct. 8, 2023, to bless the new parish hall for Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.



COURTESY



COURTESY

Sacred Heart Parish in Abilene held a Youth Revival in the parish hall Oct. 25, 2023.



St. Mary's Central Catholic School in Odessa was filled with saints on All Saints Day, Nov. 1, 2023.

Stewardship: Five keys to help disciples respond to Jesus' call

By Susan M. Erschen
OSV News

What is "stewardship"? Stewardship is perhaps one of the most misunderstood words in the church today. Some people think it is all about money. Others think it means only time, talent and treasure. Some wonder if it is just another word for fundraising or tithing.

In reality, "stewardship" is the word that describes our entire relationship with God. God loved and trusted us so much that he made us his stewards. Our challenge is to strive to be good stewards by recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God, taking time to be grateful for the gifts that God has given us, realizing that God gives each of us all we need plus enough to share, and turning to the Holy Spirit for guidance in sharing our gifts as God intended.

Stewardship, therefore, is linked to our life of following Jesus.

"Once one chooses to be a disciple of Jesus Christ,

stewardship is not an option," the bishops state in their pastoral letter "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response," first published in 1992.

Anyone who wants to be good at any task must study it and practice it. Stewardship, too, takes practice. Society tempts us to triumph in our material accomplishments and continually strive for more. At times resisting this pull toward self-centered materialism requires practice, prayer and careful study of God's teachings.

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ gave us important final messages: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: Love one another" (Jn 15:15-17).

This simple message from Our Lord gives us five keys for living as good stewards: spend time with God, realize God has chosen us, contribute something for God, trust in God's abundance, and love and serve.

1. Spend time with God: God is the owner and master of everything. Yet, we are not his slaves. We are the stewards he trusts, the ones he invites to know him and his will. Stewardship draws us closer to God. When we embrace the role of steward, we open ourselves to know God more fully.

We foster that relationship by attending Mass more frequently; weaving more prayer into and throughout our busy days; finding time to study Scripture and religious books, articles or websites; participating in faith-enrichment activities in our parish; and stopping into a church or chapel for quiet time alone with God.

2. Realize God has chosen us: How awesome it is to realize God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, has chosen us. Everything we are, everything we do and everything we have is a result of God choosing us, loving us and blessing us.

God chooses each one of us to be the stewards of different gifts. We may have a musical talent, financial aptitude, a generous spirit or a positive attitude. Even our faith is a gift from God.

God does not give us all the same gifts. We could look around and see people who have more gifts than we have and become jealous. Or, we could look around the world and see people who have much less than we have, and learn to be compassionate. The choice is ours.

3. Contribute something for God: Based on the

unique combination of gifts God has given us, each of us is called to make a contribution that is uniquely ours to make. We can contribute in a variety of ways by providing a helping hand or a strong back; leadership, knowledge or wisdom; financial support; a listening ear or a gentle smile; a new idea; and special skills or talents.

Only we, through prayer, know what God is calling us to contribute.

4. Trust in God's abundance: It can be difficult for any of us to give away something that we think we need. However, stewardship teaches us to look at our financial situations in a new way. When we believe our own needs will be met, it is easy for us to give.

Unfortunately, the endless advertising so prevalent in today's media convinces us we have endless needs. However, the things the world tempts us to have are not needs. They are wants. God may not give us all we want, but we must trust that he will give us what we need, when we ask. In turn, we generously share with the world what God has entrusted to us.

5. Love and Serve: When we share our resources more generously with the parish, we take the focus off the parish's financial burdens. In this way, stewardship encourages ministry and a more loving parish community. When we love and serve others in our parish, we build up a community that will also love and serve us. We become part of something greater than ourselves. We feel a sense of belonging. We also develop a sense of compassion when we reach out to those who are most in need. Belonging and compassion are two of the many unexpected benefits of living as God's stewards.

Stewardship is not a gift we give to God, but rather a gift God gives to us.

From the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ, Catholics made the work of the church, Christ's body, a priority in their lives. The great cathedrals and simple country churches where people worship, schools where countless children are educated, hospitals that care for the sick, and charitable institutions that serve the needs of many, have been built by generations of the faithful.

They gave, even when they had little to give, because they knew Jesus had called them as his disciples to be good stewards of the resources God entrusted to them.

Susan M. Erschen served for 12 years as the director of stewardship education for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. She is the author of the books God's Guide to Grandparents and Finding a Loving God in the Midst of Grief.

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Question: Are demonic possessions just mental illness?

Q: In watching *The Chosen* I noted a couple of demonic episodes were included, as are in fact depicted in Scripture. No CGI effects were done to show the demons either going in or coming out of the victims, making the healed person seem to simply be someone with personality disorders. What does the church say today about demons? Are they real or were they ancient superstitions and misidentifications of what would today be called “mental issues?” (City withheld, Indiana)

A: The church teaches that demonic possession, while rare, is certainly something that can happen.

In 1999, the rite of exorcism was the last liturgical ritual to be revised after Vatican II, but it's worth noting that this ritual is for what we call “major exorcisms,” or exorcisms intended to release the afflicted from actual demonic possession (i.e., more or less along the lines of the exorcisms we see portrayed in the movies). But in the Catholic Church we also have “minor exorcisms,” such as the prayers prayed over soon-to-be baptized infants and adult catechumens preparing to enter the church. Minor exorcisms are meant to strengthen the one seeking baptism against the very real powers of evil, with no presumption that the one receiving the minor exorcism is actually possessed.

Because of the reality of the demonic, today every diocese is supposed to have a specially trained priest, appointed by the diocesan bishop, who serves as the diocesan exorcist.

That being said, it requires careful discernment on the part of the exorcist-priest to determine whether or not a true demonic possession is actually the source of a particular individual's suffering. As the U.S. Bishops' Conference website's page on exorcism notes: “The exorcist is instructed to employ the utmost circumspection and prudence before proceeding to the rite. Throughout his ministry, an exorcist must establish a balance within his own mind between not believing too easily that the devil is responsible for what is manifesting, and attributing all possible manifestations solely to a natural, organic source.” To that end, most dioceses in United States have protocols which require an individual to have medical and psychiatric evaluations, to rule out potential natural causes, before they can receive a major exorcism.

Finding a medical or mental health condition that could mimic demonic possession is one way to gain clarity that a

Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News

Question Corner

person's suffering is not caused by the direct malevolence of a supernatural entity.

On the other hand, the introduction to the rite of exorcism lists some medically-unexplainable, positive “signs and symptoms” of demonic possession, such as: the afflicted person speaking and understanding foreign languages they never studied; revealing hidden knowledge or information they would have had no way of knowing; and demonstrating physical strength beyond what would be normal for their size and general condition. True victims of possession will typically also have a history of dabbling in the occult, such as through fortune-telling, visiting psychic mediums, playing with Ouija boards, or participating in “New Age” activities.

If we turn to the Gospels themselves, there are some instances where Jesus cast out demons in a way that might perhaps be interpreted as the curing of a mental illness, such as when he frees a mute man to speak (See Mt 9:32).

But there are also many narratives of Jesus performing exorcisms in unambiguous cases of actual demonic possession. For example, we read of demons tormenting two possessed men; they recognize Jesus and cry out to him: “What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?” (Mt 8:29).

But the bottom line we should always remember is this: whether the biblical exorcisms cured cases of true demonic possession or mental illness, the message to us is the same: God has supreme authority over all that he has created, and he wishes salvation and healing for all his children.

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

Our home away from home

“Home.” What do you think of when you hear that word? For many, it is a place of complete security. Former First Lady Rosalyn Carter said, “There is nothing more important than a good, safe, secure home,” while William J. Bennett, a past U.S. Secretary of Education, stated, “Home is a shelter from storms ... all kinds of storms.” But our home is also associated with peace.

Indeed, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt believed that “peace, like charity, begins at home.” Kathleen Norris, American poet and essayist, wrote, “Peace — that was the other name for home.” A home is a refuge for the many storms that we experience in life, both internal and external. Most importantly, it is a place of love and being loved.

“Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do ... but how much love we put in that action,” declared Mother Teresa, saint and founder of the Missionaries of Charity. Lydia Child, American abolitionist, compassionately offered, “Home — the blessed word, which opens to the human heart the most perfect glimpse of heaven, and helps to carry it thither, as on an angel’s wings.” But while so many of us can relate to the comforting sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches of home, that clearly is not the case for everyone.

Many times in my professional practice, I have seen people become highly emotional as they recall childhood events in homes that were anything other than secure, peaceful, and loving. Horrific abuses of all kinds have left indelible memories that are immediately brought to the surface as they relate what “home” was like for them. And it is not just children who have been wounded physically, mentally, or spiritually by their home life but also millions of adults who have experienced the heartache of a broken marriage.

Our true home, of course, is with God and all our loved ones in heaven. Dr. Peter Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College, writes, “Remembering the facts of death and heaven gives us an even more pressing reason to learn to pray: We do not have an infinite amount of time. We are one day nearer Home today than we ever were before.” Until that final day comes, where do we find refuge?

While it is unquestionable that Satan has infiltrated the church founded by Jesus through the sins of some of its priests, religious, and others, it is also true that the Catholic Church is our greatest source of security, peace, and love on earth. In our own home we have the sight of candles on a birthday cake ... in church we see candles lit for prayers. In our home we may have the touch of loved ones ... in church, the touch of kneelers. At our home, the sound of voices ... in adoration chapels, the sound of silence. In our home, the smell of food cooking ... in church, the smell of incense. In our home we may have a table with bread on it with a focus on the here and now ... in church, the bread on the table is all about eternal life! Our Blessed Sacrament is truly “HOME made” as Jesus comes down from heaven, accompanied by



James R. Sulliman, PhD

saints and angels, to “give us each day our daily bread.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nos. 1324–1327), states that, "The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.’

“The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.”

“Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.

“In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: ‘Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.’”

As the dark clouds of evil gather and intensify, portending the storms that are to come, many Catholics are getting further and further away from their true “home away from home,” not a church building but their Catholic faith. The latest research conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate challenged the methodology used in the 2019 Pew findings that reported only one third of Catholics believed in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. The findings of the CARA study indicated that 64% of Catholics held that belief, and 95% of Catholics who attended Mass each week. While those numbers are more encouraging, it is clear that many Catholics have weak foundations for their “homes.” We must look for them and do all we can to strengthen their faith, while we do the same with ours through the Mass, reception of the Blessed Sacrament, eucharistic adoration, daily rosaries, and following the path Jesus taught us.

Most people are aware of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 14:11–32) where a father greets a returning son with open arms. Similarly, Jesus gave this parable: “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home,

he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep’” (Lk 15:4–6). There is also the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt: 20:1–16) in which the owner of the vineyard pays each worker the same wage regardless of how long they have worked for him. It is easy, then, to mistakenly think that we can put off strengthening our faith for another day.

But, there are other things that Jesus said, as well. “Then he told them a parable. ‘There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, “What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?” And he said, “This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, “Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!”’ But God said to him, “You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?” Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God’” (Lk 12: 16–21). And, “Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come” (Lk 12:39–40). In Mathew 24:37–39 we are told, “For as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In [those] days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be [also] at the coming of the Son of Man.”

If home is a place of security, peace, and love, then we find it in Jesus who tells us “Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12:32). He quells anxiety when he says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (Jn 15:27). In John 14:23 we hear these beautiful words: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.’”

People do not wait to board up their home until a hurricane is ravaging it ... they do that in advance. We must do likewise with our faith, for we know these words of Jesus: “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). The only thing that can sustain us in the tribulations that are sure to come is our Catholic faith in God, our “home away from home.”

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Dr. James Sulliman 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.

Mother Cabrini showed triumph over adversity

Maria Frances Cabrini was the youngest of 13 children, born in 1850 in the small village of Sant’ Angelo Lodigiano, Italy. She followed her parents’ wishes and trained to be a school teacher in a convent boarding school at Arluno. Her parents died when she was 18 and Frances decided to follow the religious life. She applied to two religious congregations but was refused admittance because she had been ill with smallpox.

So she taught in a private school at Vidardo. In 1874 the Bishop of Lodi asked her to help at a small orphanage called the House of Providence in Codogno. Editor Michael Walsh wrote in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that the bishop then asked her to turn its staff into a religious community, and she agreed.

Several recruits joined her, and in 1880 she founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, dedicated to the education of Christian girls. Some years later, the Bishop of Piacenza suggested that Mother Cabrini, as she was now known, should go to America to work among the Italian immigrants. She had always wanted to do missionary work in China, so she rejected his suggestion

Then the Archbishop of New York, Msgr. Michael Corrigan, sent her a formal invitation. Walsh wrote that she consulted with Pope Leo XIII, and he told her to go “Not to the East, but to the West.”

In 1889, she and six sisters crossed the Atlantic to organize an orphanage and an elementary school for Italian children in New York. Sadly, they were not



Mary Lou Gibson

Speaking of Saints

welcomed when they arrived. Archbishop Corrigan withdrew his invitation because he felt the work was not suitable for women and suggested that she and her sisters return to Italy. Richard McBrien writes in *Lives of the Saints* that Mother Cabrini said, “No. The pope sent me here, here I must stay.”

At that time, there were some 50,000 Italian immigrants living in New York, for the most part in poverty and apart from the church. Mother Cabrini and her sisters received no support from the diocese as they taught the children, visited the sick, and fed the hungry. As the sisters’ reputation grew, McBrien writes, the local shopkeepers donated whatever they could for their work. Mother Cabrini eventually was able to find a building and open the orphanage. She had years of experience in overcoming insurmountable obstacles in Italy and was no stranger to adversity. Sarah Gallick writes in *The Big Book of Women Saints* that Mother Cabrini was blessed with a gift for

bringing out generosity in others, and she also shrewdly negotiated with landowners and contractors.

Success followed and Mother Cabrini opened more orphanages and schools in New York. During an epidemic there, she founded a hospital named after Christopher Columbus. The year was 1892 — the 400th anniversary of his voyage to America.

For the next several years she traveled extensively across the United States, establishing foundations in Chicago and New Orleans. Her mission spread to Italy, Costa Rica, Panama, Chile, Brazil, France, and England, with 67 houses of her congregation throughout the world. Her religious congregation received final approval from the Holy See in 1907.

She became an American citizen in 1909. Mother Cabrini fought a constant battle with ill health all her life. She was a petite woman, barely five feet tall, had difficulty learning English, and always spoke with an accent.

Mother Frances Cabrini died in Chicago on Dec. 22, 1917. She was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1946, the first American citizen to be canonized. She was named the patroness of immigrants by Pope Pius in 1950. Her feast day is observed on Nov. 13 in the U.S. and Dec. 22 in the rest of the world. Mother Cabrini’s legacy lives on in the 16 countries around the world where her Missionary Sisters live and work.

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

Catholic Voices

A day at the synod

As some of you probably know, I’ve been in Rome for the past three weeks participating as a delegate at the Synod on Synodality. You might also have heard that in order to ensure the confidentiality of the proceedings, Pope Francis has asked all the members of the synod to refrain from disclosing what has been discussed. So, I won’t be providing any juicy inside information. But I thought you might find it interesting to know what a typical day at the synod is like and what the overall atmosphere is.

I am residing, along with most of the other American delegates, at the North American College, situated on the Janiculum Hill, about a fifteen-minute walk from St. Peter’s. We commence with a quiet Mass in a small chapel at 7 a.m, and then, after a quick breakfast, we make our way by bus to the Paul VI audience hall, where the synod is taking place. You have undoubtedly seen photos or videos of this venue, for it is where general audiences with the pope are held during the colder months of the year. They have cleared out the first fifty or so rows of chairs to open up a space for thirty-six round tables at which the delegates are seated. The leadership of the synod — including the pope himself, when he is able to attend — are situated at a round table on a slightly elevated platform at the front of the room.

The synodal day begins with prayer — in either Italian, Spanish, English, or French — and proceeds with a calling of the roll and an introduction to that day’s work by Cardinal Grech, the General Secretary of the Synod. The focus of our attention is the so-called *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document), which represents a distillation of two years of preparatory conversations around the world. In our small groups, we consider the various sections of the *Instrumentum* under the guidance of a facilitator, who rather tightly manages the process. Each person around the table is expected to offer a prepared five-minute contribution, and then, in a second round of discussion, each can react to what the others have said. At the conclusion of this lengthy (and frankly, sometimes laborious) undertaking, the group puts together a three-minute summary of the main points of convergence and divergence. Then, one by one, each group shares these summaries with the plenary assembly. When those reports are finished, all of the delegates are permitted to request time for what are called “free interventions.” Though the speeches are, in principle, limited to three minutes, speakers frequently go over the limit, and the days when we have to listen, in plenary assembly, to intervention after intervention are, I admit, rather tiresome.

The time that we spend in small groups is the most enjoyable, mostly because it enables us to get to know one another — and we come from an astonishing variety of backgrounds. In the four groups in which I have so far participated, I have met bishops from Liberia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Turkey, Germany, and Lithuania — as well as lay delegates from Australia, Canada, Ireland, and Lebanon. I just don’t think there is any other organization in the world that could gather a group of such stunning cultural and geographical diversity. Being part of these groups shows that Jesus’ command to go out to the ends of the world proclaiming the Gospel has been, against all odds and expectations, obeyed.



Bishop Robert Barron
Word on Fire Ministries

I should say a word about the technology, which has worked rather impressively and represents a significant improvement over what was available at previous synods. There are, of course, simultaneous translations available through headsets, but there are also, at each table, cameras that can swivel into position to broadcast the speech of a given individual to the entire assembly. All of it has gone pretty much without a hitch, the great exception being when the system mistook me for my namesake, Sr. Mary Theresa Barron from Ireland!

The days are very long, commencing at 8:45 a.m. and ending at 7:15 p.m. — and we work Monday through Saturday. Almost everyone that I’ve talked to is less than thrilled with the schedule and eager for a bit of a reprieve when we regather next year. A saving grace is the coffee breaks: the morning session featuring cappuccinos and the afternoon session a shot of espresso. During these informal times, we small talk, complain a bit, tell stories, and sometimes have some very serious conversations. During the breaks, I have engaged, to name just a few, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna; Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney; Cardinal Michael Czerny, head of the Vatican Dicastery on the Development of Peoples; Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay (India); Cardinal Walter Kasper, a theologian whom I read with great interest when I was a seminarian; and Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former head of the Vatican’s office for doctrine.

The overall mood of the synod I would describe as businesslike and serene. Important and controversial matters are being discussed, and it is very clear that not everyone is of the same opinion, but I have not heard one raised voice or polemical tone. Very occasionally, following an intervention, a smattering of applause might be heard, but typically, each speech is met with a respectful silence.

When the workday ends, I either go back to the North American College for dinner or, a bit more typically, I go out with friends and colleagues to a Roman restaurant. Since supper in Rome begins at 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m., I don’t get back to my room until 9:30 p.m. or so, at which point, I’m pretty exhausted. As you can undoubtedly sense, the whole synod experience is a bit of a slog, and frankly, I’m eager to get home. But it’s also fascinating, even at times, exhilarating. And in a year, I’ll be back for round two. Please keep all of us synodal participants in prayer.

Bishop Robert Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota.

Can the laity save the church?

There’s a good chance that Russell Shaw is one of the most prolific contemporary authors and commentators on the Catholic Church that you may never have heard of.



Greg Erlandson
OSV News
Amid the Fray

Defiantly unretired, in just the past seven years Russ has written *Catholics in America* (Ignatius), *Eight Popes and the Crisis of Modernity* (Ignatius), *The Life of Jesus Christ*, (OSV) and now *Revitalizing Catholic America: Nine Tasks for Every Catholic* (OSV).

In the course of his more than six decades in service to the church and numerous Catholic institutions, he has authored 25 books and countless articles for a wide variety of Catholic and secular publications.

In addition, he has worked for several Catholic institutions, from the U.S. bishops’ conference and the National Catholic Educational Association to the Knights of Columbus. He was a longtime consultant to what was then called the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

If you haven’t heard of him, it may well be because Russ does not bask in the limelight. At a time when everyone seems to be pimping his or her “brand” and getting as many “clicks and eyeballs” as possible by tossing what Russ called “red meat” to the readers, he is none of that.

He isn’t a flamethrower. He doesn’t pander. He is what is becoming increasingly rare: a quiet, thoughtful observer of Catholic life today, understood through the prism of Catholic history.

His institutional experience may explain his tempered tone, but it may also explain the fact that he was a critic of clericalism long before Pope Francis. His book, *To Hunt, to Shoot, to Entertain* (the only tasks one bishop said were appropriate for the laity) may not have warmed the cockles of episcopal hearts when it was released in 1993, but he was way ahead of many in deploring how the laity have been sidelined, sometimes by their own clericalist attitudes. He has also been a quiet activist going back to his days with the bishops’ conference in arguing against secrecy and for transparency, particularly during the bishops’ national meetings.

In his newest book released this year, *Revitalizing Catholic America*, Russ, with coauthor David Byers, is his Eeyore best. He looks at trends in the U.S. church with a baleful eye, describing it as being challenged by a “devil’s stew of hostile mindsets and aberrant behaviors, all coming together under an umbrella called

See ERLANDSON, Page 19

A subtler kind of poverty

There are different ways of being excluded in life. Earlier this year, one of my older brothers died. By every indication he had lived an exemplary life, one lived mainly for others. He died much loved by everyone who knew him. His was a life lived for family, church, community, and friends.

Giving the homily at his funeral, I shared that, while he almost always brought a smile, a graciousness, and some wit to every situation, underneath he sometimes had to swallow hard to always do that. Why? Because, even though through his entire adult life he gave himself to serving others, for much of his life he didn’t have much choice in the matter. Here’s his story.

He was one of the older children in our family, a large second-generation immigrant family, struggling with poverty in an isolated rural area of the Canadian prairies where educational facilities weren’t easily available at that time. So, for him, as for many of his contemporaries, both men and women, the normal expectation was that after elementary school (an eighth-grade education) you were expected to end your school days and begin to work to support your family. Indeed, when he graduated from elementary school, there was no local high school for him to go to. Making this more unfortunate, he was perhaps the brightest, most gifted mind in our family. It’s not that he didn’t want to continue his formal education. But, he had to do what most others of his age did at that time, leave school and begin working, giving your entire salary over every month to support your family. He did this with good cheer, knowing this was expected of him.

Through the years, from age sixteen when he first entered the work force until he took over the family farm in his mid-thirties, he worked for farmers, worked in construction, and did everything from operating a backhoe to driving a truck. Moreover, when our parents died and he



Father Ron Rolheiser

took over our farm, there were a number of years when he was still pressured to use the farm to support the family. By the time he was finally freed of this responsibility, it was too late (not radically, but existentially) for him to restart his formal education. He lived out his final years before retirement as a farmer, though as one who found his energy elsewhere, in involvement in ongoing education and lay ministries programs where he thrived emotionally and intellectually. Part of his sacrifice too was that he never married, not because he was a temperamental bachelor, but because the same things that bound him to duty also, existentially, never afforded him the opportunity to marry.

After I shared his story at his funeral, I was approached by several people who said: *That’s also my brother! That’s also my sister! That was my dad! That was my mother!*

Having grown up where this was true of a number of my older siblings, today, whenever I see people working in service jobs such as cooking in cafeterias, cleaning houses, mowing lawns, working in construction, doing janitorial work, and other work of this kind, I am often left to wonder, are they like my brother? Did they get to choose this work or are they doing it because of circum-

stances? Did this person want to be a doctor, or writer, a teacher, an entrepreneur, or a CEO of some company, and end up having to take this job because of an economic or other circumstance? Don’t get me wrong. There’s nothing demeaning or less-than-noble in these jobs. Indeed, working with your hands is perhaps the most honest work of all — unlike my own work within the academic community where it can be easy to be self-serving and mostly irrelevant. There’s a wonderful dignity in working with your hands, as there was for my brother. However, the importance and dignity of that work notwithstanding, the happiness of the person doing it is sometimes predicated on whether or not he or she had a choice, that is, whether or not he or she is there by choice or because factors — ranging from the economic situation of their family, to their immigrant status, to lack of opportunity — have forced them there.

As I walk past these folks in my day-to-day life and work, I try to notice them and appreciate the service they are rendering for the rest of us. And sometimes I say to myself: *This could be my bother. This could be my sister. This could be the brightest mind of all who was not given the opportunity to become a doctor, a writer, nurse, a teacher, or a social worker.*

If in the next life, as Jesus promised, there’s to be a reversal where the last shall be first, I hope these people, like my brother, who were deprived of some of the opportunities that the rest of us enjoyed, will read my heart with an empathy that surpasses my understanding of them during their lifetime.

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

Un género más sutil de pobreza

Hay diferentes maneras de ser excluido en la vida.

A comienzos de este año, murió uno de mis hermanos mayores. Por todos indicios, había llevado una vida ejemplar, entregada principalmente a los demás. Murió muy amado por todos los que lo conocieron. La suya fue una vida dedicada a la familia, la iglesia, la comunidad y los amigos.

En la homilía de su funeral, comenté que, aun cuando casi siempre mostraba sonrisa, bondad y algo de ingenio en cada situación, en el fondo a veces tenía que aguantar mucho para hacer siempre eso. ¿Por qué? Porque, a pesar de que a lo largo de toda su vida adulta se entregó a servir a los demás, durante buena parte de su vida no tuvo mucha opción en esto. He aquí su historia:

Él fue uno de los hermanos mayores de nuestra familia, una numerosa familia inmigrante de segunda generación, que luchaba contra la pobreza en una solitaria área rural de las praderas canadienses donde las circunstancias educativas no estaban fácilmente disponibles en ese momento. De modo que, para él, al igual que para muchos de sus contemporáneos, tanto para hombres como para mujeres, la expectativa normal era que, acabada la escuela primaria (una educación de grado octavo), se esperaba que acabaras tus días escolares y empezaras a trabajar para mantener a tu familia. Por cierto, cuando se graduó de la escuela primaria, no había ningún local de segunda enseñanza al que ir. Para mayor desgracia, él era quizás la mente más brillante y dotada de nues-



Padre Ron Rolheiser

tra familia. No es que no quisiera continuar su educación formal. Pero tenía que atenerse a lo que casi todos los demás de su edad hacían en ese momento: abandonar la escuela y empezar a trabajar, entregando íntegro su salario todos los meses para mantener a su familia. Hizo esto con alegría, sabiendo que era lo que se esperaba de él.

A lo largo de los años, cumplidos los dieciséis, desde que ingresó por primera vez en la nómina de trabajadores de una empresa particular hasta que tomó posesión de la granja familiar en sus mediados treinta años, trabajó para agricultores, trabajó en la construcción e hizo de todo, desde manejar una retroexcavadora hasta conducir un camión. Además, cuando nuestros padres murieron y tomó posesión de nuestra granja, hubo algunos años en que aún fue presionado a usar la granja para mantener a la familia. Para cuando por fin quedó liberado de esta responsabilidad, fue demasiado tarde (no radical, sino existencialmente) para reiniciar su educación formal. Vivió como agricultor sus

Véase ROLHEISER, Página 18

¿Podremos los católicos escucharnos unos a otros?

Escuchémonos mutuamente. De verdad; tomémonos el tiempo para hacer esto. Escuchar exige poco y mucho al mismo tiempo. Es difícil decir que queremos mantener la unidad si no aprendemos a escucharnos unos a otros con amor cristiano y admiración mutua.

El proceso sinodal es en última instancia un recordatorio de lo que somos: Pueblo de Dios guiado por el Espíritu Santo. Como tal, somos una comunidad sinodal, un conjunto de discípulos cristianos que caminamos juntos en la historia con una esperanza común. Dios nos habla por medio de muchas voces. Escuchemos.

Poco ha generado tanto interés en la comunidad católica mundial desde los días del Concilio Vaticano II como lo ha hecho el proceso que acompaña el Sínodo sobre la Sinodalidad. El proceso sinodal ha logrado cautivar la atención de una gran variedad de voces católicas que van desde agentes pastorales dedicados de lleno a la evangelización hasta católicos que viven en las márgenes de la vida de la Iglesia.

Al centro del proceso sinodal está la invitación a escuchar. La tarea puede parecer abrumadora, especialmente cuando ese escuchar ocurre en un momento histórico en el que tenemos acceso a muchos medios para expresar nuestras voces sin filtro alguno y podemos llegar a grandes audiencias con poco esfuerzo.

Una gran multiplicidad de voces con muchos tonos y perspectivas hablan al mismo tiempo. Todas guiadas por el Espíritu Santo. ¿Cacofonía o armonía? Yo diría que las dos. A medida que los bautizados discernimos maneras para escucharnos mutuamente con sinceridad, también buscamos escuchar la voz de Dios.

Tanto quienes apoyan o rechazan el proceso sinodal, al cual el Papa Francisco ha invitado a todos los católicos en el mundo



Hosffman Ospino
OSV News

Caminando Juntos

entero, nadan libremente en un océano agitado de voces y opiniones. El proceso como tal anticipa esto. Si tomamos el proceso sinodal en serio, deberíamos estar dispuestos a escuchar a los 1.300 millones de voces católicas que hay en el mundo.

Conversaciones incesantes en los medios de comunicación social, artículos en periódicos y revistas, columnas de opinión, blogs, páginas web, libros, cartas pastorales, homilías, enseñanzas, tratados teológicos, ponencias y un sinnúmero de conversaciones diarias coinciden al mismo tiempo, compartiendo esperanzas y preocupaciones católicas que nos tocan a todos.

Para muchos católicos, ser parte de un proceso como éste es inusual, quizás incómodo e incluso espantoso. Somos herederos de una cultura eclesial de siglos en la cual pocas voces expresaban su opinión sobre cómo vivir y practicar la fe. Muchos católicos parecían estar contentos con dicho statu quo, delegando cualquier responsabilidad a los pocos — por lo general ministros ordenados o personas altamente educadas — o simplemente no tenían interés alguno en participar de estas conversaciones.

El Concilio Vaticano II recordó a los católicos que todos los bautizados tenemos una responsabilidad ineludible con relación a la evangelización. Los bautizados hemos

Véase OSPINO, Página 20

Los inmigrantes de hoy y por qué muchos no vienen legalmente

Una pregunta muy común que la gente se hace hoy sobre los migrantes es: "¿Por qué estas personas no vienen legalmente como lo hicieron mis antepasados?".

Hay muchas respuestas a esta pregunta. En primer lugar, los antepasados de la mayoría de la gente vinieron antes de 1921, cuando Estados Unidos impuso un sistema de cuotas de inmigración muy estricto, que sólo se rectificó en los años sesenta.

Había pocas restricciones legales, por no decir ninguna, para la mayoría de las personas que deseaban venir a Estados Unidos, especialmente las procedentes de los países considerados útiles para la fuerza laboral estadounidense.

Aunque en 1965 nuestra ley de inmigración fue totalmente renovada en un sistema nacional de cuotas, la forma en que se ha aplicado en los últimos 50 años ha hecho casi imposible que la mayoría de la gente entre legalmente en Estados Unidos. La ley de 1965 se basaba en las relaciones familiares y las necesidades del mercado laboral.

Nos sirvió bien durante muchos años, pero hay que tener en cuenta los nuevos avances. La globalización del mundo, por ejemplo, no sólo afecta a la economía, sino también a los medios de comunicación y al mercado de trabajo. La libre circulación de bienes, información y servicios en todo el mundo debe ir acompañada de una circulación de mano de obra para satisfacer las necesidades a largo plazo de nuestra nación.

Además, la posición histórica de Estados Unidos como refugio de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo es algo que nuestro país no debería abandonar.

Un interesante estudio de David J. Bier, titulado "Por qué la inmigración legal es casi imposible" (Why Legal Immigration Is Nearly Impossible"), ex-



Obispo Nicholas DiMarzio
OSV News

Caminando con Migrantes

plica las razones. En este estudio, muy documentado y con más de 450 notas a pie de página, el autor deduce que menos del 1 por ciento de quienes desean venir legalmente a Estados Unidos pueden realmente inmigrar.

Bier afirma: "Incluso cuando alguien cumple los requisitos, la demanda sobrepasa los cupos anuales de inmigración lo que conlleva un retraso enorme y, con mayor frecuencia, elimina la oportunidad del inmigrante de venir a Estados Unidos. La inmigración legal se trata en menor medida de esperar en la fila y más de ganar la lotería: Ocurre, pero es tan raro que es irracional esperar que ocurra en cualquier caso individual" (Policy Analysis No. 950, Cato Institute, Washington, D.C., 13 de junio de 2023).

La actual afluencia de solicitantes de asilo ha puesto de relieve el problema existente de la falta de vías legales. Se ha establecido una vía por la que se debe permitir a los solicitantes de asilo entrar en Estados Unidos para presentar una solicitud de asilo. Algunos incluso eligen o son dirigidos a los destinos donde pueden presentar una solicitud.

El obstáculo es que el sistema de asilo está desbordado y no pueden recibir rápidamente los beneficios de una solicitud, que incluye el permiso para trabajar. Esto ha creado un grave problema en algunas ciudades, como Nueva

York, donde cerca de 115.000 inmigrantes han llegado por sus propios medios o han sido transportados por los estados fronterizos en un acto de represalia política.

Sin embargo, algunas leyes municipales, particularmente en la Ciudad de Nueva York, exigen que las personas sin hogar reciban alojamiento y comida. Esta afluencia inesperada ha hecho presión en el presupuesto de la ciudad a tal punto que el alcalde Eric Adams ha dicho que la afluencia "destruirá Nueva York".

Aunque esto puede ser una exageración, hace sonar la campana de alarma de que el Congreso y la administración tienen que actuar para reparar nuestro sistema roto.

El gobierno de Biden ha intentado mejorar el sistema sin contar con el Congreso, utilizando su autoridad para crear vías legales para inmigrantes y refugiados. Para el gran número de refugiados ucranianos y afganos que huyen de la guerra, la administración ha utilizado la libertad condicional humanitaria para admitirlos en Estados Unidos, proporcionándoles un estatus legal y la posibilidad de solicitar una autorización de trabajo.

La administración también ha creado un programa de libertad condicional para los refugiados que huyen de los disturbios políticos en países como Haití, Nicaragua, Cuba y Venezuela. El 21 de septiembre, por ejemplo, el gobierno de Biden extendió y reasignó el Estatus de Protección Temporal (TPS) a los venezolanos que ya se encontraban en Estados Unidos, lo que benefició a 500.000 personas.

Aunque se trata de medidas útiles, no resuelven el problema subyacente de la falta de vías legales permanentes para los recién llegados en nuestro sistema

actual. Ni la libertad condicional humanitaria ni el TPS proporcionan un estatus permanente, por lo que los inmigrantes y sus familias viven con el temor de que su estatus legal pueda terminar y se enfrenten a la deportación. Nunca llegan a integrarse plenamente en la sociedad.

Aunque la mayoría de los economistas y expertos en el mercado laboral ven la necesidad de nueva mano de obra inmigrante. Otros no están de acuerdo, quizás no se basan en un análisis de los hechos, sino más bien en su temor al cambio del carácter racial de nuestra población estadounidense.

Un sistema basado en el interés nacional debería definirse no sólo en términos de mercado laboral, sino también en términos de nuestra identidad nacional como nación de inmigrantes, formada por familias inmigrantes y sostenida por inmigrantes. Como demuestra la historia de nuestro país, en la diversidad encontramos la fuerza.

Los juegos políticos no lograrán el objetivo de tener un sistema de inmigración nuevo y justo que sirva a nuestro interés nacional sin racismo y sin los propios intereses mal informados.

Sin la aprobación de una nueva ley de inmigración por parte del Congreso, no hay solución disponible para la falta de vías legales de migración en el sistema, lo que hace que nuestro país esté mal equipado para responder a las futuras necesidades laborales, a la reunificación familiar y a la necesidad de proporcionar un refugio seguro a los perseguidos.

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El obispo Nicholas DiMarzio es obispo emérito de la diócesis de Brooklyn, Nueva York. Escribe la columna "Caminando con Migrantes" para OSV News.

Genetic privacy: Should law enforcement have access to your newborn’s blood?

Many parents and concerned citizens would probably be surprised to learn that their children’s blood samples are being accessed by law enforcement agencies without their knowledge or consent.

In 2021, the State Police of New Jersey sought access to a blood sample from the Newborn Screening Laboratory, a sample belonging to a child who had been screened nine years earlier as a newborn. They wanted to perform DNA analysis so they could try to connect the child’s father to a crime committed nearly 25 years earlier.

Filed away for a long time, these original paper medical forms, with spots of dried blood on them, contain the DNA of newborns. By obtaining the child’s bloodspot sample without a warrant, the State Police were able to maneuver around the requirement to establish probable cause before seeking a warrant for a mouth swab from the suspect. The DNA results obtained from the child’s blood were used to submit an affidavit of probable cause, and a warrant was then issued for a mouth swab from the father. Following the analysis of his swabbed DNA, he was criminally charged.

Every baby born in New Jersey — and most other states as well — is required by law to be tested for a number of diseases and disorders, often within 48 hours of birth, as part of a newborn screening program. By pricking the heel of the baby, hospitals and medical facilities collect blood samples from virtually all newborns in the U.S. Many states retain the dried blood samples after the initial testing has been completed. Upwards of four million newborns are tested annually.

The goal is to identify a range of conditions and diseases in newborn babies, in the hope of reducing their severity through early treatment. One of the most notable success stories involves a condition called phenylketonuria (PKU). When babies with PKU eat foods containing phenylalanine — an essential amino acid found in many common foods — they can suffer permanent brain damage. Before standardized newborn blood screening, families discovered that their child had the condition only after the child developed brain damage. With the advent of newborn screening for PKU in the 1960s, families could be told whether their child had the condition right after birth. They could then use a special diet to prevent permanent brain damage from occurring.

Notwithstanding the praiseworthy and commendable project of trying to improve health outcomes for newborns, these blood spot samples are often collected without getting informed consent from a newborn baby’s parents, and in some states, the samples may be retained and stored afterwards, even for decades. Many parents are unaware not only of the existence of the screening program but also that blood was drawn from their newborn. It can come as a shock to discover that their family’s genetic privacy may have been violated when law enforcement receives access to their child’s stored blood sample without their knowledge or consent and without a warrant.

When it comes to the ethics of blood testing programs, parents are entitled to full transparency, including complete and accurate information about why their baby’s blood is being drawn. Those states that retain and store samples after the completion of immediate testing also have an ethical duty to inform parents of this practice and be sure that parents have an opportunity to provide informed consent not only for the immediate testing of their newborn, but for any subsequent uses of the blood sample, including possible future scrutiny of the sample by law enforcement, or by biomedical researchers.

The fact that our DNA and our genetic code contains important personal information about us means that our individual “bio-informatics” should not be used or brokered by others without our awareness and consent. Medical confidentiality should be reasonably safeguarded as part of initiatives like the Newborn Bloodspot Screening Program. Legislative mandates requiring such newborn screening should thus allow parents to opt out, not only of the testing itself in the face of serious reasons, but also of long-term storage and subsequent uses of their newborn’s biological samples, including by law enforcement.

Informed consent is also becoming important in the face of an ever-growing number of direct-to-consumer genetic testing options, like 23andMe and Ancestry.com. Companies should assure that customers can retain real control over their data. Genetic privacy is a subset of medical privacy, and even those who upload their DNA data to genetic genealogy databases should have the opportunity to provide consent for retention of their data and for disclosure of these data to any third parties.

Informed consent serves as an essential bioethical principle in biomedicine today by providing a concrete safeguard for the dignity of those receiving medical treatments, or otherwise involved in human medical experimentation or research. It should not be contravened without due process and substantial reason.

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



Father Tad Pacholczyk
Making Sense of Bioethics

Catholic Voices

Will Catholics listen to one another?

Listen to your Catholic sister and brother. Really; take the time. Listening requires little; it also requires a lot.

Listen. It is hard to make a case for communion if we fail to listen to one another with Christian love and awe.

The synodal process is ultimately a reminder of who we are: people of God guided by the Holy Spirit. As such, we are a synodal community, a body of Christian disciples who walk together throughout history with a common hope. God speaks through many voices. Listen.

Since the Second Vatican Council, little has sparked the interest of the Catholic community worldwide as much as the process accompanying the two-part Synod on Synodality. The synodal process has managed to attract the attention of a wide variety of voices ranging from highly invested pastoral leaders to Catholics living in the fringes of church life.

At the heart of the synodal process is the invitation to listen. The task could be overwhelming since that listening is to happen while we use the many venues available to express our voices without filters and delight in the ability to reach vast audiences with little effort.

A multiplicity of voices carrying numerous tones and perspectives speak all at once, all guided by the Spirit. Cacophony or harmony? I would say both. As the baptized discern ways to sincerely listen to one another, we strive to hear God’s voice.

Supporters and detractors of the synodal process to which Pope Francis has invited all Catholics are feasting in a bewildering ocean of voices and opinions. The process itself anticipates this. If one wants to be true to the synodal process, we should remain open to listening to 1.3 billion Catholic voices.

Unending social media conversations, newspaper and magazine articles, opinion columns, blogs, websites, books, pastoral letters, homilies, teachings, theological treatises, lectures and everyday conversations coincide all at once, sharing common Catholic hopes and concerns.

For many Catholics, engaging in a process like this is unusual, perhaps uncomfortable, even frightening. We are heirs of centuries of ecclesial



Hosffman Ospino
OSV News
Journeying Together

practice in which only a few voices expressed their opinions about how to live and practice the faith. Most Catholics seemed content with that status quo, deferred to the few — usually ordained or highly educated — or simply remained uninterested.

The Second Vatican Council reminded Catholics that all the baptized have a non-negotiable responsibility toward the work of evangelization. The baptized have received the Holy Spirit that moves us to build the church and to journey on the path of holiness. No exceptions.

Because the Holy Spirit lives in us as baptized people of God, all our voices count when discerning how to best live our faith as church. The Spirit speaks in and through every baptized person. The synodal process is an invitation to listen to God’s Holy Spirit speaking in many voices.

It is urgent that amidst our zeal to promote progress or conserve tradition we do not dismiss the work of the Holy Spirit by closing ourselves to certain voices while privileging others. We need to listen to one another with open hearts and minds.

We must listen with ecclesial humility and a prayerful attitude. This is why we are invited to engage in the practice of spiritual conversation. Listen. Pray. Listen again. Speak when necessary.

Will Catholics actually listen to one another as we build communion amidst the pluralism of voices and perspectives that define who we are as church? We have no choice. We are a synodal church. Let us listen to the many voices through which the Holy Spirit speaks incessantly in our time.

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

Following the saints or followed by the saints?

We like to think we follow the saints, but sometimes the saints follow us.

As I walked home from class in Tours, France, I had an irresistible urge to explore the church I was passing by. As I entered, I marveled at the architecture. A choir of nuns happened to be singing Vespers.

The moment was like the scene where the main character experiences a revelation in every Hollywood movie, except it was actually playing out for me, in real life.

I knelt in a pew at the back of the church. The nuns kept chanting. And I began to pray.

Then I noticed something strange about the church. The altar appeared to have two tabernacles. How strange, I thought. This required investigation.

I rose and approached the sanctuary. Even as the sun fell, the neo-Byzantine church was luminous. Gazing up at the brass chest perched on top of the high altar, I couldn’t determine what it was. I searched around for a brochure.

Discovering St. Martin

Then, thanks to the help of reading, I learned: the chest was not a second tabernacle, it was a reliquary. It contained a relic of the skull of St. Martin of Tours. And in fact, the church was not only dedicated to him but included his tomb. Twin staircases descended on either side of the high altar (not unlike St. Peter’s in Rome). I continued my exploration.

The dimly lit crypt flickered in the candlelight. Ex-votos, mementos of prayers answered and favors received, adorned the sandstone walls. The smell of beeswax and the cold damp of the subterranean refuge were intoxicatingly peaceful. Again, I knelt in prayer. I prayed for my family. For my vocation. Probably for help with my French, too.

It was the first visit I made to a saint’s



Father Patrick Briscoe, OP
OSV News

tomb. And it was a complete accident. I was baptized in St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Martinsville, Indiana. It was my grandmother’s parish, my mother’s family church. It was the place where I received the grace of faith. And here I was, an undergraduate in France, receiving grace through St. Martin, yet again.

The Basilica of St. Martin of Tours was once one of the greatest monuments in the Christian world. Today, all that remains of the ancient church is one tower. The current church was rebuilt after the French Revolution. The building hadn’t just fallen into despair. Revolutionaries used the church as a stable, then subsequently ripped it stone from stone. Then, to make sure it couldn’t be rebuilt, they sold the stones.

But it was rebuilt.

Pursued by the saints

And there’s a lesson in that. Jesus always has a way. Often that way is through his saints, who pursue us. The saints invite us to come to them, not for their own glory, but to know Christ.

St. Martin’s story shows this clearly. A Roman soldier, he famously split his cloak in

Managing the growing chorus of opinions

As our children get older, the number of voiced opinions under our roof seems to be growing exponentially by the day.

Blessing 1 wants to listen to one particular kind of music; Blessing 2, another; Blessing 3 points. Blessing 1 wants to watch one particular TV show; Blessing 2, another; Blessing 3 screeches. Blessing 1 wants to play with a particular toy; Blessing 2 inevitably wants to play with the same toy; Blessing 3 tackles and attempts to eat said toy.

What we eat, when we go to the grocery store, which playground we visit, who gets to hold the phone during grandparent FaceTime, how long is bathtime, how short is bedtime, which four snacks must be consumed in 30 minutes, how much dinner is enough dinner, how much dessert is too little dessert, how many crayons/Legos/marbles/playing cards need to be poured out on the floor in order to achieve a satisfactory playtime experience -- in all things, there is a constant flurry of various points of view, all stemming less from a desire to achieve the common good and more from the individual will. (Parents sometimes included.)

“So. Many. Opinions.” I find myself frequently remarking to my husband. It’s wonderful, of course. We wouldn’t change a thing. But, boy, the dynamics of decision-making in our home have drastically changed over the past six years. And, inevitably, tears flow or tempers flare when opinions differ. In other words, we live in a community.

Helping your domestic church

Managing this community — primarily the points at which authoritarian rule necessarily trumps spirited democracy — is a constant balancing act, as every community leader knows. With this in mind, I went looking for some ground rules for our domestic church. And I ended up, interestingly enough, doing a deep dive into the Vatican’s proposed “attitudes for participating in the synodal process,” released in the September 2021 official handbook of the Synod on Synodality. Thinking about them in the context of a domestic church was an interesting exercise. Several resulting ideas, based on principles from the handbook, are as follows:

— Take time for sharing, with honesty and courage at its roots. We should encourage our little ones to speak from their hearts, sharing their opinions and their reasons for those opinions. They should not be dismissed because they are little.

— Listen to one another with humble hearts. Once we invite our children to speak, we owe them the dignity of our



Gretchen R. Crowe
OSV News

undivided attention. Put phones down, remove AirPods, look our little ones in the eyes.

— Redefine winning. For example, we should try not to simply declare a “no” to snacks, but also a “yes” to an earlier dinner, mindful of small, hungry tummies.

— Be open to conversion and change. Perhaps our kids have a point that we parents haven’t considered. Maybe they have a suggestion that might enhance family life. Parents should seek to be open to a shift in our own, sometimes narrow or self-centered, thinking.

At the same time, as is true in the context of the universal church, we know there are things on which our domestic churches cannot compromise.

— Mass and prayer time are non-negotiables. Participation is required, and negative attitudes must be checked at the door.

— Following God’s commandments is also not negotiable: we must put God first, be respectful, not hurt others, not take what isn’t ours. We must tell the truth and speak the truth in love.

— We must love God with our whole hearts, and think about our neighbors -- or brothers and sisters -- as much as we think about ourselves.

— Invoking the Holy Spirit for proper discernment within our family, we must say “no” to the temptation to follow individual desires and “yes,” always, to the will of God and the teachings of the church.

Such is the way of holiness; such is the path to heaven, and we owe it to our children to show them the way.

When the synod for America ended in December 1997, Pope John Paul II remarked on how “my soul is opened through the action of grace towards God, who is the source of ‘every good endowment and every perfect gift’ (Jas 1:17).”

As we continue to grow and journey together, may our domestic churches -- and our universal one, as well -- confidently be able to say the same.

Gretchen R. Crowe is the editor-in-chief for OSV News.

The contributions of Hispanic immigrants to the church and society

I recently had the blessing of attending a team dinner for the "Cámbiame a mí Señor" ("Change Me Lord") men's retreat that has been taking place in the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island, for over 16 years. This gathering was a nice opportunity to enjoy a barbecue, get to know each other better, and share stories.



Silvio Cuéllar
OSV News

While chatting, the topic of how we came to this country came up. It was touching to hear the common denominator that almost all these servants of Christ had to go through many hardships, including hunger, danger and even near death, in order to get to this country. At some point, many of them were in need, and today, they are actively serving in their parish communities and society in general. Many have started businesses and received blessings from God.

That made me reflect on the important contributions the majority of our Hispanic Catholic immigrant brothers and sisters make, bringing with them to this beautiful country their faith, devotion to family, hard work, spirit of celebration and a great desire to excel.

In the 25 years that I served in the Diocese of Providence, I attended many vigils, retreats, Marian celebrations, posadas and novenas — witnessing the faith and devotion of the Hispanic people to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

I remember the family of Pepe and Elia Ruiz, who have been serving on the diocesan Guadalupe committee for more than two decades, contributing generously with their time, talent and treasure to make the Mass to the Virgin of Guadalupe a dignified and

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Cultural Catholicism: What it can and can’t bring to the party, or the battlefield

By Jaymie Stuart Wolfe
OSV News

When we moved to New Orleans, my husband and I were surprised to see the depth of Catholic influence in the culture here. Southern Louisiana isn’t quite a Catholic Disney World, but sometimes it comes close. Local meteorologists provide weather predictions for “All Saints’ Day” by name. In March, over 50 Catholic parishes, schools, and other institutions create elaborate “St. Joseph Altars” and feed hundreds of visitors a free meal. Families and small groups solemnly walk the streets in a novena of nine historic churches — a traditional Good Friday pilgrimage of penance and prayer. Around every Sept. 14, Catholics are offered an evening for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

And then, of course, there’s Mardi Gras.

The Catholic calendar may be particularly full here, but practices like these exist everywhere. In Boston, there are many who visit the seven churches on Holy Thursday, feast on seven fishes each Christmas Eve, or attend one of the summer festivals devoted to a favorite saint. And why not? Not everything we do as a community of faith has to fit into a parish mission or formation initiative. We can love all that local Catholic culture has to offer.

In fact, these lingering remnants of Christendom should encourage us; they’re evidence that our faith has deep roots, and that the full flowering of Christian discipleship may be more easily cultivated than we suspect. Faith builds culture around it. But

there may be no better way to access the faith — or introduce it — than the cultural practices that have managed to endure despite the decline in religious practice. That’s why we’ve fully embraced all-things-Catholic here in Louisiana and enthusiastically participate in as much as our schedules allow.

These joyful or solemn celebrations provide us with opportunities to invite others to experience our communities of faith. An acquaintance may be unlikely to accept an invitation to Mass or an explicit spiritual presentation, but might be thrilled to come and see our parish St. Joseph Altar, attend a concert, or join us for a parade. We know that what people really need is a personal encounter (and then an ongoing relationship) with Jesus Christ. But often, reminding someone that they have a place to go if they want or need to — or are just curious — has an impact.

And sometimes, the strangest things attract people. After all, who wouldn’t be intrigued by a 35-mile Eucharistic procession down the bayou by boat?

While all of these customs are great ways to express and foster faith, it is important for us to remember that cultural Catholicism isn’t going to save anyone. Only Jesus can do that. St. Joseph altars, Mardi Gras, the seven fishes, and the nine churches — these things can and do support the faithful in discipleship, but they can never substitute for it. As evangelical tools, they can bring folks to the thresholds of authentic Christian life, but they cannot carry them across them.

Cultural Catholicism can, however, fuel a sense of Catholic community and that might be more important than we think.

Three hallmarks of religious affiliation are believing, behaving, and belonging. For the past several centuries, Christians have emphasized the first two — faith and morals — at the expense of the very human need to belong to something larger than ourselves. While cultural practices can catechize in a limited way, the real growth of Catholic culture lies in building the bonds of community. And that matters. Often a person who leaves the church does so because they have made few friendships within the local faith community — so few, that nobody even notices they’ve left.

There’s a better way to be a culture warrior than to decry the current state of the church and the world. For some, that will entail baking time-tested Sicilian recipes for breads, cakes and cookies. For others, it will mean gathering a small group together to walk from church to church.

There is a war to be fought and won. It’s the war against our own complacency and the loss of the cultural inheritance that connects us to our faith in Christ and has the power to connect others as well. But small battles may be effectively won, sometimes, by friendly faces and inviting hands.

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

Cartoon Corner



SYNOD

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recognized by the church.

The synthesis report did not use the term "LGBTQ+" or even "homosexuality" and spoke only generally of issues related to "matters of identity and sexuality."

Jesuit Father James Martin, a synod member involved in outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics, told Catholic News Service, "From what I understand, there was too much pushback to make using the term 'LGBTQ' viable, even though it was contained in the '*Instrumentum Laboris*,'" or synod working document.

"This opposition came up often in the plenary sessions, along with others who argued from the other side, that is, for greater inclusion and for seeing LGBTQ people as people and not an ideology," he said.

The synthesis said that "to develop authentic ecclesial discernment in these and other areas, it is necessary to approach these questions in the light of the Word of God and church teaching, properly informed and reflected upon."

"In order to avoid repeating vacuous formulas, we need to provide an opportunity for a dialogue involving the human and social sciences, as well as philosophical and theological reflection," it added.

The divergences in the assembly, it said, reflected opposing concerns: that "if we use doctrine harshly and with a judgmental attitude, we betray the Gospel; if we practice mercy 'on the cheap,' we do not convey God's love."

Still, it said, "in different ways, people who feel marginalized or excluded from the church because of their marriage status, identity or sexuality, also ask to be heard and accompanied. There was a deep sense of love, mercy and compassion felt in the Assembly for those who are or feel hurt or neglected by the church, who want a place to call 'home' where they can feel safe, be heard and respected, without fear of feeling judged."

The report emphasized the "listening" that took place on the local, national and continental levels before the assembly and the "conversations in the Spirit" that took place during it, which involved each person speaking in his or her small group, other participants at first commenting only on what struck them, silent reflection and then discussion.

In several places throughout the report, assembly members insisted that greater efforts must be made to listen to the survivors of clerical sexual abuse and those who have endured spiritual or psychological abuse.

"Openness to listening and accompanying all, including those who have suffered abuse and hurt in the church, has made visible many who have long felt invisible," it said. "The long journey toward reconciliation and justice, including address-

ing the structural conditions that abetted such abuse, remains before us, and requires concrete gestures of penitence."

Members of the assembly said the process helped them experience the church as "God's home and family, a church that is closer to the lives of her people, less bureaucratic and more relational."

However, it said, the terms "synodal" and "synodality," which "have been associated with this experience and desire," need further clarification, including theological clarification and, perhaps, in canon law.

Some participants, it said, questioned how an assembly where about 21% of participants were lay women, lay men, religious and priests could be termed a Synod of Bishops.

The report also acknowledged fears, including that "the teaching of the church will be changed, causing us to depart from the Apostolic faith of our forebears and, in doing so, betraying the expectations of those who hunger and thirst for God today."

In response, though, assembly members said, "We are confident that synodality is an expression of the dynamic and living Tradition."

"It is clear that some people are afraid that they will be forced to change; others fear that nothing at all will change or that there will be too little courage to move at the pace of the living Tradition," the report said.

"Also," it added, "perplexity and opposition can sometimes conceal a fear of losing power and the privileges that derive from it."

Members of the assembly described the synodal process as being "rooted in the Tradition of the church" and taking place in light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly its emphasis on "the church as Mystery and People of God, called to holiness."

Synodality, they said, "values the contribution all the baptized make, according to their respective vocations," and thus "constitutes a true act of further reception of the Council."

The report also insisted the purpose of synodality is mission.

"As disciples of Jesus, we cannot shirk the responsibility of demonstrating and transmitting the love and tenderness of God to a wounded humanity," the report said.

Throughout the synod process, the report said, "many women expressed deep gratitude for the work of priests and bishops. They also spoke of a church that wounds. Clericalism, a chauvinist mentality, and inappropriate expressions of authority continue to scar the face of the church and damage its communion."

"A profound spiritual conversion is needed as the foundation for any effective structural change," it said. "Sexual abuse and the abuse of power and authority continue to cry out for justice, healing and reconciliation."

ROLHEISER

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últimos años antes del retiro, aunque lo hizo como quien encontraba su energía en otra parte, al involucrarse en programas de educación continua y ministerios laicales, donde medró emocional e intelectualmente. Parte de su sacrificio fue también el hecho de que nunca se casó, no porque fuera soltero por temperamento, sino porque las mismas cosas que lo ataron al deber, tampoco existencialmente le proporcionaron nunca la oportunidad de casarse.

Después de comentar su historia en su funeral, se me acercaron varias personas que me dijeron: *¡Lo mismo mi hermano! ¡Lo mismo mi hermana! Lo mismo mi papá! ¡Lo mismo mi madre!*

Habiendo crecido yo donde esto fue la realidad de algunos de mis hermanos mayores, hoy, dondequiera que veo a gente trabajando en tareas de servicio, tales como cocinar en cafeterías, limpiar casas, cortar césped, trabajar en la construcción, hacer tareas de conserjería y otros trabajos de la misma índole, me paro a preguntar: ¿son estos como mi hermano? ¿Llegaron a elegir este trabajo, o lo están haciendo obligados por las circunstancias? ¿Quiso esta persona ser médico, escritor, maestro, empresario, o director ejecutivo de alguna compañía, y acabó teniendo que asumir este empleo por una circunstancia económica u otra? A ver si me explico: No hay nada degradante ni menos noble en estos empleos. A propósito, trabajar con las propias manos es quizás el trabajo más honrado de todos, a diferencia de mi propio trabajo en la comunidad académica, donde puede ser fácil ser egoísta y mayormente irrelevante. Existe una admirable dignidad en trabajar con las propias manos, como se daba en mi hermano. No obstante, a pesar de la importancia y dignidad de ese trabajo, la felicidad de la persona que lo hace depende a veces de si tenía una opción o no, es decir, si está ahí por elección o porque los factores que surgen, desde la situación económica de su familia hasta su estatus de inmigrante, hasta su falta de oportunidad, le han forzado ahí.

Cuando paso por delante de estas gentes en mi vida diaria y mi trabajo, intento darme cuenta de ellos y valorar el servicio que nos están prestando a los demás. Y a veces me digo: *Este podría ser mi hermano. Esta podría ser mi hermana. Este podría ser la mente más brillante de todas, a la que no se le dio la oportunidad de llegar a ser médico, escritor, enfermera, maestro o trabajador social.*

Si en la otra vida, como Jesús prometió, va a haber un cambio donde los últimos serán los primeros, confío en que esta gente, como mi hermano, que fueron excluidos de algunas de las oportunidades de que gozamos el resto de nosotros, leerán mi corazón con una empatía que sobrepase la comprensión que tuve hacia ellos durante el curso de su vida.

SÍNODO

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añadía el informe, algunos miembros pensaban que eso haría "que la Iglesia se alinee con el espíritu de los tiempos".

El párrafo sobre la manera en que varios miembros expresaron su apoyo u oposición sobre el tema del diaconado de mujeres también fue aprobado por más de dos tercios de aprobación, pero recibió más votos negativos que cualquier otro punto, pasando con 277 votos a favor y 69 en contra.

Los miembros de la asamblea también debatieron enfoques pastorales para acoger e incluir en la vida de las parroquias a personas que se han sentido excluidas, como los pobres, las personas con discapacidades, los católicos LGBTQ+ y los católicos cuyos matrimonios no son reconocidos por la Iglesia.

El informe de síntesis no utilizó el término "LGBTQ+" ni siquiera "homosexualidad" y sólo hablaba en general de cuestiones relacionadas con "la identidad de género y la orientación sexual".

El padre jesuita James Martin, un miembro del sínodo involucrado en el acercamiento a los católicosLGBTQ+, dijo a Catholic News Service: "Por lo que entiendo, hubo demasiada oposición para hacer viable el uso del término 'LGBTQ', a pesar de que estaba contenido en el '*Instrumentum Laboris*'", o documento de trabajo del sínodo.

"Esta oposición surgió a menudo en las sesiones plenarias, junto con otros que argumentaban desde el otro lado, es decir, a favor de una mayor inclusión y de ver a las personas LGBTQ como personas y no como una ideología", dijo.

La síntesis dijo que "para desarrollar un auténtico discernimiento eclesial en estos y otros ámbitos, es necesario integrar, a la luz de la Palabra de Dios y del Magisterio, una base informativa más amplia y un componente reflexivo más articulado".

"Para evitar la repetición de fórmulas convencionales, hay que inculcar la confrontación con el punto de vista de las ciencias humanas y sociales, la reflexión filosófica y la elaboración teológica", añadió.

Las divergencias en la asamblea, decía, reflejaban preocupaciones opuestas: que "si utilizamos la doctrina con dureza y con actitud sentenciosa, traicionamos el Evangelio; si practicamos una misericordia 'barata' no transitamos el amor de Dios".

Aún así, decía, "de distintas maneras, las personas que se sienten marginadas o excluidas de la Iglesia por su situación matrimonial, su identidad o su sexualidad, también piden ser escuchadas y acompañadas. En la Asamblea se percibió un profundo sentimiento de amor, misericordia y compasión hacia las personas que son o se sienten heridas o desatendidas por la Iglesia, que desean un lugar al volver 'a casa' y donde sentirse seguras, escuchadas y respetadas, sin miedo a sentirse juzgadas".

El informe hacía hincapié en la "escucha" que tuvo lugar a nivel local, nacional y continental antes de la asamblea y en la "conversación en el Espíritu" que tuvieron lugar durante la misma, en las que cada persona hablaba en su pequeño grupo, los demás participantes comentaban al principio sólo lo que les llamaba la atención, se reflexionaba en silencio y luego se discutía.

En varios lugares del informe, los

miembros de la asamblea insistieron en la necesidad de redoblar los esfuerzos para escuchar a los sobrevivientes de abusos sexuales por parte del clero y a quienes han sufrido abusos espirituales o psicológicos.

"La apertura para escuchar y acompañar a todos, incluidos los que han sufrido abusos y heridas en la Iglesia, ha hecho visibles a muchos que durante mucho tiempo se han sentido invisibles", se afirmó en el informe. "Nos queda un largo camino hacia la reconciliación y la justicia, que requiere abordar las condiciones estructurales que permitieron tales abusos y realizar gestos concretos de penitencia".

Los miembros de la asamblea afirmaron que el proceso les ayudó a experimentar la Iglesia como "el hogar y la familia de Dios, una Iglesia más cercana a las vidas de su pueblo, menos burocrática y más relacional".

Sin embargo, dijo, los términos "sinodal" y "sinodalidad", que "se han asociado a esta experiencia y deseo", necesitan una mayor clarificación, incluida la teológica y, tal vez, en el derecho canónico.

Algunos participantes cuestionaron que una asamblea en la que alrededor del 21% de los participantes eran mujeres laicas, hombres laicos, religiosos y sacerdotes pudiera denominarse Sínodo de Obispos.

El informe también reconocía temores, como el de que "se cambie la enseñanza de la Iglesia, alejándose de la fe apostólica de nuestros padres y, al hacerlo, traicionando las expectativas de quienes aún hoy tienen hambre y sed de Dios".

En respuesta, sin embargo, los miembros de la asamblea dijeron: "Estamos convencidos de que la sinodalidad es una expresión del dinamismo de la Tradición

dinámica viva".

"Está claro que algunos temen que se les obligue a cambiar; otros temen que nada cambie y que haya demasiado poco coraje para avanzar al ritmo de la Tradición viva", dijo el informe.

"Además", añadió, "la perplejidad y oposición esconden también el temor a perder el poder y los privilegios que éste conlleva".

Los miembros de la asamblea describieron el proceso sinodal como "enraizado en la Tradición de la Iglesia" y teniendo lugar a la luz de la enseñanza del Concilio Vaticano II, en particular su énfasis en "la Iglesia como Misterio y Pueblo de Dios, llamada a la santidad".

La sinodalidad, decían, "valora la contribución de todos los bautizados, en la variedad de sus vocaciones", y así "constituye un verdadero acto de recepción ulterior del Concilio".

El informe también insistió en que la finalidad de la sinodalidad es la misión.

"Como discípulos de Jesús, no podemos eludir la tarea de mostrar y transmitir a una humanidad herida el amor y la ternura de Dios", decía el informe.

A lo largo del proceso sinodal, según el informe, "muchas mujeres expresaron su profunda gratitud por la labor de sacerdotes y obispos. Pero también hablaron de una Iglesia que duele. El clericalismo, el machismo y el uso inadecuado de la autoridad siguen haciendo el rostro de la Iglesia y dañando la comunión".

"Es necesaria una profunda conversión espiritual como base de cualquier cambio estructural", afirmó. Los abusos sexuales, de poder y autoridad, y económicos "siguen exigiendo justicia, sanación y reconciliación".



A Women’s ACTS Retreat was held at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Odessa Oct. 13–15.
ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY

BRISCOE

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two and gave half to a beggar on the street one cold winter night. Christ later came to him in a dream, revealing that he had been the beggar. The inscriptions around his tomb bear eloquent testimony to the power of his intercession.

St. Martin’s love of Christ is what made him a saint. And through the centuries pilgrims can discover that love anew for themselves. Devotion to him is what inspired the reconstruction of the once-destroyed basilica. And through Martin’s intercession, the faithful are still discovering new grace.

I know St. Martin was pursuing me that day, now 16 years ago. We are closer to the saints than we often think. And, pray God, may we one day be numbered among them.

Father Patrick Briscoe, O.P., is a Dominican friar and the editor of Our Sunday Visitor.

ERLANDSON

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secularization and producing deeply disturbing results.”

The book, citing a wide range of literary and theological sources, walks us briskly through the growth of secularism and the decline of the Christian churches in the West. Like many recent analyses of the state of the U.S. church, he cites a series of dismal trends in sacramental practice, Catholic school attendance and vocations.

He quotes then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s prediction of a future church that “will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning.”

For Russ, whatever path leads to the church of tomorrow, it depends on the laity getting involved in its revitalization. His “nine tasks for every Catholic” includes “heeding the universal call to holiness,”

ridding ourselves of clericalist thoughts and actions (and yes, laity can be the worst clericalists), and recovering a sense of the “lay apostolate.” He defines this as “the renewal of the temporal order,” bringing “Catholic values into settings where secularist values currently go virtually unchallenged.”

Russ, who has been a friend for many years, would probably distinguish between optimism and hope. His view of the church may be judged unduly bleak by some, but his is not a voice of despair, but of faith. He ends with a quote from Blaise Pascal: “There is a pleasure in being in a ship beaten about by a storm, when we are sure that it will not founder.”

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter/X @GregErlandson.

Each life lost represents defeat, pope says

ROME (CNS) — As the sun broke through the morning sky after a torrential downpour in Rome, Pope Francis was wheeled past dozens of gravestones that marked the final resting place of members of the military forces who died during and immediately after World War II. He carried a bouquet of large white roses and had an aide place it at a grave. The pope then continued along the green lawn, hands clasped briefly in prayer. "So many innocent dead, so many soldiers who leave their lives there," the pope said later in his homily at Mass celebrated Nov. 2 at the Rome War Cemetery, the burial place of members of the military forces of the Commonwealth. "Wars are always a defeat, always. There is no total victory, no. Yes, one wins over the other, but behind it there is always the defeat of the price paid," he said. Looking at the ages of those buried, the pope said he saw that "most of them were between 20 and 30 years old. Lives cut short, lives without a future here." The same thing is still happening today in wars, he said. "We ask the Lord for peace, so that people will no longer kill each other in wars," he said, marking the feast of All Souls.

CUÉLLAR

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beautiful celebration. God has blessed them with a beautiful family and two Mexican food restaurants. They, too, have not forgotten their roots. Once a year, they return to their town, Piaxtla, in the state of Puebla, Mexico, where they collaborate with the celebration of the Virgin of the Assumption in the place where they were born.

Not long ago, I was talking with my friend Father Roberto Beirne, who told me, "How much life there is in the Hispanic communities and how much activity there is in every parish I visit." It made me think of places like St. Patrick Parish in Providence, which has activities of different parish groups every day of the week — often using all the school's classrooms.

Another great contribution that Hispanics bring is the love of family. A young man who serves with me in the parish choir recently had the joy of hosting some family members who migrated to the United States. He moved heaven and earth to help them financially until they could get jobs and support themselves. Such devotion to family is truly admirable.

In our own home my wife, Becky, and I have a tradition of gathering every other Sunday at my in-laws' home to share with all my wife's siblings and nieces and nephews. These family gatherings always begin with a prayer around the table, thanking God for the blessings received and praying for our needs. Afterwards, there are conversations and board games with very special and fun times to create memories and strengthen our family bonds.

Another contribution is the strong

work ethic. Hispanics are very hard workers; they contribute to the economy doing jobs and occupations that no one else wants to do in many cases. Most immigrants I know are hardworking, entrepreneurial people and many of them have started small businesses, always with a great sense of self-improvement. So many names and faces come to mind of people who have developed companies and small businesses. Also, many of our parishes would have already closed if it were not for the presence and service of our Hispanic immigrant brothers and sisters.

Another contribution is the fiesta. In all the parishes I have visited, there have always been great celebrations, from the patronal feasts to popular devotions, such as the feast of the Lord of Esquipulas, the Lord of Miracles, and many different Marian celebrations. These celebrations are full of joy, ethnic food, music, traditional

dances, piñata for the children, and are moments where the sense of community is strengthened and also help to raise funds for the parish.

In addition, when a person passes away, the community always gathers to support the family and perform the traditional novena, praying for nine days after the burial Mass.

There are so many contributions that Hispanics bring to the church and society that it would take many articles, but let us give thanks to God for the faith, devotion to family, work ethic, joy and sense of community that Hispanic immigrants bring to our country.

Silvio Cuéllar is a writer, liturgical music composer and journalist. He was coordinator of the Hispanic Ministry office and editor of El Católico de Rhode Island newspaper in the Diocese of Providence.

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PLAN

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about 9 million to 63.7 million, according to 2022 U.S. census data. And even though there have been reports of an increase in disaffiliation, recent demographic data showed that about 31 million Hispanics and Latinos identify as Catholic.

"We are talking more as we belong to this church. We're not going anywhere. It's our church too, and we want to be part of it," said Villar. "And I think that the whole synod process, and the way that Pope Francis encourages (us) to move forward in that direction, we've been doing it in small steps throughout these 51 years."

Auxiliary Bishop Arturo Cepeda of Detroit, chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, said the new pastoral plan was the "fruit of many years of wisdom and consultation, experiences, ups and downs, of listening, collaboration, and so many fruits that the Encuentros have brought."

He hopes that the pastoral plan will help equip ministry leaders and Hispanic and Latino parishioners to understand how to share their faith experiences with generations who will come after those in ministry today.

"We need to be able to share that and to know that we need to prepare our second, third generations," Bishop Cepeda told OSV News. "We need to move forward. I think that it is a blessing. It is a challenge, yes. But we need to be aware of it."

In Houston, Lázaro Contreras, director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, said he looks forward to seeing how each parish and Catholic community in the region will uniquely implement the pastoral plan.

"With this pastoral plan, I hope that people are motivated and encouraged to make it their own," he said. "Hispanic ministry is a work that we don't do alone. It's a work that we all do as one church. That is why these kinds of gatherings are a constant reminder that, in that work of pastoral ministry of accompaniment to Hispanic Catholics, is done by the whole church."

That united movement forward is what excited Ignacio Rodriguez, NCADDHM president, especially during the conference, which began with an opening Mass celebrated by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston Oct. 10.

While the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 slowed down much of the follow-up collaborations between the 3,000 Hispanic ministry leaders and clergy who met in Texas in 2018 for the V Encuentro, Rodriguez said the zeal and desire for the pastoral plan to take shape only grew.

Now that the pastoral plan is out in the hands of ministry leaders, Aguilera-Titus said that the plan emphasizes the importance of diversity and intercultural engagement and includes practical guidelines and resources for creating a sense of unity and belonging. He noted how a parish can thrive when it embraces diverse cultures present in a congregation through its shared Catholic faith.

"When they develop relationships with one another across cultures, they begin to develop a new sense of identity as a diverse, Catholic community," Aguilera-Titus said. "The plan has a language that is inclusive, engaging and is meant for not only Hispanic/Latino Catholics, but for the entire church. We hope that it will bring new ways to bring the Gospel to life and create a more synodal and diverse church."

That intercultural relationship is a key to evangelization, said Sister Elsa Narvaez, a member of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Word and an evangelization consultant for the Hispanic communities in the Archdiocese of Boston.

"Many people might think (the pastoral plan) is just for Hispanics and Latinos, but it's not. Our goal is to bring Christ to everyone. It's like we are missionaries here in the U.S.," she said, noting how U.S. Catholics used to visit Latino and South American countries to evangelize.

"We help us now. We are here doing a mission and we know everyone is the same before God," she continued, saying that the plan is not about sharing languages or cultures but about evangelization and strengthening of the faith. "It's not because you're Hispanic or you're not Hispanic. We are one church, and we are here to love and serve each other and just to bring Jesus to everyone. That's our goal. ... It's Jesus, that's the goal."

James Ramos writes for OSV News from Houston.

OSPINO

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recibido el Espíritu Santo que nos mueve a construir la Iglesia y a caminar hacia la santidad. Nadie está exento de ello.

Porque el Espíritu Santo vive en nosotros como pueblo de Dios constituido por personas bautizadas, todas nuestras voces cuentan al momento de discernir cómo vivir mejor nuestra fe como Iglesia. El Espíritu Santo habla "en" y "por medio" de toda persona bautizada. El proceso sinodal es una invitación a escuchar al Espíritu Santo hablando por medio de muchas voces.

Es urgente que en medio de nuestro celo por promover ideas progresivas o mantener la tradición no terminemos rechazando la obra del Espíritu Santo, cerrándonos a ciertas voces para privilegiar otras. Necesitamos escucharnos mutuamente con corazones y mentes abiertas.

Tenemos que escuchar con humildad eclesial y una actitud de oración. Por eso es que se nos invita a la práctica de la conversación espiritual. Escuchemos. Oremos. Escuchemos de nuevo. Hablemos cuando sea necesario.

¿Podremos los católicos de hecho escucharnos unos a otros mientras construimos comunión en medio del pluralismo de voces y perspectivas que nos definen como Iglesia? No tenemos opción. Somos una Iglesia sinodal. Escuchemos las muchas voces por medio de las cuales nos habla el Espíritu Santo en nuestro tiempo.

Hosffman Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.