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WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas

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A Holy Family Friendsgiving



COURTESY

In November the youth from Holy Family Parish in Abilene celebrated their annual “Friendsgiving,” sharing lattes, food, games, and fellowship with friends at Front Porch Coffee Co. & Bakery.

The light of Christ is the reason for our hope

On Nov. 29, 2023, Bishop Michael Sis spoke at the first of four weekly talks hosted by First Methodist Church in San Angelo as part of their Advent Luncheon Series. Each week will feature different local religious leaders. The text of Bishop Sis’ reflection is below.

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at the Advent Luncheon Series. As you know, Christmas falls on a Monday this year, so the fourth week of Advent this year will be only one day — Sunday, December 24. That makes for a very short season of Advent this year, and it makes today actually a “pre-Advent luncheon.”

In the Methodist Church, and the Catholic Church, and many other Christian churches, we share the practice of the Advent wreath. Have you ever wondered why the Advent wreath has four candles, and not some other number? Why not three, or seven, or perhaps twelve?

Each of the four candles of the Advent wreath represents 1,000 years, adding up to a total of 4,000 years. Why 4,000 years? Well, if you make a literal count of the years

in the Old Testament, from Adam to Christ, it comes to 4,000 years. Thus, the Advent wreath symbolizes all the many generations of human beings who awaited the coming of the Messiah to save us from the sin of Adam. As we light an additional candle with each week of Advent, we see visually that we are coming closer to the celebration of the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Advent is a time of waiting. We remember the waiting of the human race before Christ’s birth, and we Christians wait in joyful hope for the second coming of our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. Each week of this season, the amount of light in the Advent wreath increases, as we approach the time of the commemoration of Christ’s birth.

The candles of an Advent wreath are traditionally placed in a circle of evergreen leaves. Why a circle, and not a square or a triangle or some other shape? If you follow the line of a circle, it has no beginning or end, so it is a symbol of the eternity of God, who has no beginning or end. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, has won for us mortal human beings the possibility of eternal life in union with him in heaven.

The use of evergreen on an Advent wreath is symbolic of eternal life, because evergreens are still green, even in the middle of winter, when other plants have died. In general, the color green is symbolic of life and hope.

I suppose that many of you are decorating your homes these days with Christmas lights. One of the primary sym-



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Bishop Michael Sis gave a reflection about Advent during a Nov. 29 service at First Methodist Church in San Angelo, the first of four talks planned from local religious leaders.

bols of Advent and Christmas is light. The Christmas lights in our homes, as well as the lit candles of an Advent wreath, symbolize the light of Christ. This theme of light

From the Bishop’s Desk

A more Christian Christmas

In a few days, Christmas will come, and then it will be over, and after all this, how will we be different? What will this Christmas bring for you? Will it be just a repetition of the same routine of buying some gifts, exchanging them, opening them, and paying the bills? Will you go through these Christmas holidays totally unchanged? Rather, will you open yourself to living them in a new way that is deeper and more impactful?

This year, it could be different. This year, we could allow the experience of Advent and Christmas to change us. In this article, I would like to share some suggestions for an Advent and Christmas that is a fuller experience of Christian faith, drawing us closer to Jesus Christ and to one another.

Here are twenty ideas for having a more Christian Christmas:

1. Prepare spiritually for Christmas by making a good sacramental Confession during one of the communal Advent Penance Services in our local parishes. You can find the schedule on our diocesan website at www.sanangelo-diocese.org.
2. Attend Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. After all, the very word “Christmas” means “the Mass of Christ.” Plan ahead for where and when you will celebrate the Mass of Christ. Arrive early to enter into a spirit of prayer before the liturgy begins. Invite a family member, friend, coworker, or neighbor to come to Christmas Mass with you. Of all the days of the year, Christmas is a time when people are more likely to be willing to join you.
3. When choosing gifts, think not only about what people want, but also whether this gift is really going to help the person who receives it — if it is going to have a positive effect in their life. You might even consider this novel approach to gift giving: instead of giving more “stuff,” make a donation to charity in honor of the person to whom you would normally give a material gift.
4. While making or wrapping a gift for someone, or in the moment of signing a Christmas card to them, pray for the needs of that person. Give thanks to God for their friendship and for their presence in your life.
5. When writing Christmas cards, choose to write significant words that could have a positive effect on the life of that person — words of thanks, reconciliation, and Christian faith.
6. When attending holiday parties in the community,



Bishop Michael J. Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

choose to interact in a way that helps those gatherings to become moments of grace. For example, welcome a new person. Talk to the person who is lonely and shy. Say some words of affirmation. Let it be a time for building new bridges between people.

7. When attending family gatherings, be truly present to the people who are there. Listen to them, look them in the eye, put your phone away, and enter into real conversation. Come with an openness to forgive the resentments of the past and accept one another, just as Christ has forgiven and accepted you.
8. Invite to a meal in your home someone who has no one else with whom to spend Christmas, such as an elderly acquaintance, a recent immigrant, or an international student from a local university.
9. When you are with family members at Christmas time, sit down together and read out loud the story of the birth of Jesus Christ from the Bible. You could use either Luke 1:26-56 or Matthew 1:18-2:11.
10. Sing Christmas songs that actually celebrate Jesus, who is the reason for the season. Here are ten of the most popular Christ-centered Christmas songs: “Angels we Have Heard on High,” “Away in a Manger,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” “Joy to the World,” “O Come All Ye Faithful,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Silent Night,” “The First Noel,” “What Child is This?”
11. Go caroling.
12. Set out a stocking for Jesus. Be creative in what you put in his stocking, such as notes of intercessory prayer, expressions of thanks, or words of love for him.
13. Set up a nativity scene in your home in a place that is accessible to the little children. Let them look, converse, touch, and use their imagination in rearranging the figures. A beautiful variation on this practice is to let

the children make a nativity scene out of Play-Doh, talking about each character in the scene. Another creative alternative is a custom that began in France many years ago. You place the empty manger in the nativity scene at the beginning of Advent and add the little baby Jesus at Christmas. Meanwhile, during the season of Advent, you place a little basket or bowl with pieces of hay or grass near the nativity scene, and anyone can put a piece of hay or grass from the basket into the manger for each good action or act of kindness that they do during Advent, to prepare a soft and comfortable place to receive the baby Jesus.

14. With children, read Christmas books about Jesus.
15. Have a birthday party for Jesus on Christmas Day. Bake a cake for Jesus with birthday candles. Let the children help in decorating it and in blowing out the candles. Sing “Happy Birthday” to Jesus.
16. If you have some free time during the holidays, think of some things you could do with your time beyond simply eating, watching television, and shopping. For example, visit the homebound, the incarcerated, the poor, the suffering, or the sick. Take on some project to make a lasting impact in the life of some individual or family. Ask yourself, "Whom can I visit to bring them a little bit of the joy of Christ?"
17. Pack up some gently used items that you don’t use or no longer need and bring them to a local shelter or organization serving the poor.
18. Take a turn helping at a local soup kitchen, shelter, or program that delivers meals to the elderly. You could give the regular volunteers a break so they can spend some quality time with their families.
19. If you are married, set aside some romantic time with your spouse. Slow down and enjoy one another.
20. In this time of year, we see many beautiful lights decorating homes, businesses, and public places. When you see those lights glowing, remember the one whom they are symbolizing — Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Recall his words in John 8:12: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

You and your loved ones might think of other creative ways to add deeper meaning to your experience of Advent and Christmas. These are merely a few suggestions to get you thinking of how to live this season with renewed faith and love.

Parishes play 'vital role' in bringing Christ to the world, say bishops

By Gina Christian
OSV News

Parishes play a "vital role" in bringing Christ's transformative love to the world, said two U.S. bishops as a key document on social ministry marks its 30th year.

"Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish" was approved by the U.S. Catholic bishops in November 1993 and continues to serve as a roadmap for parish social ministry.

The document's title points to Jesus' likening of the disciples to salt and light, called to season and illuminate the world with the Gospel message (Mt 5:13-16).

"Three decades after its release, we see the enduring importance of this guiding document," said Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, who in mid-November completed his three-year term as chairman of the USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace.

"We continue to invite faith communities to integrate social ministry throughout the life of the parish, and to take up the call to be communities of salt and light, forming and sending the faithful to protect the least of these," said Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Malloy in a statement issued Nov. 20.

The statement noted that updated resource pages, available in both English and Spanish, have integrated Pope Francis' teaching with the original document. Also available are new prayer and educational materials, including an interactive assessment tool to help parishes implement their social ministry initiatives.

While preceded by major pastoral letters on several issues, "Communities of Salt and Light" was the U.S. Catholic bishops' first effort to specifically address what they called "the crucial role of parishes" in the church's social ministry.

"We are convinced that the local parish is the most important ecclesial setting for sharing and acting on our Catholic social heritage," since "the parish is where the church lives," said the bishops in the document.

Parish social ministry "has clear biblical roots," and

"especially in the Hebrew prophets and the life and words of Jesus," wrote the bishops.

They noted that biblical mandates to uphold human dignity — for example, through care of the poor and marginalized — "have been explored and expressed in a special way in Catholic social teaching."

In 1990, the U.S. bishops outlined the development of that teaching in a pastoral message for the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, an 1891 encyclical by Pope Leo XIII that articulated the church's stance on issues of social justice, particularly those raised by the impact of the Industrial Revolution on modern society and human dignity.

The encyclical, a foundational document on Catholic social teaching, was inspired in part by U.S. Cardinal James Gibbons, who had defended the Knights of Labor — the first major labor organization in the U.S. — in an 1887 letter to the Vatican.

In "Communities of Salt and Light," the bishops stressed that "our faith is profoundly social," since "we cannot be called truly 'Catholic' unless we hear and heed the church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace."

At its heart, the church's social teaching "is the life, dignity and rights of the human person," they said.

Social ministry should not be a separate component but rather "an integral part of the entire parish," woven "into every aspect of parish life — worship, formation and action," said the bishops in the document.

Rather than a specific model, the bishops offered a framework of seven elements for integrating social ministry into parish life.

— Social ministry must be anchored in prayer and worship, since "the most important setting for the Church's social teaching is not in a food pantry or in a legislative committee room, but in prayer and worship, especially gathered around the altar for the Eucharist."

— Preaching and education must reflect the Gospel's social dimensions, without turning the pulpit into "a partisan rostrum" or neglecting to include social doctrine in Catholic school curriculum and life, religious education programs, and sacramental and Christian initiation preparation.

— Helping parishioners "to understand and act on the social dimensions of the gospel in their everyday

The Prayer Square

Away in a manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the heavens looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with thee there.

lives."

— Reaching out to the poor and vulnerable through "concrete acts of charity."

— Promoting "a revived sense of political responsibility calling Catholics to be informed and active citizens."

— Partnering with other parishes and faith groups in community efforts of common concern.

— Being willing to go beyond parish boundaries "to serve those in need and work for global justice and peace."

The document also encouraged parishes to exercise creativity, cultural sensitivity, wisdom, charity and zeal in exercising their social ministries.

"This is not a new message, but it takes on new urgency in light of the increasing clarity and strength of Catholic social teaching and the signs of declining respect for human life and human dignity in society," said the bishops in the document. "In these challenging days, we believe that the Catholic community needs to be more than ever a source of clear moral vision and effective action. We are called to be the 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world.' ... This task belongs to every believer and every parish. ... The pursuit of justice and peace is an essential part of what makes a parish Catholic."

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Una Navidad más cristiana

En unos días llegará la Navidad, y luego se acabará, y después de todo esto, ¿en qué seremos diferentes?

¿Qué le traerá esta Navidad? ¿Será simplemente una repetición de la misma rutina de comprar algunos regalos, intercambiarlos, abrirlos, y pagar las cuentas? ¿Pasará estas vacaciones de Navidad sin cambios? Más bien, ¿se abrirá a vivirlos de una manera nueva, más profunda e impactante?

Este año podría ser diferente. Este año, podríamos permitir que la experiencia del Adviento y la Navidad nos cambie. En este artículo, me gustaría compartir algunas sugerencias para un Adviento y una Navidad que sean una experiencia más plena de fe cristiana, que nos acerque a Jesucristo y a los unos con los otros.

Aquí hay veinte ideas para tener una Navidad más cristiana:

1. Prepárese espiritualmente para la Navidad haciendo una buena Confesión sacramental durante uno de los servicios comunitarios de Penitencia de Adviento en nuestras parroquias locales. Puede encontrar el horario en nuestro sitio web diocesano en www.sanangelodiocese.org.
2. Asista a Misa en Nochebuena o Navidad. De hecho, la misma palabra “Navidad” significa “la Misa de Cristo.” Planifique con anticipación dónde y cuándo celebrará la Misa de Cristo. Llegue temprano para entrar en un espíritu de oración antes de que comience la liturgia. Invite a un familiar, amigo, compañero de trabajo, o vecino a asistir a la Misa de Navidad con usted. De todos los días del año, Navidad es una época en la que es más probable que alguien esté dispuesto a acompañarlo.
3. Al elegir los regalos, piense no sólo en lo que la gente quiere, sino también en si ese regalo realmente va a ayudar a la persona que lo recibe – si va a tener un efecto positivo en su vida. Incluso podría considerar este novedoso enfoque para dar regalos: en lugar de dar más “cosas,” haga una donación a una organización benéfica en honor a la persona a la que normalmente le daría un regalo material.
4. Mientras hace o envuelve un regalo para alguien, o en el momento de firmarle una tarjeta de Navidad, ore por las necesidades de esa persona. Dele gracias a Dios por la amistad y por la presencia de este amigo en su vida.
5. Al escribir tarjetas navideñas, opte por escribir palabras significativas que puedan tener un efecto positivo en la vida de esa persona – palabras de agradecimiento, reconciliación, y fe cristiana.
6. Cuando asista a fiestas navideñas en la comunidad, elija interactuar de una manera que ayude a que esas reuniones se conviertan en momentos de gracia. Por ejemplo, dele la bienvenida a una nueva persona. Hable con la per-



Obispo
Michael J. Sis

Diócesis de
San Ángelo

sona que se siente sola y tímida. Diga algunas palabras de afirmación. Que sea un momento para construir nuevos puentes entre las personas.

7. Cuando asista a reuniones familiares, esté verdaderamente presente con las personas que están allí. Escúchelos, mírelos a los ojos, guarde el teléfono celular, y entable una conversación real. Venga con apertura para perdonar los resentimientos del pasado y aceptarse el uno al otro, así como Cristo lo perdonó y aceptó.
8. Invite a una comida en su casa a alguien que no tenga con quién pasar la Navidad, como un conocido anciano, un inmigrante recién llegado, o un estudiante internacional de una universidad local.
9. Cuando esté con miembros de su familia en Navidad, siéntense juntos y lean en voz alta la historia del nacimiento de Jesucristo de la Biblia. Podrían usar Lucas 1:26-56 o Mateo 1:18-2:11.
10. Canten canciones navideñas que realmente celebran a Jesús, quien es el motivo de la temporada. Aquí están ocho de las canciones navideñas más populares centradas en Cristo: “Adeste fideles” (versión en español), “Noche de paz,” “Pastores venid,” “El Niño del tambor,” “Campana sobre campana,” “Los pastores a Belén,” “Duerme y no llores,” y “Jesús del alma.” Para más cánticos, pueden consultar el álbum de “Noche Luminosa” de los Misioneros Servidores de la Palabra. Lo pueden encontrar en YouTube y en Apple Music. Entre los cánticos más hermosos están: “Ven a mí Navidad”, “Ya la tierra es cielo”, “Campana navideña”, “Emmanuel”, “Dios con nosotros”, y “Noche Luminosa”.
11. Vaya con un grupo a cantar villancicos.
12. Prepare una calceta navideña para Jesús. Sea creativo en lo que ponga en su calceta, como notas de oración intercesora, expresiones de agradecimiento, o palabras de amor por él.
13. Instale un nacimiento navideño en su casa en un lugar accesible para los niños pequeños. Deje que miren,

conversen, toquen, y usen su imaginación para reorganizar las figuras. Una hermosa variación de esta práctica es dejar que los niños hagan las figuras con Play-Doh, hablando de cada personaje de la escena. Otra alternativa creativa es una costumbre que comenzó en Francia hace muchos años. Coloque el pesebre vacío en el nacimiento al comienzo del Adviento y agregue al niño Jesús en Navidad. Mientras tanto, durante el tiempo de Adviento, se coloca una pequeña canasta o una ollita con pedazos de paja o pasto cerca del nacimiento, y cualquiera puede poner un pedazo de paja o pasto de la canasta en el pesebre por cada buena acción o acto de bondad que haga durante el Adviento, para preparar un lugar suave y cómodo para recibir al niño Jesús.

14. Con los niños, lea libros navideños sobre Jesús.
15. Organice una fiesta de cumpleaños para Jesús el día de Navidad. Prepare un pastel para Jesús con velas de cumpleaños. Deje que los niños ayuden a decorarlo y a apagar las velas. Canten “Feliz Cumpleaños” a Jesús.
16. Si tiene algo de tiempo libre durante las vacaciones, piense en algunas cosas que podría hacer con su tiempo más allá de simplemente comer, mirar televisión, e ir de compras. Por ejemplo, visite a los confinados en sus hogares, a los encarcelados, a los pobres, a los que sufren, o a los enfermos. Emprenda algún proyecto que tenga un impacto duradero en la vida de algún individuo o familia. Pregúntese: “¿A quién puedo visitar para llevarles un poco del gozo de Cristo?”
17. Empaque algunos artículos poco usados que no use o que ya no necesite y llévelos a un refugio u organización local que sirva a los pobres.
18. Tómese un turno para ayudar en un comedor de beneficencia, refugio, o programa para desamparados local que entregue comidas a personas mayores. Podría darles un descanso a los voluntarios habituales para que puedan pasar un tiempo agradable con sus familias.
19. Si está casado, reserva un tiempo romántico con su cónyuge. Ralenticen su vida y disfruten el uno al otro.
20. En esta época del año, vemos muchas luces hermosas decorando hogares, negocios, y lugares públicos. Cuando vea esas luces brillar, recuerde a quién simbolizan — Jesucristo, la luz del mundo. Recuerde sus palabras en Juan 8:12: “Yo soy la luz del mundo. El que me sigue no caminará en tinieblas, sino que tendrá la luz de la vida.”

Usted y sus seres queridos podrían pensar en otras formas creativas de agregar un significado más profundo a su experiencia de Adviento y Navidad. Estas son sólo algunas sugerencias para que piensen en cómo vivir esta temporada con fe y amor renovados.

Las parroquias desempeñan un 'papel vital' para llevar a Cristo al mundo, dicen los obispos

Por Gina Cristian
OSV News

Las parroquias desempeñan un "papel vital" al llevar el amor transformador de Cristo al mundo, dijeron dos obispos de Estados Unidos mientras un documento clave sobre el ministerio social cumple 30 años.

El documento "Comunidades de Sal y Luz: Reflexiones sobre la Misión Social de la Parroquia" fue aprobado por los obispos católicos de Estados Unidos en noviembre de 1993 y continúa sirviendo como hoja de ruta para el ministerio social parroquial.

El título del documento apunta a la comparación que Jesús hace de los discípulos con la sal y la luz, llamados a sazonar e iluminar el mundo con el mensaje del Evangelio (Mt 5, 13-16).

"Tres décadas después de su publicación, vemos la importancia perdurable de este documento guía", dijo el arzobispo Borys A. Gudziak de la Arquidiócesis Católica Ucraniana de Filadelfia, presidente Comité de Justicia Doméstica y Desarrollo Humano de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB), y obispo David J. Malloy de Rockford, Illinois, quien a mediados de noviembre completó su mandato de tres años como presidente del Comité de Justicia y Paz Internacional de la USCCB.

"Seguimos invitando a las comunidades de fe a integrar el ministerio social a lo largo de la vida de la parroquia y a aceptar el llamado a ser comunidades de sal y luz, formando y enviando fieles a proteger a los más pequeños", dijeron el arzobispo Gudziak y el obispo Malloy en un comunicado emitido el 20 de noviembre.

La declaración señaló que las páginas de recursos actualizadas, disponibles tanto en inglés como en español, han integrado las enseñanzas del Papa Francisco con el documento original. También están disponibles nuevos materiales educativos y de oración, incluida una herramienta de evaluación interactiva para ayudar a las parroquias a implementar sus iniciativas de ministerio social.

Si bien estuvo precedida por importantes cartas pastorales sobre varios temas, "Comunidades de Sal y Luz" fue el primer esfuerzo de los obispos católicos de Estados Unidos para abordar específicamente lo que llamaron "papel crucial de las parroquias" en el ministerio social de la iglesia.

"Estamos convencidos de que la parroquia local es el marco eclesial más importante para compartir y actuar sobre nuestro patrimonio social católico", ya que "la parroquia es donde vive la Iglesia", afirman los obispos en el documento.

El ministerio social parroquial "tiene claras raíces bíblicas" y "especialmente en los profetas hebreos y en la vida y la palabra de Jesús", escribieron los obispos.

Señalaron que los mandatos bíblicos de defender la dignidad humana -- por ejemplo, a través del cuidado de los pobres y marginados -- "han sido explorados y expresados de una manera especial en la enseñanza social católica".

En 1990, los obispos de EE.UU. describieron el desarrollo de esa enseñanza en un mensaje pastoral para el centenario de *Rerum Novarum*, una encíclica de 1891 del Papa León XIII que articuló la postura de la Iglesia sobre asuntos de justicia social, particularmente aquellas planteadas por el impacto de la Revolución Industrial sobre la sociedad moderna y la dignidad humana.

La encíclica, un documento fundamental sobre la enseñanza social católica, fue inspirada en parte por el cardenal estadounidense James Gibbons, quien había defendido a los Caballeros del Trabajo (Knights of Labor) -- la primera organización laboral importante en Estados Unidos -- en una carta de 1887 al Vaticano.

En "Comunidades de Sal y Luz", los obispos subrayaron que "nuestra fe es profundamente social", ya que "no podemos ser llamados verdaderamente 'católicos' si no oímos y prestamos atención al llamado de la Iglesia a servir a aquellos que están necesitados y a trabajar por la justicia y la paz".

En esencia, la enseñanza social de la Iglesia "es la vida, dignidad y los derechos de la persona humana", dijeron.

El ministerio social no debe ser un componente separado sino más bien "una parte integral de toda la parroquia", entretendida en "todos los aspectos de la vida parroquial -- el culto, la formación y acción", dijeron los obispos en el documento.

Más que un modelo específico, los obispos ofrecieron un marco de siete elementos para integrar el ministerio social en la vida parroquial.

— El ministerio social debe estar anclado en la oración y la adoración, ya que "el marco más importante para la doctrina social de la Iglesia no radica en una dispensa de alimentos ni en la cámara de un comité legislativo, sino en la oración y el culto, especialmente reunidos en torno al altar para recibir la Eucaristía".

— La predicación y la educación deben reflejar las dimensiones sociales del Evangelio, sin convertir el púlpito en una plataforma partidista ni descuidar la inclusión de la doctrina social en el currículo y la vida de las escuelas católicas, los programas de educación religiosa y la preparación sacra-

Espacio de Oración

Allá en el pesebre

Allá en el pesebre, do nace Jesús,
La cuna de paja nos vierte gran luz;
Estrellas lejanas del cielo al mirar,
Se inclinan gozosas su lumbre a prestar.

Pastores del campo, teniendo temor,
Cercados de luz y de gran resplandor,
Acuden aprisa buscando a Jesús,
Nacido en pesebre del mundo la luz.

Oh Cristo, pedimos hoy tu bendición,
Rogamos que atiendas a nuestra oración;
A todos, Oh Cristo, nos muestras amor,
Nosotros te amamos también, Salvador.

mental y de iniciación cristiana.

— Ayudar a los feligreses "a entender y actuar según las dimensiones sociales del Evangelio en sus vidas diarias".

— Llegar a los pobres y vulnerables a través de "actos concretos de caridad".

— Promover "un sentido renovado de responsabilidad política que llama a los católicos a ser ciudadanos informados y activos".

— Asociarse con otras parroquias y grupos religiosos en esfuerzos comunitarios de interés común.

— Estar dispuesto a ir más allá de los límites parroquiales para "servir a los necesitados, trabajar por la justicia y buscar la paz global".

El documento también anima a las parroquias a ejercitar la creatividad, la sensibilidad cultural, la sabiduría, la caridad y el celo en el ejercicio de sus ministerios sociales.

"No es éste un mensaje nuevo, pero toma una nueva urgencia en vista del aumento en la claridad y la fuerza de las enseñanzas sociales católicas y las señales de declinación del respeto por la vida y la dignidad humana en la sociedad", dijeron los obispos en el documento. "En estos días de desafíos, creemos que la comunidad católica necesita ser más que nunca una fuente de visión moral clara y acción efectiva. Estamos llamados a ser la 'sal de la tierra' y la 'luz del mundo'. ... Esta es una tarea para cada creyente y cada parroquia ... La búsqueda de la justicia y la paz es una parte esencial de lo que hace católica a una parroquia".

Gina Christian es reportera nacional de OSV News. Síguela en X (anteriormente Twitter) @GinaJesseReina.

CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



December

- 1

Rev. John A. Pierce (D — 1979)
- 1

Rev. Joseph Uecker (B)
- 2

Rev. Juan Lopez (B)
- 4

Rev. Thomas Manimala (B)
- 4

Rev. Larry Cyr, CPPS (D — 2017)
- 5

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)

January

- 2

Deacon Alfred Camarillo (B)
- 3

Deacon Antero Gonzalez (B)
- 3

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

Rev. Kumar Jujjuvarapu (O — 2006)
- 5

Rev. Andrew Wueste (D — 2011)
- 7

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

Bishop Michael Sis (B)
- 10

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

Deacon Arturo Casarez (B)
- 10

Rev. Joseph Choutapalli (B)
- 11

Deacon Paul Klein (D — 2015)
- 12

Rev. Angel Castro-Gonzales (B)
- 12

Rev. Jeremiah McCarthy, MSC (D — 2019)
- 13

Rev. Laurent Mvondo (B)
- 13

Deacon Reynaldo Nuñez (B)
- 13

Rev. Joseph Walter (D — 1989)
- 14

Rev. Emilio Sosa (O — 2006)
- 16

Rev. Mike Elsner (B)
- 16

Rev. Charles Greenwelll (B)
- 16

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

Deacon John Specht (B)
- 18

Rev. Noel Britto (D — 2012)
- 18

Deacon Charles Evans (D — 2020)
- 18

Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (D — 1975)
- 19

Rev. Robert Kelly (D — 1999)
- 22

Deacon José Esparza (D — 2011)

Continued at right

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

(Dates of birth and ordination given for living clergy; date of death for deceased.)



Bishop’s Calendar

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

December 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 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.
- 6

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Staff Advent Morning of Reflection at 9:00 a.m.
- 6

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Vocation Team meeting at 1:00 p.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.
- 13

SAN ANGELO, First Methodist Church, Interreligious Hanukkah service 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.
- 24

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Midnight Mass at 12:00 a.m.
- 25

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Spanish Mass at 12:00 noon

January 2024

- 1–5

SAN ANTONIO, Oblate Renewal Center, Region X Bishops’ Retreat

- 6

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass of Admission to Candidacy at 10:30 a.m.
- 9

FORT STOCKTON, Lynaugh Unit, Confessions and Mass
- 11

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priestly Life and Formation Committee meeting at 1:30 p.m.
- 12–14

Project Rachel Healing Retreat
- 14

MIDLAND, The Way Retreat Center, Project Miriam Dinner at 6:00 p.m.
- 15

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service at 12:00 noon
- 15

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Diocesan Mission Council meeting at 4:00 p.m.
- 18

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Pension Administrative Committee meeting at 1:30 p.m.
- 18

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Hour for Life at 8:00 p.m.
- 19

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Catholic Charitable Foundation meeting at 10:00 a.m.
- 20

MIDLAND, Holy Cross Catholic High School, Diocesan Schools Commission meeting at 9:30 a.m.
- 21

MIDLAND, St. Stephen, Mass at 10:00 a.m.
- 21

ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Adult Confirmation Mass at 4:00 p.m.
- 22

SAN ANGELO, Tom Green County Courthouse steps, silent prayer for the unborn at 12:00 noon
- 22

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Diocesan Pro-Life Mass at 6:30 p.m.
- 27

AUSTIN, UT Catholic Center, Mass for Life at 10:00 a.m.
- 27

AUSTIN, State Capitol, Rally for Life
- 27

AUSTIN, Texas State Council Knights of Columbus meeting
- 28

ABILENE, Holy Family, Youth 2000 Closing Mass at 10:30 a.m.
- 28

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Anniversary Mass at 6:00 p.m. with reception
- 30–31

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Spring Priests’ Conference
- 31

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Deans’ meeting at 1:00 p.m.



Christ the King Retreat Center

December 2023

- 1

Bishop’s Annual Party for Clergy
- 6

Staff Advent Morning of Reflection
- 8–10

Deacon Formation Pre-Candidacy Retreat
- 11

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 14

Bishop’s Annual Advent Party for Staff
- 15

Catholic Daughters’ Christmas Party
- 16–19

Seminarian Winter Gathering
- 22–25

CKRC Offices Closed in Observance of Christmas
- 29

CKRC Offices Closed in Observance of the New Year

January 2024

- 1

Closed in Observance of the New Year
- 7–12

Holy Trinity Seminarians’ Silent Retreat
- 17

DOSA Staff Meeting, Mass & Lunch
- 19–21

Engaged Encounter
- 21

Natural Family Planning
- 22

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 30–31

DOSA Priests’ Spring Conference

Advent Penance Service Schedule

Monday, Dec. 4

- 6:30 p.m. – SAN ANGELO, St. Mary Parish

6:30 p.m. – SWEETWATER, Holy Spirit Parish

Tuesday, Dec. 5

- 6:00 p.m. – CRANE, Good Shepherd Parish

6:30 p.m. – SAN ANGELO, St. Joseph Parish

Wednesday, Dec. 6

- 5:45 p.m. – ST. LAWRENCE/GARDEN CITY, St. Lawrence Parish

6:30 p.m. – COLEMAN, Sacred Heart Parish

6:30 p.m. – OZONA, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish

6:30 p.m. – ROWENA, St. Joseph Parish

See PENANCE, Page 7

Clergy, continued

- 24

Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (D — 2009)
- 25

Deacon Paul Hinojos (B)
- 26

Deacon D.J. Goetz (D — 2003)
- 26

Rev. Cyril Lange (D — 1971)
- 26

Deacon Jack Peterson (D — 1987)
- 26

Rev. Anthony Sloan (B)
- 27

Deacon Daniel Peña (D — 2021)
- 27

Deacon Horacio Yanez (D — 2015)
- 28

Deacon Julio Carrasco (O — 1979)
- 28

Deacon Apolonio Gutierrez (O — 1979)
- 28

Rev. Knick Knickerbocker (O — 2009)
- 30

Deacon Bill Butler (B)
- 30

Deacon Federico Medina (B)

Mass obligations for Christmas and NY

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 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.

Holy Cross student advances to all-region and all-state choir competition

MIDLAND — Raul Garcia, a senior at Holy Cross Catholic High School, continues to advance not only in academics, but in fine arts as well. On Friday, Oct. 27, the Texas Private School Music Educators Association auditions took place, resulting in Raul advancing to All-Region and All-State Choir.

“I’m very proud of Raul with all his hard work and making time outside of school to learn his pieces. Congratulations to Raul for this accomplishment. He represents Holy Cross so well,” said Carla Hernandez, Holy Cross Music Teacher.

In order to audition for this competition, there are three parts to the process. The student will first select their vocal part. Then, they will learn the same song and audition cuts as everyone else competing, within two months. Finally, the student will submit a recording for their piece to be judged. This is a blind competition and the judges do not see the student but can only hear the recording.

“Raul continues to amaze us with his beautiful voice! He is a humble young man who has been blessed with an amazing talent. We are so proud of him,” Carolyn Gonzalez, Head of School, praises. “Congratulations to Raul on a job well done!”

Garcia competed in the Bass 1 category. The region reaches from El Paso to Amarillo to Fort Worth. Out of the region, there are only 35 Bass 1 vocalists chosen for the All-Region choir. The top 16 go on to compete for the All-State choir with two other regions. Raul is one of those 35 vocalists who will be singing with the All-Region choir in January. He placed 15th and will be advancing to compete for a spot in the All-State choir, held on Nov. 6th.



COURTESY
Holy Cross Catholic High School senior Raul Garcia.

'Poverty is a scandal,' pope says; Christians must use gifts for charity



Pope Francis greets a woman and child during a lunch in the Vatican audience hall Nov. 19, 2023, the World Day of the Poor.

CNS PHOTO | VATICAN MEDIA

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The material, cultural and spiritual poverties that exist in the world are a "scandal" that Christians are called to address by putting their God-given capacity for charity and love into action, Pope Francis said.

The poor, whether "the oppressed, fatigued, marginalized, victims of war," migrants, the hungry, those without work or left without hope, "are not one, two, or three, they are a multitude," the pope said during a Mass celebrated for World Day of the Poor Nov. 19 in St. Peter's Basilica.

"And thinking of this immense multitude of the poor, the message of the Gospel is clear: let us not bury the wealth of the Lord. Let us spread charity, share our bread, multiply love," he said. "Poverty is a scandal."

Among the 5,000 who filled the basilica for Mass were homeless persons and other people in need who were seated in the front rows near Pope Francis. After celebrating Mass and praying the Angelus, the pope ate lunch in the Vatican audience hall with some 1,250 people, continuing a tradition he began on the first World Day of the Poor in 2017.

Seated at a central table, the pope prayed that God would bless the food and "this moment of friendship, all together." On the three-course menu were ricotta cheese-filled pasta tubes, meatballs and tiramisu for dessert.

This year's World Day of the Poor, the seventh edition, drew its theme from the Book of Tobit: "Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor." In the week leading up to the world day, the Vatican extended the hours and operations of a medical clinic it runs near St. Peter's Square dedicated to caring for anyone in need.

See POVERTY, Page 19

Charismatic Corner: The ‘gateway’ gift

By Dee Halbert

During this time of upheaval in the world it is hard sometimes to know how to pray. We pray for an end to violence, protection of life, peace, conversion of heart and mind for those gripped in hate, and wisdom for our leaders. But have you ever asked the Lord “For what more should I pray, Lord” or “How should I pray?”

St. Paul tells us to put on the armor of God and to “pray always in the Holy Spirit” (Eph 6:18). He tells us, “Pursue love, but strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts” (1 Cor 14:1), “I wish you all would speak in tongues” (1 Cor 14:5). When we pray in tongues it is the Holy Spirit praying through us (Rom 8:26-27).

The first time I heard the gift of tongues was when the Heart of Mercy Charismatic Prayer Group came from San Angelo and held a weekend Life in the Spirit Seminar for us at Abilene’s Holy Family Parish in 1998. The leaders were also “singing” in tongues. I thought, “This must be what heaven sounds like.” Praising God in tongues was so beautiful, peaceful, and joyful. Without even knowing all the Scripture references at that time I thought, “something this beautiful must please God and I want this gift!” And when prayed over I received it and has been a normal part of my prayer life ever since.

After being prayed with for this “Baptism in the Spirit” and asking for the gift of tongues, I witnessed the next day to a dear friend and prayed with her. She did not pray in tongues at that time but the next morning was praying alone in her living room and asked for the gift. She said she heard what she could only describe as a multitude of angels praying in tongues all around and she started praying in tongues with them. She later completed a Life in the Spirit Seminar but had already received this beautiful gift praying on her own.

I remember our beloved charismatic priest Father Robert DeGrandis teaching us as St. Paul does that as we pray in our prayer tongue we “utter mysteries in the Spirit,” that the Holy Spirit intercedes for our needs and others to strengthen the sanctification and spiritual gifts received at our sacramental baptism, Eucharist, confirmation and reconciliation to be used in service to the whole body of Christ, the church. He gave as example a man he knew who had been living a homosexual lifestyle receiving the gift of tongues. The man desired to be set free from his disordered attraction to men and gave witness that he prayed in the Spirit in his prayer tongue constantly as he drove from New York to Florida for a conference. Upon arriving he witnessed to Father DeGrandis and others that he had been set free from his disordered desire. Father DeGrandis told us he started dating women and was happily married with several children (the man consented that his story be shared). I have also witnessed testimony of numerous people being healed and set free of addictions after receiving their prayer tongue.

Father DeGrandis was led by the Spirit to drive to see Mother Angelica and pray with her. She received the gift of tongues and soon after was inspired to start the Eternal Word Television Network (Mother Angelica has retold this story). One of our presenters in our recent Life In the Spirit Seminar shared that after he was prayed with many years ago in one of the seminars he received a prayer tongue, but upon praying before bed that night began to doubt if these seemingly nonsensical syllables coming out of his mouth were really from the Lord but felt if the Lord wanted him to pray this way he would. He said while praying a strong urge came over him to pray for a couple that he had not seen in a while and who had not asked him to pray for them. Not knowing what they needed he prayed in tongues for them. The next morning he received a call from the husband asking for prayer for him and his wife.

My experience and that of others has been that praying in tongues has served as a gateway that has deepened our contemplative prayer time. Over the years we have also found as we pray with people to be baptized in the Spirit that, if they desire, ask, and surrender to the Lord for the gift of tongues, they will eventually receive it.

This beautiful gateway gift of praying in the Holy Spirit using the gift of tongues helps release and empower the charisms, the gifts and talents in a person given by God, to aide them to lovingly live out the call of God in their lives for themselves and others to further the Kingdom of God.

“But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” (Jude 20-21).

Dee Halbert is a parishioner of Holy Family Parish in Abilene and a member of the DOSA Service Committee and the Holy Light Charismatic Prayer Group.

For more information on Life in the Spirit Seminars, prayer groups, Healing Masses, conferences, teachings, and other events in the diocese, visit CatholicCharismatic.com.

Next Healing Mass: Dec. 12 at Sacred Heart Parish in Abilene.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

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

Nicaraguan Catholic Miss Universe wins hearts of fellow countrymen oppressed by the regime

By David Agren
OSV News

MEXICO CITY — Nicaraguans spilled into the streets after Sheynnis Palacios was crowned Miss Universe, celebrating the success of a countrywoman rising from humble origins to international acclaim.

They showed unbridled expressions of pride and patriotism, waiving the country's blue-and-white flag — a symbol seen as subversive by the ruling Sandinista regime, which has imposed its own red-and-black banner in its place. They also risked the regime's wrath by congregating in public — violating rules against public assembly so severe that even feast day processions have been prohibited.

"It's been a true explosion of joy for Nicaraguans that no one could stop," said Father Edwin Román, a Nicaraguan priest now exiled in Miami.

"This is much more than a beauty contest for Nicaraguans," Yader Morazán, an exiled Nicaraguan lawyer, told OSV News.

"Miss Universe 2023 has become a patriotic symbol, which embodies the history of a poor, humble, and suffering people, but a hard-working people, too, with dreams, personal drive, and desires of freedom," Morazán said.

Her victory also came as a rare moment of relief for Nicaragua, which exploded in protests against the regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, in 2018 — only to be violently suppressed by police and paramilitaries. The regime also cracked down on dissent, imprisoned and exiled dissidents and has persecuted the Catholic Church — most notoriously arresting and convicting Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, who remains behind bars.

"Thank you for making the name of our country shine in your beauty! Thank you for bringing joy to our long-suffering country!," Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez wrote on X after the pageant. "Thank you for giving us hope for a better future for our beautiful country!"

But no sooner had Palacios claimed the crown in the Nov. 18 pageant than the Central American country's increasingly totalitarian regime politicized the accomplishment, attempting to seize it for themselves.

The regime initially congratulated Palacios, expressing "legitimate pride and joy," in a statement.

But the victory and expressions of support put the regime in a bind: pro-government media spoke poorly of Palacios prior to the pageant. And it was later revealed that her name appeared on an airline list of passengers to be denied reentry into Nicaragua — a form of exile imposed on regime critics.

The organizer of Miss Nicaragua pageant was subsequently denied reentry into the country, according to CNN.

"They had to juggle their dislike of the miss and what she represents, especially to young people, without openly opposing an overwhelming public sentiment of joy and pride that her victory triggered," Tiziano Breda, researcher at the Italian Institute of International Affairs, told OSV News.

Murillo, the regime spokeswoman, later lashed out at critics, saying, "In these days of a new victory, we are seeing the evil, terrorist commentators making a clumsy and insulting attempt to turn what should be a beautiful and well-deserved moment of pride into destructive coup-mongering," according to The Associated Press.

Palacios was the first Nicaraguan and the first woman from Central America to claim the Miss Universe title. Her blue-and-white jeweled gown was thought to be a tribute to the Virgin Mary, though others said it was inspired by the national flag.

She grew up Catholic as the daughter of a single mother, who moved to the United States to support the family. Palacios graduated with a communications degree from the Jesuit-run Central American University — recently seized and renamed by the regime — earning scholarships and selling buñuelos (a fried dough fritter) to fund her studies.

In an interview with ABS-CBN after her victory, Palacios spoke about her faith. "I am a Christian person, Catholic person, and to me, prayer is a way that makes me feel more comfortable," she said. "When I say thanks, God, it is because this crown is not mine, it's for him. It's all for all the delegates and it's also for my country and my family."

"Sheynnis is an exemplary young woman of a lot of effort, sacrifice, dedication to winning this pageant and other beauty contests, but also of Christian faith and values transmitted in her home as she refers to her mother and grandmother, in addition to good academic preparation in schools and Catholic universities," Father Román said.

Palacios posted a photo attending a 2018 protest on Facebook, but deleted it, according to The Associated Press. She has steered clear of politics since becoming Miss Universe, telling CNN, "I want to say that I am very happy to bring joy to my country, to really see that



OSV NEWS PHOTO | JOSE CABEZAS, REUTERS

Miss Nicaragua Sheynnis Palacios points her finger upward after being crowned Miss Universe during the 72nd Miss Universe pageant in San Salvador, El Salvador, Nov. 18, 2023.

each one of them is enjoying this triumph just like me."

Father Román urged Nicaraguans to keep Palacios out of politics.

"They should distinguish it is not her role. She's an ambassador of universal beauty," Father Román said.

"The Sandinista dictatorship must not try to manipulate her image."

David Agren writes for OSV News from Mexico City.

Why can't a Catholic join the Freemasons?

By Tyler Arnold
Catholic News Agency

The Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) in response to a question from a Filipino bishop recently reaffirmed the long-standing position of the Catholic Church that being an active Freemason constitutes a grave sin.

"Active membership in Freemasonry by a member of the faithful is forbidden," said the letter, signed by Pope Francis and DDF Prefect Cardinal Víctor Fernández.

The dicastery sent the letter to Bishop Julito Cortes of the Diocese of Dumaguete, who asked the Vatican for guidance on how to approach the "very significant" number of Filipino Catholics enrolled in Freemasonry and "a large number of sympathizers and associates who are personally convinced that there is no opposition between membership in the Catholic Church and in Masonic lodges," according to the dicastery document.

In addition to reaffirming the Church's teaching on Freemasonry, the dicastery encouraged Filipino bishops to conduct catechesis explaining why Catholicism and Freemasonry are irreconcilable.

Why is the Church against Freemasonry?

The first papal condemnation of Freemasonry came from Pope Clement XII in 1738, but it has been reiterated by numerous popes over the past three centuries. The pronouncement was in Clement's papal bull titled *In Eminenti*.

In this bull, Clement commented on the secrecy of Masonic lodges and the "host of grievous punishment" received

when violating the oath of secrecy. The bull did not delve into many specific objections to Masonic practices but concluded, based on "certain knowledge and mature deliberations," that "all prudent and upright men have passed the same judgment on them as being depraved and perverted."

Pope Leo XIII greatly expanded on the church's teaching nearly 150 years later in his 1884 papal encyclical *Humanae Genus*. The encyclical detailed why Freemasonry is irreconcilable with Catholicism and accused the Freemasons of "planning the destruction of the holy church publicly and openly" and holding to doctrines that contradict church teaching.

According to Leo, Freemasonry adheres to naturalism, which he says is the idea that "human nature and human reason ought in all things to be mistress and guide." He adds that "they deny that anything has been taught by God; they allow no dogma of religion or truth which cannot be understood by the human intelligence, nor any teacher who ought to be believed by reason of his authority."

The encyclical expands on the naturalism of Freemasonry, noting that people of all religions can become freemasons and that religion is "held as an indifferent matter and that all religions are alike," which ruins "all forms of religion, and especially of the Catholic religion, which, as it is the only one that is true, cannot, without great injustice, be regarded as merely equal to other religions."

Leo says that Freemasons desire to secularize marriage as simply civil contracts, desire that children be left to choose their own religion when they come

of age instead of receiving proper religious instruction, and desire that governments refuse to recognize God. He adds that this proposed secularization seeks to eliminate fundamental truths from society.

"If these be taken away, as the naturalists and Freemasons desire, there will immediately be no knowledge as to what constitutes justice and injustice, or upon what principle morality is founded," Leo says. "And, in truth, the teaching of morality which alone finds favor with the sect of Freemasons, and in which they contend that youth should be instructed, is that which they call 'civil,' and 'independent,' and 'free,' namely, that which does not contain any religious belief."

Which Freemason actions and practices promote naturalism and indifferentism?

Freemasons do not consider Freemasonry to be a religion; rather, they accept members from various religions, including Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Yet, Freemasons do have altars at their lodges, they engage in secret rituals, and they say prayers to a generic conception of God, which they often call the "Great Architect of the Universe."

This practice itself promotes religious indifferentism, but Freemasonry is very decentralized and does not adhere to a specific body of texts that declare all religions to be equal. Some prominent and influential Freemasons, however, have more clearly articulated support for indifferentism toward religion.

Albert Pike, who was the sovereign grand commander of the supreme council of the southern jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in the late 1800s,



OSV NEWS PHOTO, LOLA GOMEZ, CNS

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, leaves the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall in this file photo dated Oct. 6, 2023. In a Nov. 13 note approved by Pope Francis, the Cardinal said Catholics involved with Freemasonry "are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion."

wrote a book called *Morals and Dogma*, which was given to 14th-degree Masons under that jurisdiction for about a century. His writings draw supposed connections between various religions and promote indifferentism.

"We do not undervalue the importance of any truth," Pike says. "We utter no word that can be deemed irreverent by any one of any faith. We do not tell the [Muslim] that it is only important for him to believe that there is but one God, and wholly unessential whether [Muhammad] was his prophet. We do not tell the Hebrew that the Messiah whom he expects was born in

The Catechist Corner on Advent

By Alison Pope
Director of Evangelization and Catechesis

Oftentimes, people use the beginning of a new year to set resolutions for themselves and to be intentional about a particular aspect of their life. Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year. It is a time of preparation — both for Christmas and for the second coming of Christ. It is a time where we should be encouraging those we minister to, and their families, to be intentional about reflecting on their lives and to point them to resources to help in this endeavor.

While there are numerous resources and ideas to share with those you minister to and with related to Advent, we want to share a few to consider.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have numerous resources that can be found at <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/advent>. Here you can find a daily Advent calendar, information on the O Antiphons, a blessing for a nativity scene, a blessing for a Christmas tree, and a prayer for an Advent wreath.

Many identify each Sunday of Advent with a theme — hope, peace, joy, and love. You can create resources to share so that families can take each week to focus on that Sunday’s theme. Find activities to do together around that theme. Discuss how you see that theme playing out in those around you. Be creative!

Parishes can help families during this Advent to discover new ways to mark this liturgical season. I have several colleagues around the country whose parishes put together Advent packets for each family. Some are simply different prayers, trivia about the season, and suggestions

of ways to share with others during the season. Some are more elaborate and include items for each family to make a simple Advent wreath, a simple treat that can be shared by the family, and some sort of Advent calendar. There are a ton of free, reproducible printable resources online that can be shared with families.

Another suggestion for parishes is to host a Blue Christmas service. For many, this time of year is not a happy time. Due to a variety of circumstances, some find this time one of sadness. A Blue Christmas service acknowledges grief and other difficult emotions some may feel and finds ways to address these. The message is not that it will be okay or to cheer up, but that in the pain, there is also hope. There are many forms this Blue Christmas service can take on, so gather ideas and incorporate what works for your faith community.

Create a resource for your parish explaining the Jesse Tree. The Jesse Tree tells the story of Jesus from Creation to Christmas. Each day typically includes a Scripture story and an ornament. Again, there are free resources online to help you with the ornaments and that will explain what story goes with each ornament/symbol. The ornaments can be displayed on a branch, a string, or any other way that works for each family. It’s a great way to incorporate Scripture into our daily Advent rituals.

You can also share resources from Catholic Icing (<https://www.catholicicing.com/advent-and-christmas-with-kid/>) and Loyola Press (<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/advent/>), among others.

Let us take advantage of this new liturgical year to better partner with the families we serve to help them make their homes true households of faith.

Beginning in November 2023, the Office of Evangelization began a social media outreach program called The Catechist Corner with the goal of providing weekly content focused on prayer and reflections, highlighting publishers and partnered organizations, providing updates on upcoming and ongoing events, and introducing resources to help catechetical and youth ministry leaders in their respective ministries.

We would also like to encourage you to take an active part in The Catechist Corner by contributing the following if you are interested and able:

- *A Prayer and Reflection to be released on the second Wednesday of each month. Submissions for each month are due on the first Friday of the month.*
- *Any upcoming or ongoing events happening in your area that fall under catechetical or youth ministry. These announcements will be released every Friday on the week that they are submitted.*
- *Any photos or videos of events that happened in your area that fall under catechetical or youth ministry. These will be released every Monday in the week following their submission.*

You can submit any of the above content contributions by emailing us directly at evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocese.org or by messaging us through our social media pages at:

- *Facebook:* <https://www.facebook.com/dosaoec>
- *Instagram:* https://www.instagram.com/dosa_oec/

It is our hope that The Catechist Corner can help to create a collaborative space for everyone taking part in catechetical and youth ministry and provide a glimpse for leaders of parish life across the diocese.

Read the Angelus online

Sign up for DOSA Mail (see below) to get the WTA and other news from the diocese in your inbox.
Past issues available at: sanangelodiocese.org/west-texas-angelus



Stay Connected with the Diocese of San Angelo

DOSA Mail

The official Flocknote of the Diocese of San Angelo. Receive texts or emails with important news, updates, and messages from the diocese.

Two ways to join:
1) Text DOSA to 84576
OR
2) Visit
<https://app.flocknote.com/dosamail>

Social Media

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

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

On the Web

www.sanangelodiocese.org

PENANCE

Continued from Page 4

Thursday, Dec. 7

6:30 p.m. – ELDORADO, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
7:00 p.m. – ODESSA, Holy Redeemer Parish

Monday, Dec. 11

6:30 p.m. – SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels Parish

Wednesday, Dec. 13

6:30 p.m. – ABILENE, Holy Family Parish
6:30 p.m. – BIG LAKE, St. Margaret of Cortona Parish
6:30 p.m. – EDEN, St. Charles Parish
6:45 p.m. – STANTON, St. Joseph Parish

Thursday, Dec. 14

6:00 p.m. – ODESSA, St. Mary Parish
6:30 p.m. – ABILENE, Sacred Heart Parish
6:30 p.m. – BRADY, St. Patrick Parish
6:30 p.m. – SAN ANGELO, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart

Friday, Dec. 15

6:00 p.m. – FORT STOCKTON, St. Agnes Church, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
6:30 p.m. – COLORADO CITY, St. Ann Parish

Monday, Dec. 18

7:00 p.m. – MIDLAND, St. Ann Parish

Tuesday, Dec. 19

6:00 p.m. – ANDREWS, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
6:30 p.m. – BROWNWOOD, St. Mary Parish
6:30 p.m. – SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret of Scotland Parish

Wednesday, Dec. 20

6:00 p.m. – ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish
6:30 p.m. – ABILENE, St. Vincent Pallotti Parish
6:30 p.m. – WALL, St. Ambrose Parish

Thursday, Dec. 21

6:00 p.m. – ODESSA, St. Joseph Parish
6:30 p.m. – ABILENE, St. Francis of Assisi Parish
6:30 p.m. – BALLINGER, St. Mary, Star of the Sea Parish

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL AWARDS
BANQUET

14

DAY

04

MONTH

24

YEAR

DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
COORDINATORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
COORDINATORS OF YOUTH MINISTRY
YOUTH & SCOUTS



Diocese of San Angelo
Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

Collection for retired religious to be taken Dec. 9–10

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) is announcing the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection, scheduled in parishes throughout the Diocese of San Angelo on Dec. 9-10.

In 2022, parishioners contributed \$78,115.68 to the collection. Mr. John Knutsen, director of the NRRO, looks forward to this year’s collection, stating, “We are privileged to support those who have dedicated their lives to tireless service, and we are immensely grateful for the continuing generosity of U.S. Catholic donors to this vital cause.”

Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests — collectively known as women and men religious — have selflessly served for decades without significant financial compensation. However, due to escalating health-care costs, numerous U.S. religious communities face a substantial gap between their elderly members’ needs and the financial resources available for their care. Many religious orders currently experience insufficient retirement savings.

The 2022 appeal demonstrated Catholics’ tremendous generosity by raising \$27.6 million. These funds from the Retirement Fund for Religious collection provided financial assistance for retirement needs for 297 U.S. religious communities.

About the NRRO

The NRRO coordinates the annual national appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes financial assistance to eligible religious communities to help care for their aging members.

To address the deficit in retirement funding among U.S. religious orders, the Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious collection in 1988.

The NRRO is sponsored by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

For more information, visit *retiredreligious.org*, or contact Robin Cabral, Campaign Director, by phone at (508) 685-8899 or by email at *robincabral@retiredreligious.org*.

Bishop Sis names Sister Tovar as Director for Religious

Bishop Michael J. Sis has appointed Sister Estela Tovar, CDP, as Director of the Office for Religious in the Diocese of San Angelo. In her role, Sister Tovar will oversee and assist with the needs of the vowed religious in the diocese.

Diocesan pro-life Mass to be held Jan. 22

Bishop Michael J. Sis will celebrate a diocesan pro-life Mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 22, 2024. The date is the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade* and the National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.

There will also be a gathering for silent prayer on the steps of the Tom Green County Courthouse at noon on the same day.

Bishop Sis to celebrate 10 years of episcopate

Jan. 28, 2024, at a 6:00 p.m. Bishop Michael J. Sis will celebrate Mass at the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart. This Mass will offer an opportunity for the faithful to pray with Bishop Sis on the occasion of his 10th anniversary of ordination as the Bishop of San Angelo. A light reception will follow the Mass.

Interreligious Hanukkah service Dec. 13

Bishop Michael Sis will take part in an interreligious Hanukkah service at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13. The celebration will involve local Jewish and Christian congregational leaders celebrating our shared faith heritage.

The service will be held at First Methodist Church in San Angelo, located at 37 E Beauregard Ave. All are invited.



Diocese of San Angelo
Office of Evangelization and Catechesis



YOUTH CONFIRMATION RETREAT

January 20, 2024 | 9:00a - 6:00p | Mass @ 5:00p
St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, San Angelo

 \$60 per person
(lunch included)

 Space is limited. Spots reserved with completed payment.
Youth MUST be accompanied by an adult

 <https://sanangelodiocese.org/confirmation>



Register before January 10, 2024!

American Guild of Organists

presents

Carols
by Candlelight

Monday December 18, 2023

6:30 PM

Prelude by local organists 6:00 PM

17 local churches, 12 clergy, 100+ voice ecumenical choir

Cathedral Choristers, Cathedral Schola, Concho Cathedral Brassworx, 5 conductors, Address given by Ronnie Hawkins, pastor, Fellowship Christian Church, president ASU

Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart

20 East Beauregard Ave, San Angelo



Healing After Abortion

All of us are in need of God's mercy, and Jesus stands ever ready to forgive and to heal. Project Rachel Ministry of the Diocese of San Angelo is here to help offer the healing mercy of Jesus Christ to women and men who have experienced an abortion. Many times, our sin, especially the sin of abortion, may leave us feeling great shame and guilt, but know that you are loved, Jesus desires to forgive, and you have a home in the Catholic Church.

Project Rachel offers confidential weekend retreats, one-on-one counseling with Catholic counselors, and private support groups for those desiring healing. Our next retreat is scheduled for January.

If you desire healing from abortion, know that we are here and that you are not alone. Please call us at our confidential helpline at

(432) 236-9883

or email us at

projectrachel@sanangelodiocese.org.

Jesus is here to offer all of us his love and mercy. Do not be afraid.



Sanación Después del Aborto

Todos nosotros necesitamos la misericordia de Dios y Jesús está siempre dispuesto a perdonar y sanar. El Ministerio Proyecto Raquel de la Diócesis de San Angelo está aquí para ayudar a ofrecer la misericordia sanadora de Jesucristo a mujeres y hombres que han experimentado un aborto. Muchas veces, nuestro pecado, especialmente el pecado del aborto, puede hacernos sentir una gran vergüenza y culpa, pero debes saber que eres amado, Jesús desea perdonar, y que tienes un hogar en la Iglesia Católica.

Proyecto Rachel ofrece retiros confidenciales, asesamiento individual con consejeros católicos y grupos de apoyo privados para quienes desean sanación. Nuestro próximo retiro está programado para enero.

Si deseas sanarte del aborto, debes saber que estamos aquí y que no estás solo. Llámanos a nuestra línea de ayuda confidencial al

(432) 236-9883

o envíanos un correo electrónico a

projectrachel@sanangelodiocese.org.

Jesús está aquí para ofrecernos a todos su amor y misericordia. No tengas miedo.

Men From All Walks of Life Are Called To Ministries



If you are a Catholic man between the ages of 31 to 60 and have a strong desire to serve the Lord by assisting others, please contact:

Office of Diaconal Ministry
Deacon Freddy Medina • 325-651-7500
deaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org



ST. BONIFACE, ST. JOSEPH,
& ST. THOMAS
CATHOLIC CHURCH
PRESENTS
STEVE AND JANET RAY

DECEMBER 12-13, 2023

6:30 PM

ST. JOSEPH
CATHOLIC CHURCH
ROWENA, TEXAS

Tuesday 12th

FROM BAPTIST TO CATHOLIC

Wednesday 13th

DEFENDING THE EUCHARIST:
YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

There is no charge for these two awesome inspiring evenings,
however a free will offering will be collected

Father Nilo Nalugon installed as pastor of Holy Family



COURTESY

Father Nilo Nalugon was installed as pastor of Holy Family Parish in Abilene by Bishop Michael Sis during a Mass of Installation of Pastor Nov. 4, 2023.

COURTESY



Days of reflection for priests held in Midland and Ballinger



Priests from the Diocese of San Angelo gathered in St. Hubert Hall at St. Mary, Star of the Sea Parish in Ballinger Nov. 9 to listen to Father Donald Nesti, CSSp, of Houston (center). Father Nesti gave the same talk the previous day at St. Ann Parish in Midland, giving the priests of the diocese two opportunities to attend.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Faithful should embrace silence, communication with God, pope says

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Long moments of silence and listening to God's Word are some of the many lessons contemplative women can give other Catholics, Pope Francis said.

"In this world that is always full — of things, words, news, a whole industry of external communication — interior communication, in silence, is so necessary," he said during an audience at the Vatican Nov. 16.

He spoke to people taking part in an international conference sponsored by the Pontifical International Marian Academy on the Venerable María de Jesús de Ágreda.

Mother Ágreda was a Spanish mystic, spiritual writer and 17th-century member of the Order of the Immaculate Conception, a religious order founded in Spain in 1511.

She was a cloistered nun who was believed to have had the gift of bilocation as it was said she appeared to members of the Jumano tribe in central New Mexico, Tucson, and West Texas, in what was known then as "New Spain," and evangelized that region.

The audience with the pope included members of the Conceptionists and Indigenous peoples who trace their lineage to the Jumano tribe.

In his talk, the pope praised Mother Ágreda as being "an exceptional woman" whom the conference defined as "in love with Scripture," "Marian mystic" and "evangelizer of America."

"These titles made me reflect on three lessons that contemplative women can give to the church" — silence, mysticism and mission, he said.

Silence is an "attitude of listening, to welcome the voice of the Beloved, the eternal Word of the Father, in the heart," he said. "Sometimes contemplation is done in silence, before the Lord," and this silence is needed in a noisy world.

The mystical represents "a relationship with God that is born from this attitude of listening, from this incarnate reading of the sacred Scripture," which leads to an experience of "coming out of ourselves, coming out of our comforts, out of the selfish ego that always tries to dominate us," he said.

"Contemplatives teach us, through a path of asceticism, abandonment, and fidelity, the joy of living only for him," the pope said.

Finally, the Conceptionist religious sisters spread to the Americas, offering an example of "this missionary spirit in contemplative life."

"We are not usually aware of the power of intercessory prayer in our lives, as the Indians are said to have been by Mother Ágreda's intervention," he added.

Pope Francis encouraged everyone to follow the example of Mary, who "leads us to Jesus, she generates him in us. And we must imitate this beautiful attitude, pointing to the Lord in our turn."



CNS PHOTO | VATICAN MEDIA

Pope Francis arrives for an audience at the Vatican Nov. 16, 2023, with people who were taking part in an international conference on the Venerable María de Jesús de Ágreda. Those at the audience included members of the Order of the Immaculate Conception and Indigenous peoples who trace their lineage to the Jumano tribe.



Pope Francis shakes hands with Harley Flores, a member of an Indigenous community that traces its lineage to the Jumano tribe, during an audience at the Vatican Nov. 16, 2023. The audience was with people taking part in an international conference on the Venerable María de Jesús de Ágreda.

CNS PHOTO | VATICAN MEDIA

A Cathedral Thanksgiving



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



The Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for parishioners after the Saturday Vigil Mass Nov. 18, 2023.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

By Katie Yoder
OSV News

For Kendra Tierney, a Catholic author and mother of 10, the Advent season leading up to Christmas is like preparing to give birth.

"There's such a unique character to that time where you can't rush it and that you're trying to prepare everything," said the founder and CEO of Catholic All Year. "I think that Advent gives us all that opportunity to really dive into that sort of feeling, where we want to use that time to prepare our homes and to prepare our families to welcome Christ into our lives."

Advent marks the beginning of the church's liturgical year, starting four Sundays before Christmas. The name "Advent" hints at its meaning: It comes from the Latin word "*advenire*," which translates to "to come to" or "to arrive."

The season began Dec. 3 this year.

While Advent is sometimes called "a little Lent," Catholic experts observe that there are important similarities and differences between the two, both of which lead up to major feast days and liturgical seasons: Christmas and Easter, respectively. Advent, they agree, is primarily a season of preparation.

"Lent has that penitential character where ... we are trying to focus on exercising those muscles of being penitent. I think that the character of Advent is intended to be a little different than that — that it is really, actually, a waiting for a birth," said Tierney, who writes about living the liturgical year in the home.

In a 2019 blog post, she describes the difference from Lent: "Advent is PREDOMINANTLY preparation, and Lent is PREDOMINANTLY penance."

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses similar

period of around four weeks — it's Gregory the Great that tells us of the four weeks. We know in Milan, it was six weeks (and still is)."

Advent is also marked by the use of the Advent wreath, which O'Malley said was adopted as a practice of popular piety from Germany, and the O Antiphons, descriptions of the Messiah drawn from the Book of Isaiah which are used in the Liturgy of the Hours' evening prayer Dec. 17–23.

Father Torres also pointed to fasts, vigils, wreaths and readings of the Prophet Isaiah. And in many countries, he said, the period between Dec. 17 and Christmas Eve "is filled with prayers, processions and devotions followed by a celebration and songs."

He noted, however, that "In the East, the monks would take it to Lenten levels."

Some Eastern Catholic churches, such as the Byzantine Catholic Church, still traditionally observe the "Nativity

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.

How to have everything you want ... NOW!

“Tell Santa what you want for Christmas” is a refrain that is heard many times each December in many different places. The possibility that children might receive what it is that they want most of all fills their minds with hope and joyful anticipation. But the desire to obtain something that may be outside our reach is not something that ends in childhood.

“Motivational speakers” have made fortunes by telling millions of adults how to make a fortune. Often, they say that you should not let others hold you down and that if you don’t think of yourself first, then you have no one to blame for your unhappiness. But they are not the only ones who focus on getting rich.

Wealth management professionals will help you to make investments that will provide for the things that you want out of life. Perhaps it is the car, boat, or home that you have been dreaming about for years. But what if we can’t wait and we want what we want NOW? We often borrow money. As of the second quarter of 2023, the average American household debt is a staggering \$103,358. The “buy now, pay later” mantra has been fully embraced.

Church leaders have been preaching the “gospel of wealth” for centuries. Giving to your church is often presented more as an investment plan than it is a way of supporting missions and programs. Churches of all denominations will have people speak of the virtue of tithing, in which they talk about how difficult it was to give 10% but now they have more money and things than ever before ... what better reason to “give” than to get what we want as soon as possible?

The quest for immediate self-fulfillment has caused



James R. Sulliman, PhD

the death of countless relationships, as well as the lives of many people because it so easily can draw us closer to the seven deadly sins of pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. But this quest is understandable because we live in the “here and now” ... it is just misdirected. Jesus said:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’

or ‘What are we to wear?’ All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil” (Mt 6:25-34).

We no longer ask Santa to bring us what we want for Christmas because, as Paul states (1 Cor 13:11): “When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things.” But that does not mean that we still do not ask, only that our requests are now directed to God. But just as that child is disappointed on Christmas morning because they did get everything they wanted, we feel sometimes that “our Father who art in heaven” does not give us what we so desperately want. James (4:1-3) thinks he knows the reason why. “Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”

We do not have to wait until Christmas and hope to receive everything we want. We can have it NOW, if the only thing we want is to do God’s will ... to unite our will with his. In so doing we will have everything we need.

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.

Thinking himself unworthy, St. Juan Diego’s message lives on

Juan Diego was about 50 years old in 1524 when he and his wife, Maria Lucia, were among the first indigenous people to accept baptism and convert to Christianity when the Franciscan missionaries came to Mexico.

Juan’s original name was Juan Cuauhtlatatzin, which translates as “Talking Eagle” in the Nahuatl language. He took the name of Juan Diego at his baptism. His wife died a few years later. As a widower now, Juan Diego walked every Saturday and Sunday to church. On cold mornings, he wore a woven cloak called a *tilma*, made of woven cactus-cloth.

On this Saturday morning, Dec. 9, 1531, he was walking beside a hill near Tepeyac, Mexico, when he heard “a singing like that when many choice birds sing together.” Then he saw on the top of the hill a lady with garments shining like the sun.

She spoke to him in Nahuatl, his native language and asked him to tell the bishop to build a shrine to her on the hill on the spot where she stood, in her honor. Recognizing the lady as the Virgin Mary, Juan Diego went to the bishop, a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga, and told him what the lady said.

The bishop did not believe Juan Diego’s story and asked for proof that Mary had appeared to him. A Newman Ministry account reported that Juan returned to Tepeyac Hill and told the lady that the bishop did not believe him and he implored her to use another



Mary Lou Gibson

Speaking of Saints

messenger, insisting he was not worthy. The lady, however, told him that he should speak to the bishop on her behalf and she would give him a sign.

Also at that time, Juan’s uncle, Bernardino, was seriously ill, and on Dec. 12 Juan went searching for a priest when he was visited by Mary again. Matthew Bunson wrote in *John Paul II’s Book of Saints* that the lady told him his uncle was cured and then she identified herself as Our Lady of Guadalupe.

When Juan asked for a sign for the bishop, she told him to go to the nearby rocks and gather the roses that were there. He found many roses on the hill even though it was winter. He gathered the blossoms into the folds of his *tilma*.

At the bishop’s residence when Juan opened his *tilma* the roses fell out and an “icon” of Our Lady of Guadalupe was imprinted on the cloth, bringing the

bishop to his knees. According to the Newman Ministry account, the bishop acknowledged the miracle and within two weeks ordered a Shrine to be built where the Virgin Mary had appeared.

He entrusted the image to Juan Diego who chose to live as a hermit near the spot where the Virgin Mary had appeared. Until his death at the age of 73, Juan cared for the chapel and the first pilgrims who came to pray there. Her shrine is now one of the most celebrated places of pilgrimage in North America.

News of the apparition on Tepeyac Hill spread quickly throughout Mexico. In the next several years, 1532-1538, the Indian people accepted the Spaniards and eight million people were converted to the Catholic faith according to the Newman Ministry account. Catholics in Mexico and the rest of Latin America recognize the Virgin Mary as the patron saint of “All the Americas.”

Juan Diego died on May 30, 1548, and was buried in the church at the shrine. His tilma can still be seen in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

He was canonized by Pope John Paul II on July 31, 2002, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The pope called Juan Diego a model of humility. His feast day is Dec. 9.

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

Preventing the nightmare before Christmas

By Lisa Popcak
OSV News

A friend — we'll call her Barbara — once confided to my husband and me: "I hate to admit this, but, deep in my gut, I'm dreading the holidays. Every year around this time my kids' behavior just disintegrates. Visiting with relatives is always the worst part. The kids are overstimulated at one house, then bored at another. I know I have good kids, but around the holidays they seem to morph into whiny, greedy little monsters. Is there a way for me to get through this year with my sanity and my family intact, or should I just hide out on a desert island until it's all over?"

Although we can probably all sympathize with her feelings, happy and peaceful holidays are possible. However, as we told Barbara, it takes planning and action.

The first step for Barbara is to picture herself, her kids and her husband alone on that desert island at holiday time. We asked her to imagine what kind of things they would be doing together. She mentioned baking cookies, playing games, and reading. With those things in mind we told her to get out her calendar and block out times over the next few weeks for the family to stay home and do some of those things together.

After she has those times written in ink on her calendar, she needs to call a family meeting. At the meeting, she and her husband should discuss with their children the behavior they all need to exhibit over the holidays. This isn't intended to be a long lecture of dos and don'ts, but rather guideposts to help the children over the next few weeks.

For example, you might tell the children that the next few weeks are going to be very busy. To ensure that all the busyness doesn't become too much, she could tell them she's scheduled time together as a family. Then you can add: "But we'll also need to make sure we are all behaving in a way that makes this time pleasant for us all. We expect that we will all make an effort to speak to one another kindly, that we will treat the homes of those we visit with respect, and that we will make an effort to be pleasant when we have to try a new food or do something that is different from what we do at home. Over the next few weeks we will be practicing these behaviors at home so we're prepared by the time we get to Grandma's."

Setting up these kinds of guidelines gives the family more to work with than the arbitrary "OK, we're at Grandma's now. Kids, behave" that so many of us fall back on. Practicing these behaviors, as

well as any other normal family rules, over the next few weeks are key in making them stick.

If the kids start picking on one another — for example, in the car on the way to practice for the Christmas play — mom or dad should say: "Kids, you are not speaking kindly to one another as we all promised we would. Let me hear you work this out kindly." You may even need to feed your kids the words they should say: "John would you please say, 'Margaret, may I please have my book? I wasn't finished with it yet.'" When John repeats the words in a pleasant voice, it will be Margaret's turn to repeat: "Sure, John. Sorry I took it without asking."

If the kids can't speak kindly when directed to, just calmly turn the car around and go home. A parent wouldn't hesitate to do so if one of the kids came down with a contagious fever. Likewise, a parent shouldn't hesitate to do so if the family's emotional temperature is running too high for its own good.

Another way to make the holidays easier and more pleasant is to use a code word, a special word that only the members of the immediate family understand. Then, if someone starts to get really burned-out during a visit, or someone just doesn't know how to handle it when Aunt

Gertrude pushes them to eat her famous possum pie, he or she can quietly whisper something like "Snodgrass" to mom, dad, husband, or wife as a signal that a moment alone is needed with the other person to work out what should be done.

Once alone, figure out options. Find a graceful way to bow out of the visit early? Tell Aunt Gertrude that, though you've heard wonderful things about her pie, you once had a horrible allergic reaction to possum and you regret that you'll have to pass? Perhaps the person using the code word just needs an extra hug to get through the stress of the visit. Whatever the solution, the code word will help the family to remember that they are working as a team during the holidays and that they can each rely on one another for help.

While nothing can guarantee a completely stress-free holiday, these simple techniques can go a long way toward helping families have a happy, healthy and holy time this year.

Lisa Popcak is the vice president of the Pastoral Solutions Institute, a family-life coach, lactation consultant and professional educator. For more great parenting resources visit CatholicHOM.com.

Catholic Voices

The scriptural mind

Father Georges Florovsky, an Eastern Orthodox theologian from Ukraine who taught at Harvard from 1956 to 1964 and at Princeton from 1964 until his death in 1979, was an astute observer of Christianity in the West, particularly of the Catholic Church. His *Collected Works* have been published in English in 14 Volumes. The first article in the first volume of his *Works* is “The Lost Scriptural Mind.” Florovsky said that the church in the West, particularly the Catholic Church, was losing the “scriptural mind.” He would not be surprised at the confusion in the Catholic Church we are experiencing today. What is the scriptural mind? Have we lost it? How do we recover it?

To have a scriptural mind we must recognize the irrevocable connection between the history of the Catholic Church and Scripture. As Pope Benedict XVI teaches us, the Catholic Church is the receiving, understanding subject of God’s revelation. For there to be revelation there must be a subject to receive and understand it. Revelation precedes Scripture and becomes deposited in Scripture but is not simply identical with it. Revelation is greater than what is merely written down (*Milestones*, 108-109). There must be an understanding subject, the church, both to understand what constitutes Scripture and to understand what it means. Thus, Scripture and the tradition of the church can never be separated.

In writing about the lost scriptural mind, Florovsky says that in the first five centuries of the life of the church, the church made decisions about what constituted Scripture and about the key questions with which Christians were dealing: Who is Jesus? Who is the Holy Trinity? Who is the Virgin Mary? What is the Eucharist? What is the church? What are the sacraments? The first four ecumenical councils of the church (Nicea [325], Constantinople [381], Ephesus [431], and Chalcedon [451]) developed the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian Christological Definition, and the early Fathers of the Catholic Church produced many other writings to answer these questions. The content of Scripture and the order of books in both the Old and New Testaments were not finally settled until the end of the fifth century. An essential part of this determination of what is authoritative Scripture was the use of Christian writings in the liturgy of the Eucharist. In other words, the early church was ex-



Father Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

hibiting what Pope Benedict XVI writes about when he says there is an irrevocable unity between the revelation recorded in Scripture and the church as the receiving and understanding subject.

The church in her tradition continues to interpret the meaning of the revelation of which Scripture is the record. Pope Benedict XVI writes, “If you conceive of ‘tradition’ as the living process whereby the Holy Spirit introduces us to the fullness of truth and teaches us how to understand what previously we could not still grasp (cf. Jn 16:12–13), then subsequent ‘remembering’ (cf. Jn 16:4, for instance) can come to recognize what it had not caught sight of previously and yet was already handed down in the original Word” (*Milestones*, 59). This means that our understanding of doctrine develops, but the doctrine is already there. As Vincent of Lerins pointed out in the fifth century, there is a distinction between the development of our understanding of doctrine and a change of doctrine (*First Instruction of St. Vincent of Lerins*).

Florovsky, in his essay, “The Function of Tradition in the Ancient Church,” gives an example of how doctrine is changed by those who have lost the scriptural mind with an illustration from the writings of St. Irenaeus, who wrote in the late second century before the canon of Scripture was established but when the books of the Bible were already present and were being interpreted by Christians. St. Irenaeus was writing in opposition to the Gnostic heretics of his day. He uses a picturesque simile to make his point. Suppose a skillful artist takes many precious jewels and fashions a mosaic with them to make a beautiful image of a king. Then another person takes the mosaic apart and refashions the jewels into an image of a dog or a fox. This second person claims that the

image he has created is what the original artist intended in the first place. St. Irenaeus says this is what Gnostics are doing with Scripture (*Collected Works*, I, 77).

This is the way Scripture has been treated in the church in our time. The dominance of the interpretive method called “the higher criticism of the Bible” in its various forms is based on a hermeneutic of suspicion. In other words, there is a suspicion that the church has been wrong in her interpretation of Scripture, and Scripture is taken apart in various ways to suit the desires of the interpreter. We have taken apart the mosaic created by the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and re-fashioned it into the image we desire. As in the time of St. Irenaeus, the scriptural language used by those who present us with this false mosaic sounds so familiar. The jewels of Scripture are there but are arranged in a misleading pattern. This method of interpreting Scripture has been practiced by both Catholic and Protestant scholars. In Protestantism, a reaction to this has produced a literal interpretation of Scripture which is also grounded in a hermeneutic of suspicion of the church and causes those who follow this way of reading Scripture to pick verses here and there and put them together to suit their own desires. In addition, the rise of the social sciences, particularly psychology, has caused us to think that our desires are themselves the work of the Holy Spirit and should be followed apart from anything the Scriptures have been interpreted as meaning by the church.

How do we recover the lost scriptural mind? We do so by recognizing the irrevocable wedding of Scripture and the tradition of the church and stop our attempts to separate the two. Our experience has shown that if this separation continues, there will be more confusion, contention, and frustration as the desires of some are pitted against the desires of others in an attempt to tear apart the biblical revelation and the truth of Catholic doctrine and moral teaching.

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One of the best kept secrets of Catholicism

You know those pesky New Year’s resolutions? They rarely stick, right? We end up feeling like a failure when we stop after a few weeks. They usually do not last past January!

Surprisingly, I made a resolution this past January 1 that has exponentially enriched me. Truly, no words can adequately describe this experience. When December 31 rolls around this year, there is no way I can stop this new year-long habit.

What is it? Did I somehow figure out how not to crave chocolate? No. This is much better than that. “What? How is that possible?” says the chocolate fanatic hidden inside of me.

I decided I would start attending Mass three times per week, including Sundays, so this would only be a two-per-week Mass increase for my resolution. I made this resolution more out of a sense of duty to worship over anything else; not being accustomed to attending daily Mass, this was not particularly something I wanted to do. Since I was very used to not doing so, I would have liked to have continued my lifelong way. I decided to stretch, although I did not look forward to doing so. I also told myself I did not have time to do this, but I fortunately quashed that self-argument.

As Lent approached last spring, I was surprised, or rather shocked, I was still doing my New Year’s resolution; I decided to one-up this for Lent and increase to four times per week, meaning three additional Masses per week. After Lent was over, I found I simply could not bear to decrease this. Therefore, I have been sticking with my Lenten increase.

Why? This has been one of the most rewarding spiritual experiences of my life! I LOVE attending daily Mass!

There are countless treasured aspects with daily Mass. It is a smaller and more intimate gathering. Everyone there wants to be there and has made an effort to be there. As I have attended daily Mass around the country, each parish has a beautiful uniqueness to its daily Mass with small enrichments that all add up to a beautiful Mass experience, resulting in a deepening closeness with our Lord.

In Kendra Von Esh’s book *Am I Catholic?* on returning to Catholicism, Von Esh describes her daily Mass experience as follows: “I really enjoy daily Mass and found it a blessing to have the Body of Christ in me every day. It makes me live more joyously and see the beauty in life and God in the small things like the sunrise, birds, and people I encounter throughout the day. I find that my smile is bigger and brighter, and I cannot wait to get out in the world and share my love. I am realizing the more I receive him in the Eucharist, the



Joan Schwartz

more I feel him take over my life.”

Bishop Michael Sis’ 2017 Rural Life Mass homily on St. Isidore, patron saint of farmers, also touches upon the beauty of attending daily Mass, as Bishop said, “Isidore frequented Mass every morning, but often reported to work late. His fellow workers sometimes complained that he often showed up late because of going to daily Mass. Yet, his work never suffered, and he always completed the chores required of him. It was said that two angels, one on either side of Isidore, appeared and joined him in plowing the fields. It resulted in three times more productivity. His coworkers and his boss witnessed such miraculous events and gave Isidore great respect.”

Putting Mass in perspective, perhaps think about it this way. When we worry about our day-to-day struggles, we may think of Mass as an escape from our troubles, as in an escape from the real world. However, the Mass is much more than that. To paraphrase a homily by Father Christopher Plant of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Houston, “We come to Mass to be who we really are. Sometimes we think we go to Mass to help us to live our lives. Indeed, the Mass does help us to live our life the way we’re supposed to live. But, really, THIS is our life. THIS IS LIFE. When we come here, we enter into the REAL WORLD. These are things as they really are.” In the *Father Stu* movie based on his life, Father Stuart Long as played by Mark Wahlberg asserts, “We’re not human beings having a spiritual experience. We’re spiritual beings having a human experience.”

This has changed my thinking about Mass. Sometimes during busy workdays, I tell myself I cannot possibly break away to go to non-obligatory Mass with pressing work demands; however, interestingly, I often feel a magnet-like pull, and I find myself being drawn to Mass. Afterward, I am always thankful I went for the treasured spiritual booster.

The September issue of *The Word Among Us* states, “Being in his Father’s house was vital for Jesus. He treasured the times when he could join the people in praising God and offering sacrifices to the Lord. When

Jesus told his parents, ‘I must be in my Father’s house’ (Lk 2:49), he was referring to the Temple in Jerusalem. But today, he means you. He longs to be with you. He longs to show you his presence, to heal your wounds, and to fill you with joy. Echo his words and say, ‘I, too, *must* be in my Father’s house.’ And as you enter your Father’s house, Jesus is there, ready to bless you. What a privilege it is to be able to enter the house of the Lord! What a blessing to be welcomed into his presence. May we never forget this blessing or take it for granted.”

My daughter, Kim, was my inspiration to try this, as she regularly attends daily Mass. I did not realize a coincidence until she read my draft of this article and added “Fun fact: I started attending daily Mass as a New Year’s resolution too!” As it turns out, Kim got this idea from her friend, Claire, who was doing this. What a beautiful domino effect!

Kim attends Mass every day, while I favor my flexible Mass attendance of a half-week nature. There is, of course, no wrong way to do this.

In summary, Father Mitch Pacwa in *How to Listen When God Is Speaking* explains, “Just as family reunions are never as intimate as small family dinners, neither are the large sacramental celebrations as intimate as the daily parish Mass. Yet these different kinds of Eucharistic celebrations complement one another, just as an intimate candlelight dinner complements the wedding feast.”

This, my friends, is one of the best kept secrets of Catholicism. This, while in plain sight and always available, is a hidden treasure of our Catholic faith. Indeed, it took me 58 years to discover this hidden treasure. I sometimes find myself brought to tears during daily Mass, being sorry for all the times I took God for granted. The enrichment of attending daily Masses and intertwining them with our Sunday Mass each week is an indescribable and truly unique, spiritually deepening experience. Daily Mass is everlasting food for the soul. Perhaps others may explore this as well. For those who do, there is nothing to lose and so much to gain.

My next New Year’s resolution? To never be late to daily Mass! Now THAT may require a divine intervention or perhaps a miracle. (As my matter-of-fact mother used to say, “We’ll see!”) Interestingly, Kim also added to my article draft, “Coincidentally, I also set a resolution afterward to stop being late to daily Mass!” I suppose the apple does not fall far from the tree. In any event, I am forever grateful my dear apple of Kim inspired me to try this Catholic treasure of daily Mass. It is a win-win for a New Year’s resolution or to start any time of year.

A veces llamado 'pequeña Cuaresma', el Adviento se centra en la preparación, que puede incluir la penitencia

Por Katie Yoder
OSV News

Para Kendra Tierney, autora católica y madre de 10 hijos, la temporada de Adviento que precede a la Navidad es como prepararse para dar a luz.

"Hay un carácter único en ese momento en el que no puedes apresurarte y estás tratando de preparar todo", dijo la fundadora y directora ejecutiva de Catholic All Year. "Creo que el Adviento nos da a todos esa oportunidad de sumergirnos realmente en ese tipo de sentimiento, donde queremos usar ese tiempo para preparar nuestros hogares y nuestras familias para recibir a Cristo en nuestras vidas".

El Adviento marca el comienzo del año litúrgico de la Iglesia, que comienza cuatro domingos antes de Navidad. El nombre "Adviento" da a entender su significado: proviene de la palabra latina "*advenire*", que se traduce como "venir a" o "llegar". La temporada comienza el 3 de diciembre de este año.

Si bien a veces se llama al Adviento "una pequeña Cuaresma", los expertos católicos observan que existen importantes similitudes y diferencias entre los dos, las cuales conducen a las principales fiestas y estaciones litúrgicas: Navidad y Pascua, respectivamente. Están de acuerdo en que el Adviento es principalmente una temporada de preparación.

"La Cuaresma tiene ese carácter penitencial en el que... estamos tratando de concentrarnos en reconciliarnos como penitentes. Creo que el carácter del Adviento pretende ser un poco diferente a eso: que es realmente, de hecho, una espera por un nacimiento", dijo Tierney, quien escribe sobre cómo vivir el año litúrgico en el hogar.

En una publicación de blog de 2019, se describe la diferencia con la Cuaresma: "El Adviento es PREDOMINANTEMENTE preparación, y la Cuaresma es PREDOMINANTEMENTE penitencia".

El *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* utiliza una redacción similar al describir el Adviento. "Cuando la Iglesia celebra anualmente la liturgia de Adviento, la Iglesia actualiza esta espera del Mesías: participando en la larga preparación de la primera venida del Salvador, los fieles renuevan el ardiente deseo de su segunda Venida", dice.

En contraste, el catecismo llama a la Cuaresma uno de los "momentos fuertes de la práctica penitencial de la Iglesia".

El padre Agustino Torres, un Fraile Franciscano de la Renovación y autor del

nuevo libro "Prepara tu corazón: un diario de Adviento guiado para la oración y la meditación", unió los aspectos penitencial y de preparación.

"Aunque no se lo considera como tal, el Adviento es un tiempo en el que podemos ofrecer penitencia para preparar el camino para la venida del Niño Jesús", dijo. "No es una temporada penitencial como lo es la Cuaresma, pero existe una larga tradición en la Iglesia de ofrecer vigiliass de oración, ayunos y ofrendas durante el Adviento".

Timothy O'Malley, director de educación del Instituto McGrath para la Vida de la Iglesia de la Universidad de Notre Dame en Indiana y director académico del Centro de Liturgia de Notre Dame, enfatizó que gran parte del año de la Iglesia ha sido históricamente penitencial.

"El Adviento adquiere un espíritu penitencial inspirado en el triple advenimiento de Jesucristo", afirmó. "El Cristo que viene al final de los tiempos, que juzgará al mundo. El Cristo que viene al corazón de todo creyente anhelando su presencia. El Cristo que viene como el niño recién nacido".

Y añadió: "Es penitencial en la medida en que debemos preguntarnos si estamos preparados para estas diversas presencias".

Al igual que la Cuaresma, el Adviento en la Iglesia Católica Romana históricamente incluía el ayuno, dijo O'Malley.

"El Adviento se desarrolla como un período de ayuno que precede a la celebración de la Navidad, probablemente relacionado con la iniciación de los cristianos", señaló. "Pero el rito romano adoptó más tarde este período de alrededor de cuatro semanas; es Gregorio el Grande quien nos habla de las cuatro semanas. Sabemos que en Milán fueron seis semanas (y todavía lo son)".

El Adviento también está marcado por el uso de la corona de Adviento, que según O'Malley fue adoptada como una práctica de piedad popular en Alemania, y las Antífonas O, descripciones del Mesías extraídas del Libro de Isaías que se utilizan en la oración vespertina de la Liturgia las Horas del 17 al 23 de diciembre.

El padre Torres también destacó los ayunos, vigiliass, ofrendas florales y lecturas del profeta Isaías. Y en muchos países, dijo, el período comprendido entre el 17 de diciembre y la víspera de Navidad "está lleno de oraciones, procesiones y devociones seguidas de celebraciones y cantos".

Señaló, sin embargo, que "en Oriente, los monjes lo llevarían a los niveles de Cua-

resma". Algunas iglesias católicas orientales, como la Iglesia católica bizantina, todavía observan tradicionalmente el "ayuno de la Natividad" o "ayuno de San Felipe", que comienza el 15 de noviembre, el día en que su calendario litúrgico observa la fiesta de San Felipe Apóstol. Al igual que el ayuno de 40 días de Cuaresma antes de Pascua, el ayuno de Natividad comienza 40 días antes de Navidad, pero sus requisitos no son tan rigurosos como los de la Cuaresma.

El padre Torres señaló que la Cuaresma se añadió al calendario litúrgico de la iglesia antes que el Adviento.

"Al principio, sólo la Semana Santa tenía una temporada preparatoria, pero luego la Navidad desarrolló su propio período similar llamado Adviento", dijo. "Tanto el Adviento como la Cuaresma comparten características comunes, como el color litúrgico violeta, la omisión del Gloria en las Misas dominicales y el tener un domingo de 'alegría' durante ambas estaciones: el Domingo de Gaudete y el Domingo de Laetare".

Los tiempos litúrgicos también tienen contrastes notables, añadió el padre Torres. "Mientras que la Cuaresma carece de flores, el Adviento las presenta moderadamente. La Cuaresma tiene imágenes de ir al desierto, el Adviento tiene una voz que viene del desierto. La Cuaresma tiene lecturas de conversión de vida; el Adviento tiene lecturas de cumplimiento de profecía en nuestras vidas. El Adviento posee una anticipación gozosa, porque se pretende encarnar la expectativa del Mesías con devoción deliciosa, mientras que la Cuaresma tiene prácticas penitenciales como el Vía Crucis", dijo.

Señaló que las expectativas actuales del Adviento son que sea un tiempo de anticipación gozosa.

"Si en su hogar se están preparando para recibir a un huésped encantador, hay un momento para limpiar, cocinar y preparar", dijo. "Estamos preparando nuestros corazones para Jesús en Adviento de manera similar".

En su hogar, Tierney dice que batalla con la presión de apresurarse a decorar la Navidad. Su familia pasa tiempo cortando copos de nieve de papel y ensartando palomitas de maíz, entre otras cosas.

"El simple hecho de aprovechar la temporada ralentizándola y llevando la decoración paso a paso ha sido realmente significativo para nosotros", dijo.

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Katie Yoder escribe para OSV News desde el área de Washington, D.C.

Migración indocumentada: ¿Beneficiosa o perjudicial?

Por el Obispo Nicholas DiMarzio
OSV News

Muchos dirían que la migración indocumentada es perjudicial para el país. Yo diría que la migración indocumentada es más perjudicial para los migrantes. Sin embargo, ¿cuál es la razón por la que parece que la hemos tolerado en nuestro país durante los últimos 40 años? Quienes parecen oponerse a la inmigración citan el estado de derecho, según el cual la migración ilegal, por definición, se presume perjudicial. Por otro lado, vemos un mercado laboral, especialmente en el sector agrícola y otros, que depende en gran medida de la migración indocumentada.

En la Ley de Inmigración y Nacionalidad de 1965, vimos cómo se anulaban los sistemas de cuotas raciales y se sustituían por un énfasis en la reunificación familiar y las necesidades del mercado laboral. Sin embargo, como esta legislación no se ha actualizado para satisfacer nuestras necesidades actuales, nos encontramos con un sesgo estructural que favorece la inmigración indocumentada.

Los trabajadores indocumentados benefician al sector agrícola y al sector servicios, que necesitan personas de nivel inicial que realicen trabajos difíciles con un salario mínimo. La Ley de Reforma y Control de la Inmigración de 1986 preveía sanciones a los empresarios que contrataran a trabajadores indocumentados. Sin embargo, esta disposición de la ley apenas se ha aplicado, salvo en zonas muy concretas, debido a la falta de financiación de personal y a una falta general de voluntad política. ¿Por qué socavar la oferta de mano de obra barata y flexible para industrias importantes?

Contrario a la creencia popular, muchas personas indocumentadas pagan al sistema de Seguridad Social, que es igualada por sus

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Prevenir la pesadilla antes de Navidad

Por Lisa Popcak
OSV News

Una amiga, a la que llamaremos Bárbara, nos dijo una vez a mi marido y a mí: "Odio admitirlo, pero, en el fondo de mis entrañas, temo las fiestas. Todos los años por estas fechas el comportamiento de mis hijos se desintegra. Visitar a los parientes es siempre la peor parte. Los niños están sobre-estimulados en una casa y aburridos en otra. Sé que tengo buenos hijos, pero durante las vacaciones parecen transformarse en pequeños monstruos llorones y codiciosos. ¿Hay alguna manera de que pase este año con mi cordura y mi familia intactas, o debería esconderme en una isla desierta hasta que todo acabe?".

Aunque probablemente todos podamos simpatizar con sus sentimientos, unas vacaciones felices y tranquilas son posibles. Sin embargo, como le dijimos a Bárbara, hace falta planificación y acción.

El primer paso para Bárbara es imaginarse a sí misma, a sus hijos y a su esposo solos en esa isla desierta durante las vacaciones. Le pedimos que imaginara qué cosas harían juntos. Mencionó hornear galletas, jugar y leer. Con esas cosas en mente, le dijimos que sacara su calendario y reservara momentos durante las próximas semanas para que la familia se quedara en casa e hicieran algunas de esas cosas juntos.

Cuando tenga esos momentos escritos con tinta en el calendario, tiene que convocar una reunión familiar. En la reunión, ella y su esposo deben discutir con sus hijos el comportamiento que todos deben mostrar durante las fiestas. No se trata de dar una larga charla sobre lo que hay que hacer y lo que no, sino de dar pautas que ayuden a los niños durante las próximas semanas.

Por ejemplo, podría decir a los niños que las próximas semanas van a ser muy ajetreadas. Para asegurarse de que todo ese ajeteo no resulte excesivo, podría decirles que ha programado tiempo para estar juntos en familia. Luego puede añadir: "Pero también tendremos que asegurarnos de que todos nos comportemos de manera que este tiempo sea agradable para todos. Esperamos que todos nos esforcemos por hablarnos con amabilidad, que tratemos con respeto las casas de quienes visitemos y que nos esforcemos por ser agradables cuando tengamos que probar una comida nueva o hacer algo que sea diferente de lo que hacemos en casa. Durante las próximas semanas practicaremos estos comportamientos en casa para estar preparados cuando lleguemos a casa de la abuela".

Establecer este tipo de directrices da a la familia algo más concreto que decir "Bueno, ahora estamos en casa de la abuela. Niños, pórtense bien". Practicar

estos comportamientos, así como cualquier otra norma familiar normal, durante las próximas semanas es fundamental para mantener la armonía.

Si los niños empiezan a meterse unos con otros — por ejemplo, en el auto de camino al ensayo para la obra de Navidad —, mamá o papá deben decir: "Niños, no se están hablando amablemente como prometimos que haríamos. Déjenme escucharlos resolver esto con amabilidad". Puede que incluso tengas que dar a tus hijos las palabras que deben decir: "John, ¿podrías decir: 'Margaret, ¿me das mi libro? Aún no había terminado con él'". Cuando John repita las palabras con voz agradable, será el turno de Margaret de repetir: "Claro, John. Siento haberlo cogido (el libro) sin preguntar".

Si los niños no pueden hablar amablemente cuando se les indica, da la vuelta tranquilamente y vuelve a casa. Un padre no dudaría en hacerlo si uno de sus hijos tuviera fiebre contagiosa. Del mismo modo, un padre no debería dudar en hacerlo si la temperatura emocional de la familia está demasiado alta para su propio bien.

Otra forma de hacer las vacaciones más fáciles y agradables es utilizar una palabra clave, una palabra especial que sólo entiendan los miembros de la familia más cercana. Así, si alguien empieza a estar realmente agotado durante una vis-

ita, o alguien simplemente no sabe cómo manejarlo cuando la tía Gertrude le empuja a comerse su famoso pastel de zari-güeya, puede susurrar en voz baja algo como "Snodgrass" a mamá, papá, esposo o esposa como señal de que se necesita un momento a solas con la otra persona para resolver lo que debe hacerse.

Una vez a solas, piensa en las opciones. ¿Encontrar una forma de retirarte temprano? ¿Decirle a la tía Gertrude que, aunque te han hablado maravillas de su tarta, una vez tuviste una horrible reacción alérgica y que lamentas tener que pasar? Puede que la persona que utiliza la palabra clave sólo necesite un abrazo extra para superar el estrés de la visita. Sea cual sea la solución, la palabra clave ayudará a la familia a recordar que trabajan en equipo durante las vacaciones y que cada uno puede contar con la ayuda del otro.

Aunque nada puede garantizar unas fiestas completamente libres de estrés, estas sencillas técnicas pueden contribuir en gran medida a que las familias pasen unas fiestas felices, sanas y santas este año.

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Lisa Popcak es vicepresidente del Instituto de Soluciones Vespertales, entrenadora de vida familiar, asesora de lactancia y educadora profesional. Para más recursos sobre la crianza de los hijos, visite CatholicHOM.com.

La colecta anual para ayudar a religiosos y religiosas ancianos tendrá lugar los días 9 y 10 de diciembre

Por OSV News

WASHINGTON (OSV News) -- La mayoría de las diócesis de Estados Unidos realizarán una colecta anual los días 9 y 10 de diciembre para ayudar a aproximadamente 24.000 hermanas, hermanos y sacerdotes ancianos de órdenes religiosas para abordar sus necesidades de jubilación, incluida la atención médica.

"Abordar las necesidades de nuestros religiosos ancianos exige un compromiso financiero sustancial", dijo John Knutsen, director de la Oficina Nacional para la Jubilación de Religiosos en Washington (NRRO por sus siglas en inglés), que administra la colecta del Fondo para la Jubilación de Religiosos, en una declaración del 6 de noviembre. "Estamos profundamente conmovidos y bendecidos por la generosidad continua de los fieles católicos. Sus contribuciones a este fondo son fundamentales para ayudar a nuestros religiosos ancianos".

Históricamente, estos hombres y mujeres han dedicado sus vidas a ministerios de la Iglesia en parroquias, escuelas e instituciones médicas, a menudo con poca o ninguna remuneración, según el comunicado de la NRRO. En consecuencia, muchos religiosos y religiosas tienen fondos de jubilación insuficientes, especialmente ante el aumento de los costos de la atención médica. Según las estadísticas de la NRRO sólo el 6% de las comunidades religiosas que compartieron datos con la NRRO disponen de suficientes fondos para la jubilación.

"Numerosas comunidades religiosas de Estados Unidos están experimentando dificultades para mantener a sus miembros ancianos y se enfrentan a una disparidad considerable entre los fondos disponibles y los costes de la atención", afirma la declaración de la NRRO.

Para hacer frente a esta necesidad, la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de EE.UU. fundó en 1988 la colecta del Fondo para la Jubilación de Religiosos. La colecta recaudó cerca de 28 millones de dólares el año pasado, con más de 975 millones recaudados desde el inicio de la colecta hace 35 años. Aunque el fondo ha distribuido 842 millones de dólares para el cuidado diario de religiosos y religiosas ancianos, el gasto anual para apoyarlos ha superado los 1.000 millones de dólares desde 2009.

"A través de esta colecta nacional, tenemos el privilegio de responder a la dedicación de toda una vida de estas personas asegurando su bienestar en la jubilación", dijo Knutsen.

NOTA: Para más información sobre la Oficina Nacional para la Jubilación de Religiosos y cómo pueden apoyar a las hermanas, hermanos y sacerdotes de órdenes religiosas jubilados, visiten <https://retiredreligious.org>.

You don't really know who you are

One of the most important rules for living in the world is: You are probably not who you think you are, and many others know you better than you know yourself.

This is an old-guy lesson, I'm afraid, one of those lessons one learns from long and painful, often embarrassing experiences. We charge into life full of certainties — among them the certainty that we know exactly who we are — and then we find out we don't. That usually happens in stages over time, and it's rarely fun.

We can easily see this in other people, because sometimes it's really obvious. The man who thinks he's God's gift to women and hits on women half his age, and doesn't understand why they don't respond. The woman who thinks she's a ray of sunshine and never notices that people hide when they see her coming. The man who thinks he's a bold truth-teller who doesn't know he's usually wrong and blames his not having any friends on everyone else's unwillingness to hear the truth.



David Mills
OSV News

A true lesson

In one of the most terrifying passages in Scripture, Jesus speaks of the unexpected hour when the Son of Man returns and separates the sheep from the goats. The goats see themselves as sheep and protest Jesus's judgment.

They'd thought they were good religious people — they'd have done anything for Jesus — and find the angels herding them to the down escalator. It turns out Jesus sees them differently, and he's the only one who sees clearly.

St. Augustine knew that we're all a mess, and such a mess we don't know how much of a mess we are. As a theologian said to me, in his Confessions the saint teaches that "We are unavailable to ourselves."

We hear Augustine's famous line, "Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee," as a truism, but for the saint it was a hard-won discovery. He'd gone wrong in all sorts of ways following his restless heart, because he didn't know who he was and therefore couldn't see who was the answer to all his questions and desires.

Catholic Voices

'Longing': Learning about Eucharistic desire from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

My family made a recent visit to the new museum at the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland. I've always been drawn to St. Elizabeth's story. I remember how it fascinated me as a child that she was both a mother and a nun, not to mention the first canonized saint born in our land.

The newly redesigned museum has much to offer any pilgrim. I went there that day hoping to find something about her life that could inspire our oldest son as he prepares for his first Holy Communion in the spring. And, by God's grace, something that stuck me anew on this visit was the love St. Elizabeth had for the Lord's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

Something that particularly stuck out to me, thanks to one of the exhibits, was how significant St. Elizabeth's first Holy Communion was in her life. Digging into this pivotal day in her life a bit more later, I came to learn that St. Elizabeth had so longed for the Lord the night ahead of her first reception of the sacrament that she lay awake "burning" with desire. And as she made the 2-mile journey so quickly to the church that next morning, she wrote, it seemed her feet barely touched the ground.

Now this is no hyperbole by a pious biographer, but her very written words, preserved at the Maryland museum. These words and experiences left me with ample fodder for prayer and reflection, and still do.

Remarkably, this newfound love for the Eucharist, rooted in her newfound love for the Catholic faith, came about only by providence and through much suffering. At 29, Elizabeth and her oldest child accompanied her husband to Italy in hopes his tubercular lungs might recover there. Those hopes were dashed, though, after the state quarantined them in such harsh conditions that Mr. Seton's death was hastened.

But she was not left in despair. God burst into her life in a most amazing and transformative way. A woman of faith already, raised in the Episcopal tradition, Elizabeth was dumbstruck by the experiences she had at the Italian estate of her husband's friends — the Filicchis — where she became acquainted with Catholicism.



Michael R. Heinlein
OSV News

"[H]ow happy we would be," she wrote her sister-in-law, "if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the sacrament and that he remains in their churches and is carried to them when they are sick."

Her Episcopalian sensibilities maintained no strength against the power of the Eucharist. Witnessing firsthand a Eucharistic procession, Elizabeth would later recall, "I fell on my knees without thinking ... and cried in an agony to God to bless me if he was there, that my whole soul desired only him."

As I looked at the rosary St. Elizabeth received at her first Holy Communion, I wondered what might come of my son's some day. Then I looked at what she wrote, in her own hand, about that very day: "At last GOD IS MINE and I AM HIS." This is the beauty of a soul who longed for total union with Christ and found it only by passing through great suffering. But once she did, she couldn't keep it to herself. She set out to transform the world, nourished and sustained by the fullness of love contained in that tiny host.

Standing there, recalling St. Elizabeth's first Holy Communion, I said a prayer for our son, that he might come to experience just that. And I longed to realize the full power of those words in his life and mine. That we might be so utterly transformed in the Eucharist, as was St. Elizabeth, that we might evermore long to be made worthy to enter his kingdom in her footsteps.

Michael R. Heinlein is author of Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.

Transgender baptism: Is this something new? Not really.

It felt like there was a seismic shift in church teaching concerning transgenderism in recent weeks. And that's because so many headlines got the story wrong.

The *New York Times*, for example, reported: "Pope Francis, who has made reaching out to L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics a hallmark of his papacy, has made clear that transgender people can be baptized, serve as godparents, and be witnesses at church weddings, furthering his vision of a more inclusive church."

So what actually happened?

— Responding to pastoral questions

In a doctrinal note issued from the Vatican, Pope Francis and Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández offered a nuanced response to several pastoral questions. The document, signed on Oct. 31 and posted on the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's (DDF) website on Nov. 8, addresses the participation of "transsexual and homo-affective persons" in baptisms and weddings. For our purposes here, I'll just address the question of whether or not a transgender person, even one who has undergone medical intervention, can be baptized.

Before we get to that, recall that Pope Francis has consistently and unequivocally denounced transgender ideology throughout his pontificate. Speaking in Hungary in April, the Holy Father warned Hungarian civil authorities from falling prey to the "ideological colonization" of gender theory. A month before, he said the same thing to the journalist Elisabetta Piqué of *La Nación*: "Gender ideology, today, is one of the most dangerous ideological colonizations."

In 2016, Pope Francis told the bishops of Poland, "Today children — children! — are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and insti-



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OSV News

tutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible!" His encyclical letters — including *Amoris Laetitia* and *Laudato Si'* — warn against gender ideology.

The pope has not reversed Catholic teaching. We receive our bodies as male or female. This is settled perennial Catholic teaching, grounded in Scripture and sound philosophy. Under no circumstances can the note from the DDF be read as approval of transgender ideology or the idea of gender identity.

So what exactly does the note say?

— How to interpret the note

Regarding baptism, the document provides nuanced guidance, emphasizing pastoral prudence. It urges that each situation be carefully considered to safeguard the sacrament, prevent scandal, and address any doubts about the moral or subjective disposition of the person involved.

The document instructs that a transgender person be admitted to baptism under the same conditions as the rest of the faithful. What are those?

In order to be baptized, the church teaches in the *Code of Canon Law*: "For an adult to be baptized, the person must have manifested the

Pope Francis and the 'German Synodal Way': 5 takeaways

In recent years, the Catholic Church in Germany embarked on an ambitious and controversial project known as the "German Synodal Way."

This initiative, which sought to address various issues within the church, including governance, the role of women, and the church's teaching on sexuality, has stirred significant attention and debate within the global Catholic community. The Synodal Way represents a distinctive approach to ecclesiology — the theological study of the nature and structure of the church — and has raised questions about its alignment with the broader teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church.

Against this backdrop, a letter written by Pope Francis Nov. 10 to four German Catholic laywomen — moral theologian Katharina Westerhorstmann, theologian Marianne Schlosser, philosopher Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz and journalist Dorothea Schmidt — has gained considerable significance. First published by the German newspaper *Welt* Nov. 21, this letter highlights the pope's concerns regarding the direction of the Catholic Church in Germany, particularly in relation to the German Synodal Way. This correspondence offers valuable insights into the ongoing dialogue between the Vatican and the German Church and sheds light on key theological and ecclesiological issues.

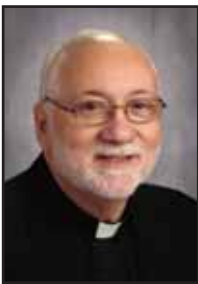
Understanding the German Synodal Way:

Before delving into the specifics of Pope Francis' brief letter, it is essential to understand what the German Synodal Way is and why it has become a point of contention. The Synodal Way is an initiative by the German bishops in collaboration with the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK). It was launched as a response to the various challenges facing the church, including the fallout from the sexual abuse crisis. The Synodal Way aims to foster a broad and inclusive discussion on several critical topics, such as the church's moral teachings, clerical celibacy, the role of women in church ministries, and the governance structure of the church.

This approach, while innovative and reflective of a desire for reform and renewal, has led to concerns about its potential divergence from the universal Catholic Church's teachings and practices. The German Synodal Way's emphasis on regional autonomy and its approach to contentious issues has been viewed by some as a departure from traditional Catholic doctrines and a challenge to the Vatican's authority.

Pope Francis' Letter: Key Themes and Takeaways:

1. Concern for Ecclesiological Fidelity: Pope Francis'



Deacon Dominic Cerrato
OSV News

concern over the ecclesiological fidelity of the German Church reflects a profound commitment to maintaining the universal church's integrity and unity. This concern centers on the steps taken by the German Synodal Way, which he fears may lead parts of the German church away from the path of the broader Catholic community. The pope emphasizes the importance of adhering to the church's sacramental structure, a cornerstone of Catholic ecclesiology. This structure is not just about governance but encapsulates the theological understanding of how the church operates as the body of Christ, with Christ as its head and the faithful as its members. The pope's apprehension is that deviations from this structure could lead to a fragmentation of the church, undermining its universality and the apostolic tradition it upholds.

2. Prohibition of the Synodal Committee: The formation of the synodal committee in Germany aimed to create a consultative and decision-making body that could address various concerns and challenges facing the church in Germany. However, the Holy See, with the pope's endorsement, prohibited this committee's formation. The primary reason for this prohibition was the committee's proposed structure, which was viewed as misaligned with the church's sacramental and hierarchical nature. The concern here is that such a structure could diminish the role of the episcopacy and the pope, leading to a more congregationalist or democratic model of church governance, fundamentally at odds with the Catholic understanding of ecclesial authority and decision-making.

3. Emphasis on Traditional Practices: In his letter, Pope Francis underscores the importance of traditional spiritual practices like prayer, penance, and adoration. He advocates for these practices over the creation of new committees and engaging in repetitive dialogues that may not lead to genuine spiritual renewal or effective action. The pope's emphasis here reflects a belief in the transformative power of these practices, not only for individual believers but for the church as a whole. By focusing on prayer, penance, and adoration, the faithful can foster a

deeper relationship with God, leading to a more authentic and effective witness in the world. This approach aligns with the Pope's broader vision for a church that is deeply connected to its spiritual roots while actively engaging with the needs of the marginalized and the broader society.

4. Commendation of Theological Contributions: Pope Francis acknowledges and appreciates the theological and philosophical contributions of professors Westerhorstmann, Schlosser, Gerlalkovitz and Mrs. Schmidt. In doing so, he recognizes the vital role that lay theologians, especially women, play in the life of the church. The pope's commendation highlights the importance of informed and faithful theological reflection in understanding and communicating the faith. It also underscores his commitment to acknowledging and promoting the contributions of all members of the church, regardless of their role or status.

5. Call for Unity and Prayer: The Pope concludes his letter with a call for unity and prayer, asking for continued prayers for himself and for the church's commitment to unity. This call reflects his vision of a church characterized by collaboration, solidarity, and mutual support among all its members. By emphasizing the need for prayer, Pope Francis underscores the spiritual dimension of ecclesial unity, suggesting that true unity in the church is not merely a matter of organizational or structural alignment but is fundamentally rooted in a shared relationship with Christ and a common commitment to living out the Gospel. This call for unity and prayer serves as a reminder of the church's mission to be a sign of communion in a divided world.

Pope Francis' letter is a significant intervention in the ongoing discussion about the future of the Catholic Church in Germany and, by extension, the global Catholic Church. It underscores the delicate balance between the need for reform and the preservation of core Catholic teachings and traditions. As the church grapples with modern challenges, this letter serves as a reminder of the importance of staying true to its foundational beliefs while also engaging with the contemporary world in a meaningful and transformative way. For those unfamiliar with the German Synodal Way, Pope Francis' response provides a clear and thoughtful perspective on the complexities and nuances of this pivotal moment in the life of the church.

Deacon Dominic Cerrato is editor of *Our Sunday Visitor's* The Deacon magazine. He is director of the Office of the Diaconate for the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, and director of diaconal ministries.

'Be prepared': Why does death take us by surprise?

A beloved relative died in October — not an immediate family member, but someone who, throughout many years, was a reliable, solid presence; one of those even-keeled anchors that every extended family needs. As he grew older, he was widowed and experienced the loneliness that accompanies loss. We kept in touch. I suppose I wanted to say, in my own way. "I too wish to be an anchor."

Why does death take us so breathlessly by surprise?

I think of my friend on the Saturday before the fall that ended his life. On that chilly fall morning, he arose with plans and hopes. It would not have occurred to him that this was his last Saturday. His last Saturday to savor a cup of rich coffee, to look out at the dying fall flowers of his late wife's once magnificent garden.

As we grow older, we view death with new eyes. When we're young, it's mostly older people who die. We don't literally believe we're immortal, but in some distant corner of our mind, we entertain the suspicion. Aunt Myrtle dies of a disease common to the family, and we dismiss our risk thinking, "they'll find a cure for that before I get old. My life isn't yet a third over," we think, or "I'm barely halfway there. Isn't everyone living to their nineties now?"

Death is a far-off mirage in a desert full of preoccupations. We push aside thoughts of mortality. Not so, as we grow older. As



Effie Caldarola
OSV News

we reach those middle years when many major life decisions have been made, or when the years stretching backward start to outnumber the ones lying before us, we begin to assess our lives. Have we done well? Were the decisions good ones?

Why haven't I achieved more? Why do I still wage some of the same old battles? Why am I yet so imperfect?

I find solace in a quote from the great Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner: "In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable we come to understand that here, in this life, all symphonies remain unfinished."

Perfection is not attainable. The things attainable — in this life, on this earth — are rarely enough for our deep longings.

God knows the greatest saints were sinners, as well. The key is they stayed on the journey, picking themselves up over and over again. This world was not made for perfection, but to be lived moving forward, not regretting or second-guessing the past. The writer Father Ron Rol-

heiser explained Rahner's quote in a 1994 essay: "We are congenitally over-charged and over-built for this earth, infinite spirits living in a finite situation, hearts made for union with everything and everybody meeting only mortal persons and things."

We deeply yearn to be, and to know, more than this life allows.

Had my friend known he had entered his final week, he might have felt incomplete — heard the distant cords of a symphony not yet finished, or perhaps in his case, the melody to an Irish tune whose final notes remained elusive.

So, we live in hope that a perfect union lies before us, a union we cannot see. St. Paul reminds us that "hope that is seen is no hope at all" (Rom 8:24).

In her poem "My Work is Loving the World," Mary Oliver sums it up for me:

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young and still not half-perfect? Let me keep my mind on what matters, which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished...

Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral ministry from Seattle University.

Cartoon Corner



BISHOP

Continued from Page 1

has a fascinating connection to the date of Christmas.

As you know, the Bible does not state the month or the date of Jesus’ birth. So, how did we arrive at December 25 as the celebration of his birth?

In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice is the point in the year with the longest night and the shortest day. From that point forward until the summer, the days get longer and the nights get shorter. In our current Gregorian calendar, the winter solstice is December 21, but in the previous Julian calendar, the winter solstice took place on December 25. Therefore, the original date of the celebration of Christmas in the early church coincided with the winter solstice, the day when the light begins to conquer the darkness. This natural phenomenon echoes the theological truth that the light of Jesus Christ vanquishes the darkness of sin and death.

This theological truth led to the beautiful custom of using lights in the Advent and Christmas seasons to celebrate Jesus Christ as the light of the world who dispels the darkness of sin. The Gospel of John says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:5).

In the pre-Christian Roman Empire, they had an annual celebration on December 25, the celebration of the *Solus Invicti*, the Invincible Sun God. They were celebrating the victory of the sun, when the light begins to dispel the darkness.

The church took over this date of December 25 and made it the date for our annual celebration of the birth of Christ, because Jesus is the light who conquers the darkness of sin and death.

As we make our way through the upcoming season of Advent, and the winter solstice approaches, in the face of increasing darkness, we have an abiding hope in the ultimate victory of light over darkness.

No matter how cold, dark, and dreary the world might seem, the light of Christ shines into the darkness and transforms it. The light of Christ is a ray of hope in our imperfect world. This Advent season, when you see lights all over town, let them be a symbolic reminder of that fact.

Even though we sometimes feel like we are walking through the valley of darkness, there is always a light shining there. That light is the living presence of



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Sacred Heart Cathedral parishioner Frank Diaz provided the vocals for the musical portions of the Advent Luncheon Series featuring Bishop Sis Nov. 29 at First Methodist Church in San Angelo.

Jesus Christ, and he is the reason for our hope.

As Christians, we are a people of hope. Our Christian hope is not just optimism or wishful thinking. It’s not just looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. St. Peter says, “If anyone asks you the reason for your hope,” you need to “be ready to give an explanation” (1 Pt 3:15).

And the explanation is this: the ultimate foundation of our Christian hope is the fact that Jesus Christ, after his suffering and death on the cross, rose to new life in the Resurrection. The Resurrection demonstrates that God’s power is victorious over death and that, in the end, God’s justice will prevail over the injustices of this world.

Hope is one of the three theological virtues, along with faith and love. These virtues don’t come naturally to us. They are infused in our souls by the grace of God.

So, Christian hope is a gift from God. We cannot create hope by our own human efforts; we can only receive it as a gift from God. Therefore, if you ever find that you are short on hope, ask God to pour more hope into your heart.

Let me conclude this Advent reflection with a prophetic statement about hope, from Jeremiah 29:11: “I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe, plans to give you a future full of hope.”

MILLS

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The problem

It’s not a small thing, this ignorance. It hurts our relation to our Creator and Redeemer, and our relation to the world, especially the people who know us.

Here’s a practical example that affects almost all our lives, thanks to both the media and social media: the belief that you must speak out, hard and loud, against the enemy. That you must go after them the way General Sherman went through Georgia. That you are 2023’s Elijah facing the prophets of Baal.

We feel zeal for the good and that feeling makes sense. We see error as a fire set by arsonists that will sweep through the building unless we stop the arsonists. We must warn everyone about the arsonists as loudly and forcefully as we can.

See something, say something. Yell something.

But if something must be said, must it be said by you? A lot of social media anger (and division in the church) would be avoided if everyone tempted to speak out first asked themselves “Am I the person to do this?”

Are you actually a prophet like Elijah with his role and his duties? Is that who you are and who God wants you to be? Maybe, but it seems unlikely. You’re probably not articulate enough, clever enough, or holy enough. Few of us are, even among those of us who speak out for a living.

In any case, it is obvious that many people who think of themselves that way don’t have the gifts for it, and more importantly, don’t have the character for it. Maybe they may become the person to speak out. They’re not that person now.

Good and bad zealotry

The Greek St. Nectarios of Aegina, a holy man who seemed to other Orthodox a kind of fanatic because he took holiness so seriously, knew something about this. He distinguishes two kinds of zeal.

“The zealot according to knowledge,” he said, “motivated by the love of God and his neighbor, does all things with love and self-effacement. He does nothing that might bring sorrow to his neighbor.”

But the zealot “not according to knowledge is a ruinous man who turns the Gospel of grace and love upside down. His zeal is a seductive fire, a consuming fire. Destruction comes forth from him and desolation follows in his wake.”

Who are we really? Which kind of zealot would we be if we tried speaking out? There’s no easy answer, except to listen to those good people who know you and love you enough to tell you the truth. And to watch your language until you know.

David Mills writes from Pennsylvania.

MEMBERSHIP

Feature

Join CRL Today!

Members of the Catholic Rural Life community are helping to build the Church, a community of Catholics, in rural America. Our members live in rural and urban alike, in 43 states across America. When you join CRL, your support and participation help support our work in serving parishes, pastors, farmers, rural businesses, and families.

The benefits of membership include:

- Connection to a network of CRL members nationally praying and advocating for rural Catholics.
- A one-year subscription to our quarterly Catholic Rural Life magazine. This includes a hard copy mailed to you as well as digital access to the most current issues.
- CRL members gain exclusive access to resources that are not available to the general public on our website including:
 - Vocation of the Agricultural Leader
 - Printable Monthly Blessings
 - Video Webinars

Most importantly, our members know they are helping to promote Catholic life in rural America by supporting priests who serve rural communities, equipping strong local CRL Chapters, advocating on behalf of family farms, and strengthening lay leadership and participation. Thank you to all of our current members!!

Visit <https://catholicrurallife.org/>

POVERTY

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In his homily at the Mass, Pope Francis said that Christians "have received from the Lord the gift of his love and we are called to become a gift to others." Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the Vatican organizer of the world day, was the main celebrant at the altar.

Reflecting on the day's Gospel reading from St. Matthew, in which Jesus tells the parable of a man who buries the money given to him by his master rather than seek to multiply it, the pope lamented the many "buried Christians" who hide their gifts and talents underground.

Mercy, compassion, joy and hope, he said, "are goods that we cannot keep only for ourselves."

"We can multiply all that we have received, making life an offering of love for others," the pope said, "or we can be blocked by a false image of God and because of fear hide underground the treasure we have received, thinking only of ourselves, without becoming passionate about anything other than our own comforts and interests."

Pope Francis said that just as the master in the Gospel reading returned to his servants to "settle his accounts" with them, people must prepare for Jesus' coming at the end of time in which he "settles the accounts of history and introduces us to the joy of eternal life."

"We must ask ourselves, then: How will the Lord find me when I return?" he said. The pope referenced the writings of St. Ambrose, who wrote that upon his return Jesus will ask, "Why did you allow so many of the poor to die of hunger when you possessed gold to buy food for them?"

The pope also urged people to be mindful of poverty's "modesty," noting that "poverty is discreet, it hides. It must be us to go look for it, with courage."

"Let us pray that each of us, according to the gift we have received and the mission entrusted to us, may strive to make charity bear fruit and draw near to a poor person," he said.

FREEMASONS

Continued from Page 6

Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago; and that he is a heretic because he will not so believe. And as little do we tell the sincere Christian that Jesus of Nazareth was but a man like us, or his history but the unreal revival of an older legend.”

Freemasonry has also used political influence throughout Europe and the Americas over the centuries to push a secularization of society and to diminish the influence of the Catholic Church.

For example, in his 1873 encyclical *Etsi Multa*, Blessed Pope Pius IX detailed Masonic political attacks on the church in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. He referred to the Masonic “deceits and machinations” as forming “the synagogue of Satan” in reference to the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation.

The encyclical touches on attacks against Catholic education, specifically the Gregorian University in Rome being “suppressed and abolished.” Regarding Switzerland, it discusses the passage of anti-Catholic laws, state intrusion into church matters, and “the violent banishment of our venerable brother Gaspar, bishop of Hebron and vicar apostolic of Geneva.” It also details the “persecution set in motion” against Catholics and the suppression of religious freedom in the German Empire, particularly in Prussia.

“Apply all your effort to protect the faithful committed to your care against the snares and contagion of these sects,” Pius urges the clergy. “Bring back those who have unhappily joined these sects. Expose especially the error of those who have been deceived or those who assert now that only social utility, progress, and the exercise of mutual benefits are the intention of these dark associations.”

Pius adds that these decrees are “not only [in reference] to Masonic groups in Europe but also those in America and in other regions of the world.”

In Mexico as recently as 2007, the Masonic Grand Lodge of the Valley of Mexico fought efforts against the church gaining authority over its own schools and communications. Prominent Freemasons played a major role in the Mexican revolution and other Latin American revolutions that diminished church influence.

What does canon law say about Freemasonry?

Prior to 1983, the *Code of Canon Law* explicitly stated that if a Catholic joins the Freemasons, that person incurs an automatic excommunication that can only be lifted by the Holy See. This applied not just to the Freemasons but to any group that engages in plots against the church.

“Those giving their name to Masonic sects or other associations of this sort that machinate against the church or legitimate civil powers contract by that fact excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See,” canon 2335 of the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* reads.

The 1983 revision of the *Code of Canon Law* avoided a specific mention of Freemasonry and removed the penalty of automatic excommunication but maintained its ban on joining any groups that plot against the church.

“A person who joins an association which plots against the church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict,” canon 1374 of the current *Code of Canon Law* reads.

Although the new canon did not explicitly reference the Freemasons, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a declaration on the Freemasons within the same year, clarifying that despite a change in the wording, there has been no change to the church’s opposition to Freemasonry and that joining any Masonic association is still a grave sin that bars one from receiving communion.

“Therefore the church’s negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden,” the document reads. “The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive holy Communion.”

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BRISCOE

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intention to receive baptism, have been instructed sufficiently about the truths of the faith and Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian life through the catechumenate” (Canon 865). Accepting Jesus Christ and seeking baptism means renouncing error, rejecting Satan, and embracing Catholic teaching, including teaching on human sexuality.

The note reaffirms the church’s teaching that baptism, when received without repentance for serious sins, imparts a “sacramental character” that is indelible but does not in that instance confer sanctifying grace.

It would remain, on my reading of the note, inadvisable to admit a post-operative transgender person to the sacrament who has not clearly embraced church teaching. In such a case, scandal and confusion would inevitably ensue. Additionally, as the document clarifies, no sanctifying grace would be conferred.

In essence, the Vatican’s recent guidance does not

signify a substantive change in church teaching but rather emphasizes the need for pastoral prudence, careful discernment, and an unwavering commitment to perennial Catholic teaching. In a word, it underscores the church’s duty to accompany her sons and daughters on the path to conversion while upholding the sanctity of the sacraments and avoiding scandal among the faithful.

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DiMARZIO

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empleadores. Sin embargo, esto no es un fenómeno universal, ya que vemos que muchas industrias se benefician de lo que podría llamarse "mano de obra barata" en un mercado no regulado. Esto no es bueno ni para los trabajadores ni para la integridad de nuestra nación.

La tolerancia de un mercado laboral paralelo en gran medida no regulado, carente de protecciones y desprovisto de prestaciones sociales normales, como la asistencia sanitaria, ciertamente no es buena para los indocumentados. Como tienen pocas oportunidades de abandonar el mercado laboral que depende de ellos, estos trabajadores están atrapados y sometidos a salarios

bajos y condiciones de trabajo inhumanas. Nuestra nación ciertamente está atrasada en la legalización de la población indocumentada, estimada en al menos entre 10 y 11 millones de personas.

En el pasado, nuestras leyes de inmigración reconocían que habría personas indocumentadas en el país y, normalmente después de un período de 5 a 10 años, una especie de periodo de estatuto de limitaciones, -- conocido como un registro -- entraba en vigor. Si los inmigrantes no tenían antecedentes penales y eran autosuficientes, podían ser regularizados. Por desgracia, la última vez que se actualizó esta disposición de la ley fue en 1976. Si actualizáramos la fecha del registro a algún punto de la década de 2020, la mayor parte de la población indocumentada, que ya está integrada en el mercado laboral y en nuestra sociedad, tendría un esta-

tus legal.

Sin la legalización de los indocumentados, es como operar a un paciente de cáncer y dejar parte del cáncer dentro de dicho paciente. A menos que se conceda un estatuto legal a los indocumentados, se establezcan controles del mercado laboral y los trabajadores migrantes puedan hacer valer sus derechos en el lugar de trabajo, seguiremos lamentando el paso ilegal de inmigrantes por fronteras porosas. Hasta que no reconozcamos lo que es bueno para nuestra nación y bueno para los inmigrantes, no resolveremos este problema de justicia social.

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U.S. bishops: COP28 must heed 'cry of the earth' and 'cry of the poor'

By Gina Christian
OSV News

Efforts to meet climate goals must heed both the "cry of the earth" and the "cry of the poor," said two U.S. Catholic bishops leading committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"No government will be successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the long run if it requires a significant increase of the energy costs of middle- and low-income citizens," said Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace.

The two bishops issued a joint statement Nov. 29 ahead of COP28, the United Nations' annual meeting on climate issues.

Named for the "Conference of the Parties" that signed the original 1992 U.N. climate agreement, COP28 is taking place Nov. 30 to Dec. 12 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The COP gatherings are held under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which entered into force in 1994 and now counts 198 parties (representing 197 countries plus the European Union).

COP28 calls for a global assessment of response to the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aimed to hold the increase of average global temperatures to under 2 degrees Celsius — and eventually to 1.5 degrees Celsius — above pre-industrial levels.

The conference also is seeking to spark four paradigm shifts: fast-tracking energy transition and slashing emissions before 2030; establishing climate finance that is affordable, available and accessible to developing countries; centering climate action on nature, people, lives and livelihoods; and including women, local communities, Indigenous peoples, faith-based organizations and other entities in the COP process.

Pope Francis was initially scheduled to travel to Dubai to address COP28 participants, but canceled his appearance Nov. 28 as he recovers from a respiratory illness.

According to a BBC News report released the same day, air quality across the Gulf region, including in the UAE, has been significantly degraded by toxic pollutants released during flaring, the burning of waste gas during oil drilling.

In their USCCB statement, Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Zaidan quoted Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (*Praise God*), issued Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, as a follow-up to his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *On Care for Our Common Home*. The exhortation warned that "the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point," making climate change "one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community."

"As Pope Francis emphasized in *Laudate Deum*, the climate crisis is an opportunity to reconfigure international relations toward the common good, 'demonstrat(ing) the nobility of politics,' where, as brothers and sisters all, we can achieve 'a decisive acceleration of energy transition,'" said Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Zaidan.

The bishops said that despite "tremendous growth" in the global development of renewable energy, "the global economic system remains largely powered by fossil fuels."

Weaning the world from that dependence is "the preeminent environmental challenge faced by all nations," said Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Zaidan, which they added "cannot be achieved alone through the efforts of individual persons or even nations and will require long-term cooperation by all."

In his letter to the COP parties, COP28 president Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, the UAE's special envoy for climate change, also stressed the need for unity as "more than ever ... a prerequisite for success."

Such unity must also offer "justice for the poor," which "constitutes an essential test of ethical climate policy," said Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Zaidan in their statement, pointing to the "3.3 billion people worldwide with limited energy and 700 million without any electricity."

"In other words, climate goals must represent both the 'cry of the earth' and the 'cry of the poor,' and include the financial support by developed nations for adaptation, resilience and recovery of the most vulnerable," they said.

In a September 2021 report, the International Monetary Fund noted that "climate risks disproportionately affect the poorest countries and people," and that climate change stands to cause greater inequality between and within countries. At the same time, the IMF report noted that "actions taken to curb warming could have an unwelcome effect on inequality, if climate policies prove too burdensome for poor countries."

"Such actions need to be complemented by measures to offset the costs on the poor and vulnerable across and within countries," it stated.

On hand at COP28 to emphasize that point is a delegation from Catholic Relief Services, the global humanitarian and development organization of the Catholic Church in the U.S.

In addition to participating in various panels and side events, CRS staff are advocating for several key policies at COP28 as outlined in its policy brief "COP28: The Case for a Quantum Leap in Climate Action."

Among the priorities for which the CRS team seeks to advance are meeting the \$100 billion climate finance goal and contributing to the Green Climate Fund, the main financial operating entity under the U.N.'s climate change convention — all while "emphasizing the moral imperative to protect the planet and support the most vulnerable," the agency announced Nov. 29.

"We believe that faith can be a powerful catalyst for environmental stewardship," said Gina Castillo, CRS' policy adviser for climate change, in a press statement. "Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, calls for an 'integral ecology' that respects both the environment and human dignity. This message is at the heart of our advocacy at COP28."

In their letter, Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Zaidan assured the "all leaders and participants of COP28" of their prayers "as they work to care for our climate."