

Inside this issue:

- Local guidance on blessings (Page 2)
- Spiritual director class starts soon (Page 5)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe feted in diocese (Page 10)
- Knickerbockers: Hearing our Shepherd’s voice (Page 13)

DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO
PO BOX 1829
SAN ANGELO TX 76902-1829

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
SAN ANGELO, TX
PERMIT NO. 44

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas Volume 44, No. 1 January 2024

What’s old is new again in Menard



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

The chapel of the original Sacred Heart Parish in Menard, first constructed in 1899, was rededicated for sacred use during a Mass of Dedication Dec. 16, 2023.

Inset: Father Mark Woodruff, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, blessed the walls of the chapel during the Mass.

By Brian Bodiford
West Texas Angelus

The morning of Dec. 16, 2023, saw both something old and something new in the community of Menard. In a Mass attended by clergy, seminarians, local faithful, donors, and lovers of Catholic history, Bishop Michael Sis rededicated an historic church that was originally erected in 1899.

“Old Sacred Heart,” as the building has become known, was the original parish church built for the faithful in Menard at the end of the 19th century. As the physical needs of the parish grew over the years, a new church was built and Old Sacred Heart was relegated to uses other than the celebration of Mass. Time and inattention contributed to a building that eventually became unsafe to use for any purpose.

But the Holy Mass returned to Old Sacred Heart that morning in December, 124 years after the first celebration of the liturgy on the site.

Father Mark Woodruff, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Menard and nearby St. Theresa in Junction, found the dedication ceremony “very moving,” and an opportunity to focus on the similarities of today’s challenges to those of our ancestors. “Recalling the development of the church in this area — especially the need for priests,” he

said, “we were reminded that some of our problems today are not new!”

Prior to the Mass, the bishop, concelebrating priests, and diocesan seminarians took part in a liturgical procession through the few blocks from downtown Menard to the church. Leading the procession and playing hymns on bagpipes was Tim Graham, whose great-grandfather donated the land where the historic chapel was built. “To have him lead us into the church,” said Bishop Sis, “with the long history of his family in that area, was very powerful.”

“This renovation project is helping us and future generations get in touch with our history,” the bishop continued. “Knowing history gives you an added dimension to your experience of the world. When you know something about the history of a place, it enriches your experience of life in the present.”

“The parishioners of Sacred Heart are deeply touched having the 1899 church in use again,” said Father Woodruff. “Those whose families date back to the early days of the parish are feeling a special connection while newer families are enjoying the history of the parish.” One family had already inquired about having a baptism ceremony at the historic church, he noted.

For the people of the diocese beyond Menard, Father Woodruff says that the restoration “is a reminder of the

long history of Catholicism in this area.” He notes that the diocese, founded in 1961, is “new,” but “a lot of great work was done before the diocese began!”

Bishop Sis that the church building is “part of our shared historical legacy as Catholics in West Texas” as the second-oldest existing church in the Diocese of San Angelo (the oldest is in Fort Stockton). “Now the Catholics in Menard will be able to pray the Mass regularly in this place where our ancestors in the faith prayed,” he said.

The Catholic history of Menard is much older than even the Old Sacred Heart building. “The Spanish Franciscan friars built a small mission church there in 1757 called Misión Santa Cruz de San Sabá, where they evangelized the Apaches,” Bishop Sis said. While that church was destroyed by unfriendly Comanches who lived in the area, even it was represented at the rededication Mass in 2024. “The bell from that mission church has been found, and we rang it on the occasion of the rededication,” he said. “To know that Catholics lost their lives giving witness to the faith in Menard gives us strength and courage to live and proclaim our faith boldly today.”

To the long list of influential Catholics in the community of Menard, a few from today should be added.

From the Bishop’s Desk

Application of Fiducia Supplicans in the Diocese of San Angelo

On Dec. 18, 2023, the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith published *Fiducia Supplicans*, a declaration on the pastoral meaning of blessings. Some media headlines misconstrued the document, claiming that it allows priests to endorse relationships that are not in accord with Scripture or traditional Catholic teaching. However, *Fiducia Supplicans* (FS) does not change any part of Catholic teaching about marriage or sexuality. Adultery is still a sin. Homosexual activity is still a sin.

The same Vatican dicastery issued a press release on Jan. 4, 2024, to help clarify the reception of this document. *Fiducia Supplicans* goes to great lengths to reaffirm that “marriage is the exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the generation of children.” It firmly reasserts that “sexual relations find their natural, proper, and fully human meaning” only in the context of this understanding of marriage. It says that any rites or prayers that could create confusion between marriage and what contradicts it are inadmissible (see FS, no. 4).

Fiducia Supplicans should be understood in light of the perennial teaching of the church. For example, it reaffirms the teaching of an earlier document from the same Vatican dicastery, the *Responsum ad dubium* dated Feb. 22, 2021, saying that “the church does not have the power to impart blessings on unions of persons of the same sex” (FS, no. 5). This remains the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Two forms of blessing

Fiducia Supplicans seeks to bring about a new development in the theology of blessings. It offers an innovative distinction between two different forms of blessing: liturgical-ritual blessings and pastoral blessings. Liturgical-ritual blessings are officially promulgated by church authorities. These blessings require that which is blessed to be conformed with God’s will as expressed in the teachings of the church (FS, no. 9). For example, the blessing given by the priest or deacon in the sacrament of matrimony “is tied directly to the specific union of a man and a woman” (FS, no. 6). Liturgical-ritual blessings are based upon certain conditions, and they are not to be given in situations when the moral conditions are not met.

The document says, “Since the church has always considered only those sexual relations that are lived out within marriage to be morally licit, the church does not have the power to confer its liturgical blessing when that would somehow offer a form of moral legitimacy to a union that presumes to be a marriage or to an extra-marital practice” (FS, no. 11).

Pastoral blessings

Pastoral blessings, as described by *Fiducia Supplicans*, are simple, spontaneous acts of devotion in the realm of popular piety. These blessings are meant for everyone; they do not have any requirements of moral perfection on the part of the recipients. Pastoral blessings are “offered to all without requiring anything” (FS, no. 27); thus, there are no preconditions to receive such a blessing. The ministers of the church have always given simple, informal, non-liturgical, pastoral blessings to people who request them.

When a priest or deacon gives a simple pastoral blessing to someone, it is not an endorsement of their behavior or a



Bishop Michael J. Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

ratification of the life they lead. Rather, it is an expression of their need for God’s help. A priest or deacon may give a pastoral blessing to a person “even if he or she lives in situations that are not ordered to the Creator’s plan” (FS, no. 28). Such a pastoral blessing is not a sacrament; it is a sacramental. It does not condone or endorse sin, nor does it absolve from sin.

Some examples of situations when an ordained minister gives a pastoral blessing are when someone spontaneously approaches a priest on the street, at the store, at a shrine, or when people are on a pilgrimage or setting out on a journey.

Fiducia Supplicans teaches that only pastoral blessings, not liturgical-ritual blessings, may be given by ordained ministers to heterosexual persons who live together in a non-marital partnership or in a marriage that is not valid in the church, or to persons who live in same-sex relationships. Such a simple pastoral blessing “does not claim to sanction or legitimize anything” (FS, no. 34).

Local guidance

Fiducia Supplicans was issued on Dec. 18, 2023, signed by both Pope Francis and Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. In its press release on Jan. 4, the dicastery stated that each local bishop has the role of discerning how to apply the teaching of this declaration in the concrete circumstances of his own local flock. Therefore, I am offering the following guidance for the Diocese of San Angelo.

Whenever an ordained minister is asked for a pastoral blessing by heterosexual persons who live together in a non-marital partnership or in a marriage that is not valid in the church, or by persons who live in same-sex relationships, he should exercise pastoral prudence and take into consideration several important factors:

- He should be careful to avoid causing serious scandal or confusion among the faithful (FS, no. 30).
- There should not be any intention to validate a relationship or union or to legitimize anything (FS, no. 40).
- He should not use any liturgical or semi-liturgical action that would be similar to a sacrament (FS, no. 36).
- He should avoid any rite that might contradict the understanding of marriage that is offered by the Gospel (FS, no. 5).
- A pastoral blessing should never be given “in concurrence with the ceremonies of a civil union, and not even in connection with them. Nor can it be performed with any clothing, gestures, or words that are proper to a wedding” (FS, no. 39).
- The pastoral blessing “must not take place in a prominent place within a sacred building, or in front of an altar” (press release, Jan. 4).
- He should not give the impression that he is approving

or condoning any sinful sexual relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Rather, he is simply responding to persons who are humbly asking for God’s help.

- He does not impose conditions and does not inquire about the intimate lives of these people (press release, Jan. 4).
- The pastoral blessing must be very short, lasting perhaps 10 or 15 seconds (press release, Jan. 4).
- In his pastoral blessing, he could offer a brief prayer in his own words, something like this: “Lord, look at these children of yours, grant them health, work, peace, and mutual help. Free them from everything that contradicts your Gospel and allow them to live according to your will. Amen”. Then it concludes with the sign of the cross on each of the two persons (press release, Jan. 4).
- He does not use the *Book of Blessings* or any official ritual book for these blessings.
- A pastoral blessing does not have officially established procedures, rituals, or protocols (FS, no. 37). It is just a simple, informal response to a spontaneous request.
- It is not scheduled, and it is not a social event.
- A pastoral blessing does not change a person’s status in regard to being able to receive the sacraments, serve as a sacramental sponsor, or hold a position that requires being a practicing Catholic in good standing.
- There is no recording of a pastoral blessing in sacramental registers or granting of certificates of any kind.
- If the persons do not seem properly disposed to this understanding of a pastoral blessing, then the minister can decide not to give a blessing. He has a right and a duty to exercise his conscience as an ordained minister of the church. He may consult with his bishop for further understanding of these criteria.

Pastoral encouragement to grow in virtue

A regular part of the pastoral ministry of any priest or deacon includes guiding persons away from sinful behavior and toward virtue. This involves leading people to more mature discipleship through teaching, catechesis, admonishing, and speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15). We must not forget that the first words of Jesus in his public ministry were “repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). The Gospel has always called us sinners to conversion, and it still does.

Ordained ministers must be concerned for the state of the soul and the eternal salvation of every member of their flock. Our blessings, even simple pastoral ones, should not be an affirmation of actions which are objectively sinful. We can bless persons while they are sinners, but we cannot endorse sin. We must not affirm what is contrary to the law of God. We should all keep in mind the response of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery. He did not condemn her, but he did tell her, “Go and do not sin again” (Jn 8:11).

Fiducia Supplicans states that pastoral blessings confer actual graces. Actual graces help a person to “mature and grow in fidelity to the Gospel, that they may be freed from their imperfections and frailties” (FS, no. 31). Thus, whenever an ordained minister chooses to grant a simple, informal, pastoral blessing to persons in a situation of objective sin, it should be to help them open their life to God, “to ask for his help to live better, and also to invoke the Holy Spirit so that the values of the Gospel may be lived with greater faithfulness” (FS, no. 40).

Christian persecution on the rise globally, but overlooked, says expert

By Gina Christian
OSV News

Data shows that Christian persecution is on the rise globally — but that repression remains largely overlooked in the news cycle, one expert told OSV News.

"It is important to ... remember persecuted Christians in many countries around the world. Their suffering gets no coverage at all by major media," said Joop Koopman, director of communications for Aid to the Church in Need in the United States.

Founded in 1947 as a Catholic aid organization for war refugees and recognized as a pontifical foundation since 2011, ACN is dedicated to the service of Christians around the world, wherever they are persecuted or oppressed or suffering material need.

Based in Brooklyn, New York, in the U.S., the nonprofit ACN provides pastoral and humanitarian assistance to the persecuted church in more than 145 countries, working under the guidance of the pope.

More than 360 million of the world's estimated 2.6 billion Christians — or one

in seven Christians globally — currently experience "high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith," according to Open Doors U.S., an advocacy group that provides Bibles and support to persecuted Christians in more than 70 countries.

One in five Christians in Africa and two in five in Asia experience persecution, according to Open Doors, which notes that over the last three decades, the number of countries where Christians suffer high and extreme levels of persecution has almost doubled to 76.

Direct forms of persecution include attacks on life and property, assassinations, imprisonment, torture, restricted access to churches and Bibles, forced conversions, and violence against women, while indirect attacks take the form of educational and employment discrimination, legal restrictions and denial of rights, according to the nonprofit International Christian Concern.

Both Christian Concern and Open Doors rank North Korea, Nigeria, India, Iran, China, Pakistan, Eritrea, and Algeria as top countries for Christian persecution,

with North Korea taking the No. 1 spot in Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List.

In its 2023 report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended that the State Department redesignate 12 nations as countries of particular concern — Burma, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In addition, the US-CIRF added five names to that list: Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, Syria, and Vietnam. On the commission's special watch list are Algeria, the Central African Republic, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.

Christian Concern cited Marxism, radical Islam, social and cultural discrimination and supernatural evil as the key sources of Christian persecution.

North Korea is perhaps the nation most "closed to Christianity and the outside world," according to Christian Concern. Under the totalitarian regime of Kim Jong Un — referred to as the "Supreme Leader" who demands absolute allegiance

— the country's estimated 200,000 to 400,000 Christians must practice in secret amid imprisonment, torture, rape, and extrajudicial killing. Owning a Bible or quoting Scripture can easily lead to death, according to Christian Concern's "Persecutors of the Year 2023" report, which noted that "Kim is just the latest in a dynastic line that has oppressed North Korea for decades, driving not just the economy into the ground but human rights and religious expression as well."

In recent weeks, embattled Christians in the Gaza Strip — particularly the hundreds sheltering at Holy Family Church, Gaza's only Catholic parish — have received international attention due to media coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. Koopman told OSV News the church in Iraq is fearful that "the war in Gaza might spread in the region, creating conditions that will prompt Iraqi Christians to leave their country (and) further shrinking the Christian population."

Concurrently, said Koopman, "in terms

Aplicación de Fiducia Supplicans en la Diócesis de San Ángelo

El 18 de dic. de 2023, el Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe del Vaticano publicó *Fiducia Supplicans*, una declaración sobre el significado pastoral de las bendiciones. Algunos titulares de los medios de comunicación malinterpretaron el documento, afirmando que permite a los sacerdotes respaldar relaciones que no están de acuerdo con las Escrituras o la enseñanza católica tradicional. Sin embargo, *Fiducia Supplicans* (FS) no cambia ninguna parte de la enseñanza católica sobre el matrimonio o la sexualidad. El adulterio sigue siendo un pecado. La actividad homosexual sigue siendo un pecado.

El mismo dicasterio vaticano emitió un comunicado de prensa el 4 de enero de 2024 para ayudar a aclarar la recepción de este documento. *Fiducia Supplicans* se esfuerza por reafirmar que “el matrimonio es la unión exclusiva, estable e indisoluble entre un hombre y una mujer, naturalmente abierta a la generación de hijos.” Reafirma firmemente que “las relaciones sexuales encuentran su significado natural, propio, y plenamente humano” sólo en el contexto de esta comprensión del matrimonio. Dice que cualquier rito u oración que pueda crear confusión entre el matrimonio y lo que lo contradice es inadmisible (véase FS, núm. 4).

Fiducia Supplicans debe entenderse a la luz de la enseñanza perenne de la iglesia. Por ejemplo, repite la enseñanza de un documento anterior del mismo dicasterio vaticano, el *Responsum ad dubium* del 22 de feb. de 2021, que dice que “la iglesia no tiene el poder de impartir bendiciones a las uniones de personas del mismo sexo” (FS, núm. 5). Esto sigue siendo la enseñanza de la Iglesia Católica.

Dos formas de bendición

Fiducia Supplicans busca hacer una distinción innovadora entre dos formas diferentes de bendición: bendiciones litúrgico-rituales y bendiciones pastorales. Las bendiciones litúrgico-rituales son promulgadas oficialmente por las autoridades de la iglesia. Estas bendiciones requieren que lo bendecido esté conforme con la voluntad de Dios expresada en las enseñanzas de la iglesia (FS, núm. 9). Por ejemplo, la bendición dada por el sacerdote o el diácono en el sacramento del matrimonio “está directamente conectada a la unión específica de un hombre y de una mujer” (FS, núm. 6). Las bendiciones litúrgico-rituales se basan en ciertas condiciones y no deben darse en situaciones en las que no se cumplan las condiciones morales.

El documento dice: “Dado que la iglesia siempre ha considerado moralmente lícitas sólo las relaciones sexuales que se viven dentro del matrimonio, no tiene potestad para conferir su bendición litúrgica cuando ésta, de alguna manera, puede ofrecer una forma de legitimidad moral a una unión que presume de ser un matrimonio o a una práctica sexual extramatrimonial” (FS, núm. 11).

Bendiciones pastorales

Las bendiciones pastorales, tal como las describe *Fiducia Supplicans*, son actos de devoción simples y espontáneos en el ámbito de la piedad popular. Estas bendiciones son para todos; no tienen condiciones previas o requisitos de perfección moral por parte de los destinatarios. Las bendiciones pastorales son “ofrecidas a todos sin pedir nada” (FS, núm. 27); por lo tanto, no existen condiciones previas para recibir tal bendición. Los ministros de la iglesia siempre han dado bendiciones pastorales sencillas, informales, y no litúrgicas a las personas que las solicitan.

Cuando un sacerdote o diácono da una simple bendición pastoral a alguien, no es un respaldo a su comportamiento ni



Obispo Michael J. Sis

Diócesis de San Ángelo

una ratificación de la vida que lleva. Más bien, es una expresión de su necesidad de la ayuda de Dios. Un sacerdote o un diácono puede dar una bendición pastoral a una persona “incluso si vive en situaciones no ordenadas al designio del Creador” (FS, núm. 28). Tal bendición pastoral no es un sacramento; es un sacramental. No tolera ni respalda el pecado, ni absuelve del pecado.

Algunos ejemplos de situaciones en las que un ministro ordenado da una bendición pastoral son cuando alguien se acerca espontáneamente a un sacerdote en la calle, en la tienda, en un santuario, o cuando la gente está en peregrinación o emprendiendo un viaje.

Fiducia Supplicans enseña que los ministros ordenados sólo pueden dar bendiciones pastorales, no bendiciones litúrgicas-rituales, a personas heterosexuales que viven juntos en una unión libre, o en un matrimonio que no es válido en la iglesia, o a personas que viven en relaciones del mismo sexo. Una bendición pastoral tan simple “no pretende sancionar ni legitimar nada” (FS, núm. 34).

Guía local

Fiducia Supplicans fue emitida el 18 de dic. de 2023, firmada tanto por el Papa Francisco como por el cardenal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefecto del Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe. En su comunicado de prensa del 4 de enero, el dicasterio declaró que cada obispo local tiene el papel de discernir cómo aplicar la enseñanza de esta declaración en las circunstancias concretas de su propio rebaño local. Por lo tanto, ofrezco la siguiente guía para la Diócesis de San Ángelo.

Siempre que se le pida a un ministro ordenado dar una bendición pastoral por parte de personas heterosexuales que viven juntos en una unión libre, o en un matrimonio que no es válido en la iglesia, o por personas que viven en relaciones del mismo sexo, debe ejercer la prudencia pastoral y tener en cuenta varios factores importantes:

- Debe tener cuidado de no causar escándalo grave o confusión entre los fieles (FS, núm. 30).
- No debe haber ninguna intención de validar una relación o unión ni de legitimar nada (FS, núm. 40).
- No debe utilizar ninguna acción litúrgica o semilitúrgica que sea similar a un sacramento (FS, núm. 36).
- Debe evitar cualquier rito que pueda contradecir la comprensión del matrimonio que ofrece el Evangelio (FS, núm. 5).
- Una bendición pastoral nunca debe darse “al mismo tiempo que las ceremonias de una unión civil, y ni siquiera en conexión con ellas. Tampoco puede realizarse con vestimentas, gestos, o palabras propias de una boda” (FS, núm. 39).
- La bendición pastoral “no se debe llevar a cabo en un lugar prominente dentro de un edificio sagrado, o frente a un altar” (comunicado de prensa, 4 de enero).
- No debe dar la impresión de que esté aprobando o tolerando cualquier relación sexual pecaminosa, ya sea heterosexual u homosexual. Más bien, está simplemente

respondiendo a las personas que humildemente piden la ayuda de Dios.

- No impone condiciones y no indaga sobre la vida íntima de estas personas (comunicado de prensa, 4 de enero).
- La bendición pastoral debe ser muy corta, de unos 10 o 15 segundos (comunicado de prensa, 4 de enero).
- En su bendición pastoral, puede ofrecer una breve oración con sus propias palabras, algo así: “Señor, mira a estos hijos tuyos, concédeles salud, trabajo, paz, y ayuda mutua. Libéralos de todo lo que contradiga tu Evangelio y permíteles vivir según tu voluntad. Amén”. Luego concluye con la señal de la cruz en cada una de las dos personas (comunicado de prensa, 4 de enero).
- Él no usa el *Bendicional* ni ningún libro ritual oficial para estas bendiciones.
- Una bendición pastoral no tiene procedimientos, rituales, o protocolos oficialmente establecidos (FS, núm. 37). Es simplemente una respuesta simple e informal a una solicitud espontánea.
- No está programado, y no es un evento social.
- Una bendición pastoral no cambia el estatus de una persona con respecto a poder recibir los sacramentos, servir como patrocinador sacramental, u ocupar un puesto que requiera ser un católico practicante con buena reputación.
- No hay inscripción de una bendición pastoral en los registros sacramentales ni concesión de certificados de ningún tipo.
- Si las personas no parecen dispuestas apropiadamente a esta comprensión de una bendición pastoral, entonces el ministro puede decidir no dar una bendición. Tiene el derecho y el deber de ejercer su conciencia como ministro ordenado de la Iglesia. Puede consultar con su obispo para comprender mejor estos criterios.

Ánimo pastoral para el crecimiento en la virtud

Una parte regular del ministerio pastoral de cualquier sacerdote o diácono incluye guiar a las personas lejos del comportamiento pecaminoso y hacia la virtud. Esto implica llevar a las personas a un discipulado más maduro mediante la enseñanza, la catequesis, la amonestación, y el hablar la verdad en amor (Efesios 4:15). No debemos olvidar que las primeras palabras de Jesús en su ministerio público fueron “arrepíentanse y crean en el Evangelio” (Marcos 1:15). El Evangelio siempre nos ha llamado a la conversión a los pecadores, y todavía lo hace.

Los ministros ordenados deben preocuparse por el estado del alma de cada miembro de su rebaño y por su salvación eterna. Nuestras bendiciones, incluso las simples pastorales, no deben ser una afirmación de acciones objetivamente pecaminosas. Podemos bendecir a las personas mientras sean pecadoras, pero no podemos respaldar el pecado. No debemos afirmar lo que es contrario a la ley de Dios. Todos debemos tener presente la respuesta de Jesús a la mujer sorprendida en adulterio. Él no la condenó, pero sí le dijo: “Ve y no peques más” (Juan 8:11).

Fiducia Supplicans afirma que las bendiciones pastorales confieren gracias actuales. Las gracias actuales ayudan a la persona a “madurar y crecer en la fidelidad al mensaje del Evangelio, liberarse de sus imperfecciones y fragilidades” (FS, núm. 31). Así, siempre que un ministro ordenado decida conceder una bendición pastoral sencilla e informal a las personas en situación de pecado objetivo, debe ser para ayudarles a abrir su vida a Dios, “para pedirle ayuda para vivir mejor e invocar también al Espíritu Santo para que se vivan con mayor fidelidad los valores del Evangelio” (FS, núm. 40).

Personal de Cáritas es condenado y las 'posadas' son prohibidas en medio de represión navideña en Nicaragua

Por David Agren
OSV News

BUENOS AIRES — Seis miembros del personal laico de un capítulo diocesano de Cáritas (ahora cerrado) fueron condenados por cargos de lavado de dinero en Nicaragua en la víspera de Navidad, mientras el régimen sandinista intensificaba su represión contra la Iglesia Católica durante la temporada navideña. El gobierno de Nicaragua también había prohibido la representación de las tradicionales "posadas", los belenes vivientes creados en las calles en los días previos a la Navidad.

Los seis miembros del personal condenados trabajaron anteriormente para Cáritas en la Diócesis de Estelí, donde el obispo encarcelado Rolando Álvarez de Matagalpa es administrador apostólico, que fue cerrada en 2022 como parte de la represión del régimen contra organizaciones eclesiasísticas, caritativas y no gubernamentales. Los medios nicaragüenses identificaron a los seis empleados de Cáritas como Julio Sevilla, Julio Berrios, Bladimir Pallés, María Verónica Herrera Galeano, Frey-dell Andino y Mariví Andino.

El régimen ha revocado el estatus legal de más de 3,500 organizaciones no gubernamentales en los últimos años, incluidas secciones de Caritas y proyectos católi-

cos como universidades, argumentando que los grupos a menudo no cumplían con las leyes fiscales y las normas de gobernanza.

La organización de noticias independiente nicaragüense Confidencial informó en junio de 2023 que la Policía Nacional alegó lavado de dinero involucrando una donación de 563,207 dólares para un hospital en 2012 de Catholic Relief Services, la agencia de ayuda internacional de la Iglesia Católica en los Estados Unidos, a Cáritas en la Diócesis de Estelí. La policía también afirmó haber encontrado "cientos de miles de dólares escondidos en bolsas" en varios lugares, según Confidencial.

El medio citó fuentes diocesanas, que confirmaron que el hospital no fue construido, pero que los fondos fueron destinados a otros proyectos. Un representante de Catholic Relief Services no estuvo disponible de inmediato para hacer comentarios sobre el tema.

Los padres Eugenio Rodríguez Benavides y Leonardo Guevara Gutiérrez del capítulo diocesano de Cáritas fueron "requeridos por la Policía Nacional" para su investigación, según un comunicado diocesano del 22 de mayo.

Fueron retenidos en un seminario en la capital Managua, aunque el padre Guevara regresó a Estelí en octubre, según informes de los medios. El padre Rodríguez

fue exiliado al Vaticano el 18 de octubre, junto con otros 11 sacerdotes, que habían sido detenidos después de que la policía y los paramilitares atacaran al clero en una ola de detenciones.

El presidente Daniel Ortega y su esposa, la vicepresidenta Rosario Murillo, se han vuelto cada vez más opresivos a medida que refuerzan su control del poder en el país centroamericano y silencian todas las voces disidentes, incluidos sacerdotes y obispos.

El obispo Isidoro Mora de la Diócesis de Siuna fue arrestado el 20 de diciembre, según medios independientes nicaragüenses, mientras viajaba a una parroquia de su diócesis para celebrar el sacramento de la Confirmación. Su arresto se produjo tras una Misa celebrada en la Diócesis de Matagalpa, donde expresó el apoyo espiritual de la conferencia episcopal de Nicaragua al obispo Álvarez. El gobierno aún no se ha pronunciado sobre el paradero del obispo Mora.

Mons. Óscar Escoto, vicario diocesano en Matagalpa, fue sacado por la policía de su residencia alrededor de la medianoche del 21 de diciembre, según el medio de noticias Mosaico CSI, que cubre Matagalpa. Regresó a la residencia diocesana al día siguiente, pero la policía permaneció afuera, según fotografías

CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



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, MSP (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 Elsnr (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)
- 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. Knickerbocker (O — 2009)
- 30

Deacon Bill Butler (B)
- 30

Deacon Federico Medina (B)

February

- 1

Deacon Dan Shannahan (B)
- 2

Rev. Francis Onyekozuru (B)
- 2

Deacon Pedro Sanchez (D — 2013)
- 5

Deacon David King (D — 2006)
- 5

Deacon John Rangel (B)
- 6

Deacon Ignacio Cisneros (D — 2016)
- 7

Deacon Pete Madrid (B)
- 8

Deacon Thomas Flores (B)
- 9

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

Rev. Terry Brenon (B)
- 10

Rev. Leo E. Lavoie (1978) – D
- 11

Rev. Bernardito Getigan (B)
- 11

Deacon Ray Smith (D — 2014)
- 14

Rev. Martin Hubbs (B)
- 15

Deacon Victor Belman (B)
- 15

Rev. Frank Colacicco (D — 2006)
- 16

Rev. Msgr. Larry Droll (B)
- 19

Deacon Bobby Porras (B)
- 20

Deacon Mark Reeh (D — 2005)
- 20

Deacon Sador Sotelo (B)
- 22

Rev. Francisco Lopez (D — 1994)
- 22

Rev. Ed DeLeon, OMI (D — 2017)
- 23

Rev. Kizito Okhuoya (O — 1996)
- 26

Rev. Mamachan Joseph (B)
- 28

Rev. Lawrence Underdonk (D —2004)
- 29

Rev. Msgr. Bernard Gully (B)

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



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

Bishop’s Calendar

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.
- 7

ABILENE, Holy Family, Masses at 9:00 a.m. and 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.
- 16

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 11:00 a.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 at 1:00 p.m.
- 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, Ordination 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.

February 2024

- 1

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 2

ODESSA, Marriott, Catholic Charities Banquet of Hope at 6:00 p.m.
- 3

MIDLAND, Petroleum Club, St. Ann’s Mardis Gras at 6:00 p.m.
- 4

CARLSBAD, St. Therese, Installation of Pastor Fr. Joe Barbieri at 9:00 a.m.
- 4

SAN ANGELO, Newman Center, Mass at 12 noon
- 5–7

IRVING, National Catholic Bioethics Center Bishops’ Workshop
- 8

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Liturgical Commission meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- 9

MIDLAND, St. Ann, Knights of Columbus Clergy Appreciation Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
- 10

ODESSA, Knights of Columbus Casino Night
- 11

MIDLAND, The Way Retreat Center, Project Andrew Dinner at 6:00 p.m.
- 14

MIDLAND, Dollye Neal Chapel at Midland College, Ash Wednesday Mass at 12:30 p.m.
- 14

ODESSA, Multipurpose Room in Mesa Building at UTPB, Ash Wednesday Mass at 3:00 p.m.
- 17

ABILENE, Holy Family, Diocesan Men’s Conference
- 18

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rite of Election at 2:30 p.m.
- 18

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Project Andrew Dinner at 6:00 p.m.
- 20

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 21–22

BOERNE, Catholic Leadership Institute meeting for bishops
- 25

MIDLAND, San Miguel, Rite of Election at 2:30 p.m.
- 28–March 1

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Tex-Mex Bishops meeting



Christ the King Retreat Center

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

February 2024

- 9–11

Deacon Formation
- 12

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 16–18

Engaged Encounter
- 18

Natural Family Planning
- 18

Project Andrew
- 22–25

Men's Small Town ACTS
- 26

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 28–Mar 1

Tex Mex Border Bishops

Special Collections

Diocesan Catholic Schools Annual Collection — Jan. 28, 2024

This collection is divided among the four Catholic schools in the Diocese of San Angelo: St. Ann’s Catholic School in Midland, St. Mary’s Central Catholic School in Odessa, Angelo Catholic School in San Angelo, and Holy Cross Catholic High School in Midland.

Aid to the Church in Central & Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Solidarity with Africa — Feb. 14, 2024

Your gift to the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe makes a difference for those living in former communist countries.

Catholics in the United States will have an opportunity to show solidarity and share their faith by giving to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) annual Collection for the Church in Latin America next month. Last year, the collection delivered more than \$6.5 million in grants to help people who reside in regions where poverty, political and religious persecution, and other hardships make it difficult for the church to support itself.

Catholics in the United States have an opportunity to support spiritually vibrant ministries in some of the world’s most impoverished regions through the U.S. bishops’ collec-

tion for the Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa. This annual collection helps African bishops’ conferences and regional associations of conferences expand pastoral ministry and evangelization, improve church administration, prepare more people for church leadership, and even to help end conflicts.

Black & Indian Missions/Catholic Extension Society — Feb. 18, 2024

Mandated by the III Plenary Council in 1884, the National Collection for Black and Indian people continues as the embodiment of the church’s concern for evangelizing the Black and Indian peoples of the United States. The funds are distributed as grants to dioceses throughout the United States, supporting and strengthening evangelization programs which otherwise would cease.

Catholic Extension works in solidarity with people to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities among the poor in the poorest regions of America.

Operation Rice Bowl, sponsored by Catholic Relief Services — Lent, Feb. 14 – March 28

Be sure to pick up a Rice Bowl from your parish to collect donations for Catholic Relief Services during Lent.

Program of formation for spiritual directors accepting applications

A program for the formation of spiritual directors, offered through St. Peter upon the Water: A Center for Spiritual Direction and Formation in Ingram, Texas, will begin its next formation cycle in September 2024. This is the seventh formation cycle offered by this ministry of the Archdiocese of San Antonio in response to a growing number of people desiring guidance in their spiritual lives. Deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition, the program consists of a three-year discernment process of formation and affirmation for women and men contemplating the call to become spiritual directors and seeking to enhance that call.

From the church’s early days, seekers have looked to others to be spiritual guides. Pope Benedict XVI declared, “As she has always done, today the church continues to recommend the practice of spiritual direction ... to every Christian who wishes to live responsibly his or her baptism [and] to be accompanied personally by a guide reliable in doctrine and expert in the things of God.” Pope Francis writes: “Today more than ever we need men and women who [practice] ‘the art of accompaniment’ ... [and can] make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze.” Responding to this call for spiritual guidance, the church recognizes the urgent need to provide for the formation and supervision of spiritual directors, and St. Peter upon the Water seeks to meet that need through its formation program for spiritual directors.

According to Bishop Mike Boulette, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio and founder and director of St. Peter upon the Water, the primary goal of this program is to form spiritual directors as Servants of Prayer. As stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “The Holy Spirit gives to certain of the faithful the gifts of wisdom, faith and discernment for the sake of this common good which is prayer (spiritual direction)” [CCC 2690]. Thus, spiritual directors are those who have rich experience in the interior life and personal knowledge of prayer, sacred Scripture, and the tradition as expressed in the church’s magisterium. Well-formed spiritual directors are able to guide others into a deeper understanding of the experience of God and a more vibrant living of the Gospel life. The gifts of spiritual directors named in the catechism are the focus of topics in the three-year



program, paying particular attention to the spiritual director’s faith in year one, his or her increase in wisdom in year two, and discernment in guiding others in year three.

The program consists of ten weekend sessions each year from September through June. Throughout the program’s three years, the formation team works with participants to explore God’s gift and call for becoming spiritual directors, servants of prayer. In conjunction with the Diocese of San Angelo, this program has formed sixteen spiritual directors for this diocese over the past many years. And now, four participants will complete their third year of monthly meetings in June 2024, and St. Peter upon the Water hopes to present these participants to the Diocese of San Angelo as formed spiritual directors that same month. In prepara-

tion for the next formation cycle, which begins in September 2024, St. Peter upon the Water is now accepting applications from anyone who may be discerning a call to become a spiritual director.

The cost of the program is \$2750 per formation year. The tuition cost should not deter anyone from discerning if you are being called to this necessary ministry. For more information or to request an application packet, you may visit their website at <https://stpeteruponthewater.org/spiritual-director-formation-program>, or call the center at 830-367-5959, or e-mail them at secretary@stpeteruponthewater.org. Those who wish to speak with someone about their discernment to be a spiritual director can call Tim George at 432-770-1939 or email him at tkgeorge53sd@gmail.com.

Charismatic Corner: Prophetic Tongue

By Fausto Franco

“Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray to be able to interpret” (1 Cor 14:13).

The gift of prophecy is often misunderstood as one that entails a lot of speaking. In my experience, the gift of prophecy requires more contemplation and listening than it does speaking. For the gifts to be put into action as we understand them in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, it requires that our relationship with God be a contemplative one. We need to be able to listen to God and his promptings as he desires to reveal himself. One of the things that I have personally come to understand with the gift of prophecy is that it teaches one how to experience silence even in the gathered assembly. When God begins to speak through the person, a silence envelops those gathered to hear the message that God is giving.

One way this gift can be manifested occurs when the message delivered is given in a common language known to the people. At other times the prophetic message is delivered in tongues and is interpreted by the same person or by

another who has the gift of interpretation of tongues. This gift is different from praying in the Spirit in tongues. The prophetic gift of tongues is God speaking through the person to edify the people. For purposes of this article, I will focus on the prophetic gift of tongues.

In my experience, this gift occurs in the context of a prayer gathering. There is a moment of prayer and worship where those gathered join to praise God. Usually there is an invitation to observe a time of silence, during which God is invited to speak. Even before that invitation for silence takes place, I sense internal promptings of the Lord wanting to speak in a different way to those gathered. When this first started to happen to me I would shut down or try to keep my mouth closed, but this feeling soon overwhelmed me. Internally, I would struggle with surrendering to God and ask, “Why me?” God in his mercy answered that question by giving me his Word from the Gospel of John: “It was not you who chose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16).

During my moments of struggle or doubt, God has always put that Word before me, whether as the Gospel of the day or the communion antiphon. In prayer with the assembly, I pray the

words that Eli gave Samuel, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sm 3:9). Amidst all the praise and worship taking place, a silence envelops me in which I am aware of the sounds around me, but they seem very distant. I do not know who has the gift to interpret, but the Lord has taught me and helped me to trust him and surrender. Usually, as the Lord begins to speak, such a sublime silence descends that I feel as if I can literally hear a pin drop, as if time stands still.

When the Lord starts to speak, my tone and inflection change. I know that I am speaking but do not understand what I am saying. As I sense that what was to be given is finished, I stop and pray that someone interprets the message. The person with the gift to interpret begins and internally I feel a release. If I sense there is more, I continue the message in tongues and wait again for an interpretation. Once I had the experience where the message and interpretation were simultaneous. Afterward I found out that it was the first time that person had manifested the gift of interpretation. At times when this gift is active in me, it is accompanied by tears and other emotions which I’ve understood to be part of the

message. Once it is delivered, I tend to withdraw to gather myself because my body and senses are so overwhelmed by the presence of God.

God is good. At times individuals have come up to me and said they had an interpretation. I look up at them, smile, and tell them, they must speak up. This is to help the people understand; it also helps me. God is at work and this gift will be another sign of God’s love and mercy in our times. May God grant us the trust and surrender to edify his people.

- - -
Fausto Franco is a Pentecost Today USA council member. He is an adjunct professor at Catholic Distance University and a former coordinator for the Hispanic Catholic Charismatic Renewal for the youth and young adults for the USA and Canada.

- - -
Reprint from Pentecost Today Magazine 2023, Issue 2, National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the US @ www.PentecostTodayUSA.org.

- - -
Go to CatholicCharismatic.com to find diocesan prayer groups.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

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

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

Reportar Abuso Sexual

La Diócesis Católica de San Angelo 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 Angelo, 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).



Merry melodies rang out at St. Stephen Parish in Midland during a Christmas choir concert Dec. 16, 2023.

ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY

Appeals court rules emergency abortions not required in Texas under federal law

NEW ORLEANS (OSV News) — The Biden administration cannot use a 1986 emergency health care law to require hospitals in Texas to perform emergency abortions, a federal appeals court ruled Jan. 2. The ruling by the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals deals a blow to the Biden administration's strategy to increase access to the procedure in states that have restricted it. Following the June 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned the high court's previous abortion precedent in *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent hospitals a guidance stating they must perform abortions when a woman's life is endangered by her pregnancy under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act. "When a state law prohibits abortion and does not include an exception for the life of the pregnant person — or draws the exception more narrowly than EMTALA's emergency medical condition definition — that state law is preempted," that guidance said. Texas, which banned most abortions by state law after the *Dobbs* decision, sued HHS, arguing the guidance came into conflict with its state law, and was joined in that lawsuit by several groups that oppose abortion. The appellate court found that the federal law in question obligates doctors and hospitals to attempt to stabilize both mother and unborn child in an emergency but declined to expand EMTALA's scope to include abortions.

War represents defeat, madness, pope says, calling for prayer

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — War is madness, Pope Francis said, calling for prayers for all people in the world affected by today's conflicts. "Let us not forget the people at war," he said at the end of his general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall Jan. 3. "War is madness, war is always a defeat," he said. "Let us pray for the people in Palestine, in Israel, in Ukraine, and in many other places where there is war. And let us not forget our Rohingya brothers and sisters who are persecuted," he said. The Rohingya people are a Muslim minority persecuted by the military regime in Myanmar. In his greetings to Polish visitors, the pope asked people to pray for a heart that is "sensitive to the needs of the poor, refugees and victims of war." "I ask the Lord for the gift of peace," he said.



Project MIRIAM

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ABOVE!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024

THE WAY RETREAT CENTER

FREE ENTRY / DOORS OPEN: 6PM

4014 N COUNTY RD 1160, MIDLAND TX

COME MEET CONSECRATED WOMEN FROM AROUND THE STATE AND COUNTRY!

Contact Lori Hines to register:
lhines@sanangelodiocese.org

La fuerza está en la Eucaristía

La parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Midland celebró su primera conferencia en español para mujeres el 2 de diciembre de 2023. Damos gracias a nuestros sacerdotes, el Padre David Herrera y el Padre Mike Elsner, por acompañarnos y apoyar nuestros esfuerzos para organizar esto. Las mujeres que servían eran bendecidas en su servicio. Que el Señor nos dé a todos determinación para que podamos servirle y que la fuerza de la Eucaristía permanezca siempre en nosotros.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Midland held its first Spanish conference for women on December 2, 2023. We give thanks to our priests, Father David Herrera and Father Mike Elsner, for accompanying us and supporting our efforts in putting this together. The women serving were blessed in their service. May the Lord give all us determination so that we may serve him and the strength of the Eucharist remain in us always.



COURTESY

Project ANDREW

COME AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD!
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ABOVE!

Midland/Odessa Deanery
Sunday, February 11, 2024
The Way Retreat Center

San Angelo/Abilene Deanery
Sunday, February 18, 2024
Christ the King Retreat Center

Free Entry/Doors Open: 6PM

Contact Lori Hines to register:
lhines@sanangelodiocese.org

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/DioceseofSanAngelo>

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

On the Web

www.sanangelodiocese.org

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.

MLK Jr. Association to hold Jan. 15 event at Cathedral

All are invited to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 20 E. Beaugard Avenue in San Angelo, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, for a program of history, inspiration, music, and commitment celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. The event will be from noon to 1:00 p.m.

Local religious leaders, musicians, and other community members will take part in the celebration of Dr. King’s legacy.

SAVE THE DATE

A DAY OF REFLECTION

09
DAY

05
MONTH

24
YEAR

DIRECTORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
COORDINATORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
COORDINATORS OF YOUTH MINISTRY
PRINCIPALS & CAMPUS MINISTERS



Diocese of San Angelo
Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

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

Exhibitor Booths NOW OPEN for reservation by Non-Profit Organizations, Publishing Companies, and Independent Vendors until April 19, 2024!





Diocesan Conference Day

Church: Yesterday, Today, Forever

October 19, 2024
McNease Convention Center, San Angelo

Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Bonnie Abadie, Oblate School of Theology

Space is limited! Reserve your booth by scanning the QR code above or by visiting <https://sanangelodiocese.org/dcd-vendor-registration>



Carols by candlelight



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

An ecumenical choir made up of members of 16 differen Christian churches in San Angelo performed an evening of Christmas carols at the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart Dec. 18, 2023. The event, “Carols by Candlelight,” was sponsored by the American Guild of Organists and featured a half-hour organ prelude featuring organists from around town.

I AM A DEACON,


¿De qué manera el vivir la vida de un diácono trae gozo a usted y a sus seres queridos?


“ El mayor gozo en mi vida de Diacono es saber que mi familia participa y que a través de mi servir, toda mi familia es bendecida, también es muy importante para mí, saber balancear mi vida de Diacono, de Esposo y de Padre. Sabiendo que mi ministerio principal es: mi Familia.

”

JOEL GUTIERREZ
St. Lawrence
Garden City

AND A CONSTRUCTION WORKER






ARE YOU CALLED?

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

ARE YOU CALLED?

DISCERN THE VOCATION OF

DEACON



“ How does living the life of a deacon bring joy to you and your loved ones? Being a deacon brings joy to EVERY aspect of your life. It makes me a better father, husband and friend. Being a deacon brings you into contact with more of God's people, this is a wonderful gift that exposes you more to the beauty and joy that is God's family. ”


DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO | OFFICE OF DIACONAL MINISTRY

DEACON FORMATION

ABOUT US

God calls every person to a vocation. Deacons are empowered to serve the People of God. The ministry of the deacon is service. That service is exercised in three distinct areas: Word, Liturgy, and Charity. Discerning whether you have a vocation to the diaconate is a multi-year process because it takes time to understand what God is calling you to do with your life.

The discernment process involves learning about the ministry of the deacon, growth in prayer life, continued reception of the sacraments (Eucharist and Penance), meeting with a spiritual advisor, demonstrating the qualities of being a deacon, informed consent by your spouse (if married), and support of your pastor.



CONTACT US
Deacon Freddy Medina • 325-651-7500
deaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org
www.sanangelodiocese.org/diaconal-ministry

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 12, 2023



Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Andrews

COURTESY



St. Mary, Star of the Sea
Parish, Ballinger

COURTESY



Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo

COURTESY



St. Joseph Parish, San Angelo

COURTESY



Holy Family Parish, Abilene

COURTESY



Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Eldorado

COURTESY

How can we call Mary the 'Mother of God'?

By Paul Thigpen
OSV News

Is it legitimate to call Mary the "Mother of God"? Some Christians reject the title, saying it implies that God himself somehow has his origin in Mary. How could the Creator of all things, who depends on no one else for his existence, possibly have a "mother"? To understand why Christians have called Our Lady by this title since ancient times, we need to take a look at the controversy that arose when prayers addressed to her in this way first became popular 16 centuries ago. From the very beginning of the church, at the heart of the faith she has proclaimed lies the insistence that her founder, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, is both God and Man. Jesus claimed for himself the very name of God revealed to Moses, "I AM" (Jn 8:58), and he assumed divine prerogatives such as the forgiveness of sin (see Lk 5:18-26). The apostles testified to this reality. St. Thomas, for example, having known Jesus in his humanity, affirmed

his divinity as well when he said to him after his resurrection, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28). St. John wrote in his Gospel that Jesus was "the Word" who "became flesh and made his dwelling among us," and that this "Word was God" (Jn 1:1, 14). St. Paul taught that in Christ "dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily" (Col 2:9). When early Christians pondered these and other declarations of the apostolic witness, they wondered: How exactly was Christ both human and divine? Was he, as some claimed, simply God and only appeared to be human? Was he, as others speculated, a human to whom God attached himself in a special way, dwelling inside him? Or was he, as still others imagined, a kind of hybrid, partly human and partly divine? Ultimately, in the light of Scripture and tradition, and led by the Holy Spirit, the church concluded that none of the above answers is correct. The Council of Ephesus, an ecumenical church council held in the year 431, resolved the issue. That council was provoked by a controversy over one particular question: Can we legitimately call Mary "the Mother of God"? One prominent archbishop, named Nestorius, began to preach against the use of the Marian title "Theotokos," which literally means "God-bearer," or "the one who bore God." Christ was two persons, he claimed — one human, one divine — joined together. Though Mary was the bearer (or mother) of the human person in Christ, she was not the mother of the divine person (God the Son). So she could not rightly be called the "Mother of God."

After examining this teaching, the church pronounced Nestorius mistaken. Christ was not a combination of two persons, one human and one divine. That would be close to saying that he was simply a man to whom God was joined in a uniquely intimate way — a man specially indwelt by God, like one of the Old Testament prophets. Instead, the church declared, Christ is only one divine Person — the second person of the Trinity. This single Person took our human nature and joined it to his own divine nature, so that he possesses two natures (see Jn 1:1-3, 14). But those natures don't constitute two different persons. Christ is not a committee. The two natures belong to one and the same Person, the divine Son of God. And those two natures, though not to be confused, cannot be separated. In this light, the church concluded not only that it is correct to call Mary the Mother of God, but that it is important to do so. Mary conceived and bore in her womb the one Person, Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh. If we deny that she is the Mother of God, then we are denying that her Son, Christ, is God, come down from heaven. For this reason, Catholics today follow the ancients in calling Mary Theotokos, "the God-bearer," the Mother of God. The apostolic witness is clear: As St. Paul put it succinctly, "God sent his son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4).

Paul Thigpen, Ph.D., is an award-winning journalist and the best-selling author of sixty books and more than five hundred journal and magazine articles in more than forty religious and secular periodicals.



Pope Francis venerates a figure of the baby Jesus at the start of a Mass marking the feast of Mary, Mother of God, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 1, 2017.

CNS PHOTO | PAUL HARING

What is church teaching on Protestant Communion and the Real Presence?

Q: What is the church currently teaching about the Real Presence in other denominations? I thought that at one time we recognized both the Lutherans and the Anglicans as having the Real Presence. Does that still hold true? Others?

A: For context, let us recall that the Catholic teaching on the "real presence" in the Eucharist means that we believe that the bread and wine offered at Mass literally become the body and blood of Christ when the priest prays the prayer of consecration. This doctrine has been a part of the Catholic faith since the time of the church's foundation. For example, as we read in St. John's Gospel, Jesus himself states: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. . . . For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (See Jn 6:53, 55).

Later, in the Middle Ages, scholastic theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas were able to describe this teaching in more technical philosophical terms. Specifically, "transubstantiation" is our word for what happens when the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ at Mass — namely, the "substance" (basically, the essential nature, identity or "being" of a thing) changes, even while the "accidents" (i.e., the physical, observable qualities) of the bread and wine remain.

During the Protestant Reformation and afterward, the vast majority of Protestant denominations distanced themselves from characteristically Catholic sacramental theology. Most of these denominations rejected the idea of the Real Presence in the Eucharist; that is, if they had any practice similar to holy Communion, this was understood as a purely symbolic means of recalling the Last Supper. Naturally, the Catholic Church is not going to see the Real Presence in situations where the denomination in question does not.

A few notable exceptions to this are, as you note, some Anglicans and Lutherans. Historically, the Church of England was established on the more organizational and political premise that the king or queen of England should also be considered the head of the church in England, as opposed to specific theological differences. So although Anglicanism now has many branches (such as the Episcopal Church in the United States) that might believe different things today, at least initially the Anglicans did not specifically reject the doctrine of the Real Pres-



Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News

Question Corner

ence. Similarly, while Martin Luther did not teach the Catholic understanding of transubstantiation, he did believe in the similar idea of "consubstantiation," where the "substance" of Christ's body and blood coexists with the "substance" of mere bread and wine after the consecration.

But today the Catholic Church does not recognize any Protestant denomination as having the Real Presence in the Eucharist. The reason for this is that, even in Protestant denominations that call their clergy "priests," we do not believe that these clergy were ordained through apostolic succession. That is, we as Catholic believe that all our bishops — and the priests whom they ordain as their co-ministers — were ordained by bishops who were in turn ordained by other bishops in an unbroken chain reaching back to the first bishops, the apostles, who were consecrated in their vocation by Jesus personally. Jesus gave the apostles the power to consecrate the Eucharist, a power which the apostles then handed down to their successors, and a power which cannot be obtained in any other way.

However, in contrast, we as Catholics believe that the Eastern Orthodox Churches, despite not being in union with the Pope in Rome, have nearly identical understanding of the sacraments as well as priests and bishops ordained via apostolic succession. Therefore, the Orthodox do have valid sacraments from a Catholic perspective, and thus we also recognize the Real Presence in their celebrations of the Eucharist.

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.

GRN RADIO PROGRAM SCHEDULE

GUADALUPE RADIO NETWORK

Radio for your soul can be heard on:

• Abilene - 91.7 FM, KQOS

• Midland-Odessa - 1180 AM, KLPF

• Midland-Odessa – 90.9 FM (Español)

• San Angelo - 91.5 FM, KPDE

POPULAR ENGLISH PROGRAMS

6:00-7:30 AM – GRN Catholic Drive Time

7:30 AM – Holy Mass - The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity

8:00 AM – Catholic Connections - Teresa Tomeo

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

10:00 AM – Women of Grace - Johnnette Williams

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

12:00 PM – The Doctor is In - Dr. Ray Guarendi

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

2:00 PM – EWTN Open Line

3:00 PM – A Life Lived Joyfully with The Divine Mercy Chaplet

Live call-in show for questions/comments

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

Tuesday - Thursday – Kresta in the Afternoon

5:00 – 7:00 PM – Catholic Answers Live


8:00 PM – EWTN Nightly News

To promote your business & events, please email Sammy Rodriguez Jr. at: sammy@grnonline or Call: 432-682-5476

For a complete schedule or to listen live, go to our website at: GRNOnline.com. Download our free Apps for English or Spanish programming.



The Guadalupe Radio Network is a proud Affiliate of the EWTN Global Catholic Network



The eleventh commandment

In Genesis, we are told “When the Lord saw how great the wickedness of human beings was on earth, and how every desire that their heart conceived was always nothing but evil, the LORD regretted making human beings on the earth, and his heart was grieved” (Gn 6:5-6).

“But Noah found favor with the Lord” (Gn 6:8). God saw that Noah was righteous, “But the earth was corrupt in the view of God and full of lawlessness” (Gn 6:11). The great flood cleansed the world of its sinfulness and Noah became the new Adam, giving us another chance to please God.

So there would be no misunderstanding as to how we were to live our lives, God gave Moses the gift of Ten Commandments to make it clear. But, once again, many chose to live by their own “laws” and disregarded God’s commands, choosing instead to embrace sin. Even many “followers” of the commandments followed at a distance, looking for ways to technically be in compliance with the letter of the law while completely violating the law’s intent. And yet, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). He came to earth for us and gave the world “one more chance” to turn away from hatred, division, and sin so that his will, not ours, would “be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In Jesus, we



James R. Sulliman, PhD

are given a profoundly intimate relationship that should elicit a desire for complete unity with God and others.

In Jesus, we see a direct line from Noah and Moses. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we read “The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of baptism, that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness” (CCC 1219). And while the Ten Commandments that were written on stone tablets are as essential as ever, Jesus gave us an “eleventh” when he said “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). And this commandment is to be written “not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are hearts of flesh” (2 Cor 3:3).

Despite all that has been given to us, as well as the

warnings we have received, once again we are seeing an escalation in hatred, division, sin, lawlessness, wars. and self-will that are oppositional to God. We see it throughout the world and in our own country where lives are disregarded instead of cherished, and division increases daily. At their root is the same “Evil” who opposed God and was cast down to earth and has sought to corrupt the world ever since. Paul told his followers, two centuries ago, to not be concerned, “for the world in its present form is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31).

We do not need an ark made from wood to save our lives because the cross made of wood has already conquered death. We have the assurance of being with God and our loved ones for all eternity. All we have to do is embrace the eleventh commandment and love one another ... as he has loved us ... nothing else matters. Amidst the chaos all around us that is the work of the Evil one, Jesus tells us, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (Jn 14:27). One way or another, love will prevail, for “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16).

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.

From ‘dumb ox’ to Doctor of the Church

He was nicknamed the “dumb ox” by his fellow students who mistook his silent ways and huge size for stupidity and simple-mindedness. But St. Albert the Great recognized the brilliant intellect of his student, Thomas Aquinas, and made this prophetic remark: “This dumb ox will fill the world with his bellowing.”

Aquinas was born in 1225 near the small town of Aquino, Italy, where his father was the count. He was the youngest of four sons.

His family sent him to the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino when he was five to begin his education. He later enrolled at the University of Naples where he became attracted to the Dominicans. When he told his family that he wanted to become a Dominican friar, they were appalled. Jenny Schroedel writes in *The Book of Saints* that they kept him confined in the castle for over a year hoping he would change his mind.

Editor Michael Walsh writes in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that his family were upset because he was focused on a poor, mendicant order. His mother, Theodora, wanted her youngest son to be a Benedictine and eventually become abbot of Monte Cassino, thereby serving the family’s interest and honor.

They finally relented and released him. He returned to his order and was ordained at Cologne in 1250. For the next several years, he studied at the University of Paris where he became a lecturer in theology. He received his doctorate there and published his first works in philosophy and commentaries on Scripture.



Mary Lou Gibson
Speaking of Saints

Even in his earliest writings, Aquinas’ intellectual genius was apparent. His services were in demand from the Dominicans as well as in the papal court. While in Paris, he was the friend and confidant of King Louis.

Biographer John Delaney, writing in *Pocket Dictionary of Saints*, calls Thomas Aquinas the greatest theology master of Christianity. Aquinas believed that such truths as the existence of God, his eternity, his creative power and his providence can be discovered by natural reason. “Every truth without exception — and whoever may utter it — is from the Holy Spirit,” Aquinas wrote.

He turned down several prestigious ecclesiastical appointments, including the archbishopric of Naples. He preferred teaching, preaching and writing. Delaney describes him as a man of great humility and holiness who experienced many visions, ecstasies and revelations. He composed the office for the feast of Corpus Christi and also wrote hymns including “Pange lingua” and commentaries

on the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed.

His greatest work was *Summa Theologiae*, which he began in 1266. Editor Bernard Bangley writes in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that this was the first systematic approach to writing our church doctrine. Aquinas never finished his *Summa* because of a revelation he experienced while saying Mass in 1273 according to Delaney. He gave this explanation to a brother Dominican: “The end of my labors is come. All that I have written appears to be as so much straw after the things that have been revealed to me.”

Delaney writes that his unfinished *Summa Theologiae* is probably the greatest exposition of theological thought ever written and became the accepted basis for modern Catholic theology.

In 1274, Aquinas was traveling to the General Council of Lyons that had been called to discuss the reunion of Greek and Latin churches when he fell ill and died at the Cistercian abbey of Fossa Nuova.

Thomas Aquinas was canonized in 1323 by Pope John XXII. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1567.

In 1879 Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* commended Thomas’s thought to all theological students. He is the patron of all universities, colleges and schools.

His feast day was originally March 7, the day of his death, but was moved to Jan. 28 in the 1969 revision of the General Roman Calendar.

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

Hearing our Shepherd’s voice

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me ... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (Jn 10:14, 27).

In the Catholic Church we are blessed to have bishops as our shepherds who speak for Jesus and who are successors of the Apostles. We are blessed to be baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church. In baptism we have our ears opened so that we can hear the voice of Jesus speaking through Scripture and tradition in the voice of our bishops. In the Rite of the Baptism of Children, this opening of our ears is emphasized in the “Ephphatha,” in which the celebrant touches the ears and mouth of the child with his thumb, saying: “May the Lord Jesus, who made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak, grant that you may soon receive his word with your ears and profess the faith with your lips, to the glory and praise of God the Father.” Confirmation makes more acute our ability to hear the voice of Jesus when the bishop speaks.

Today we may find it difficult to hear the voice of Jesus as he speaks through the words of our bishops because there are words of some bishops that seem to contradict the words of other bishops, and words from bishops that contradict Scripture and tradition. Our own time, in this respect, is not different from other times. We, the faithful sheep of the flock of Jesus, have always had to exercise our faculty of hearing the voice of Jesus and discerning his voice from other voices. What are some things we can do to help sharpen our hearing as we listen for and discern the voice of Jesus in the words of our bishops as they proclaim, teach, and guard the Gospel and the faith? Here are three suggestions that can help us listen to Jesus in our time.

First, we can listen to bishops who have passed from this life but whose words, spoken for Jesus, are preserved for us in their many writings. Their writings that are available to us have stood the test of time as guides for the faithful. One of the best ways to hear these words from bishops of the past is through praying the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours. The first reading is from Scripture and the second reading is from the tradition of the Catholic Church. Many



Father Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

of these second readings are from bishops such as St. Irenaeus, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Pope St. Leo the Great, Pope St. Gregory the Great, and many others. Moreover, the readings in the Liturgy of the Hours that are not from the writings of bishops are nevertheless judged by other bishops as authentically speaking with the voice of Jesus.

A second thing we can do is distinguish wisdom from knowledge. Wisdom is a vision of the whole, a vision that sees the connection of various pieces of knowledge. Knowledge can be very particular. In our time, knowledge is based on analysis while wisdom is synthetic. Mountains of knowledge can be accumulated, but the bishop, through the grace coming through his ordination as a successor of the Apostles, has the responsibility to synthesize the various pieces of knowledge, casting aside those pieces that do not fit coherently into the vision of the whole truth of Jesus. As sheep in the flock of Jesus, it is helpful for us, through the grace coming through our baptism and confirmation, to listen with ears that have the same gift of synthesis as the voice of the bishop. Because of this we can help the bishop distinguish which knowledge fits into the whole of Catholic truth and which does not and is, therefore, false knowledge based on private opinion or desire.

Thirdly, in this act of distinguishing the voice of Jesus in the words of bishops, we must be careful to distinguish the voice of the shepherd from the voice of the scholar. Scholars are helpful to the church and to the culture, but we must understand that the scholar as a scholar does not have the grace of the bishop that comes through his ordination as a succes-

sor of the Apostles. Yes, some bishops are scholars, but their training as scholars does not make them bishops. In Protestantism we can see the results of the scholar taking the place of the bishop. As Pope Benedict XVI points out, Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer who began the sixteenth-century Reformation, “exchanged his priestly robes for the scholar’s gown in order to show that the Scripture scholars in the church were the ones who had to make the decisions” (Milestones, 133). Father Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI, was a young scholar himself during the Second Vatican Council and was theological adviser to Cardinal Joseph Frings at the Council. Father Ratzinger was dismayed to see the role of the scholar magnified during the Council at the expense of the apostolic authority of the bishop. He says that the Creed provides the standard for the work of scholars in the Catholic Church. However, in the popular consciousness, as the Council progressed, “even the Creed no longer appeared untouchable but seemed subject to the control of scholars” (Milestones, 134). In the development of Protestantism over the centuries since the Reformation, we can see the effect of ceding authority to scholars in the multiplicity of Protestant denominations. This fragmentation follows the burgeoning of knowledge that is produced in particulars without the grace-given wisdom of the bishop, the shepherd, to synthesize this knowledge and distinguish what is true and what is false. In our own time it is not only theological scholars who have a magnified influence in the church but also social scientists, particularly in psychology and sociology, who have gained in influence.

As the sheep in the flock of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we can help our bishops, successors of the Apostles, as we all try to hear the voice of truth coming through the Catholic coherence of Scripture and tradition.

Father Knick Knickerbocker is a retired priest of the Diocese of San Angelo and the spouse of Sandie Knickerbocker. Father Knickerbocker was ordained in the Catholic Church under the Pastoral Provision, which allows married former priests from Anglican traditions to become Catholic priests.

Catholics cannot be anti-semites

A few weeks ago, at the commencement of Hanukkah, my Word on Fire team published on our social media platforms a graphic of a Menorah accompanied by a text from St. John Paul II celebrating the spiritual bond that connects Catholics and Jews. Harmless enough, right? Wrong apparently. For this simple image and quote were met with a firestorm of angry protests from, it appears, even some Catholics who gave vent to frankly shocking expressions of anti-Semitism. Mind you, I’ve been on social media for over twenty years, and I’m well acquainted with how vile that space can be, but this outpouring of rage staggered even this grizzled veteran. Let me give you just a sample: “Did they fill your pockets with shekels to say this?” “Judaism is the anti-Christ religion.” “Semites literally steal everything . . . literally worthless thieves.” “Sin-o-gogue of Satan anyone?” “Well, there is the deicide thing.” “If by brother you mean Cain.”

Look, I know there are lots of crazy people on the Internet, but, once again, the sheer volume and intensity of these responses — and I’m giving you only a hint of the hundreds of similar remarks — signals that we have a serious problem on our hands. For Christianity collapses in on itself without constant reference to its Jewish antecedents. As St. Paul put it, Christ is “the yes to all the promises made to Israel.” And as Pope Pius XI declared, “We are all spiritually Semites.” Hence, if you don’t get the Jews, you won’t get Jesus. It’s as simple and important as that.

One of the very earliest doctrinal disputes within Christianity was the battle against Marcion and his disciples in the second century. A clever and articulate theologian, Marcion argued that the Old Testament presented a crude and morally compromised god who had nothing to do with the true God revealed by Jesus. Accordingly, he recommended that the entire Old Testament be struck from the collection of sacred texts and even large swaths of the New Testament that he considered insufficiently



Bishop Robert Barron

Word on Fire Ministries

clean of contagion. Though it was fiercely opposed from the beginning, most notably by the great St. Irenaeus, Marcionism has proved to be a very enduring heresy. In the early nineteenth century, it reasserted itself in the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the founder of modern liberal Protestantism, who openly extolled Marcion and presented an understanding of Jesus that was entirely non-Jewish. Schleiermacher’s banner was picked up in the early twentieth century by the deeply influential theologian Adolf von Harnack, who not only wrote a biography of Marcion but also, in imitation of his intellectual hero, recommended that the entire Old Testament be struck from the canon! Harnack had numerous disciples among the most prominent theologians and biblical scholars in the twentieth century, many of whom presented Jesus in radically de-Judaized form, as either a Hellenistic sage or a teacher of timeless spiritual truths. One can hear echoes of Marcionism, by the way, whenever someone says, “You know, I love the gentle and compassionate God of the New Testament, not the violent and blustering God of the Old Testament.” And such a Jesus, truth be told, is as dull as dishwater and completely un compelling evangelically. It is of crucial significance that, in the story of the Road to Emmaus, when Jesus speaks in earnest to the two disciples, he doesn’t trade in Gnostic nostrums; rather, “beginning

with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.” In a word, he presents himself as the fulfillment of salvation history, the culminating point of the story of the Jews, the full expression of Torah, temple, and prophecy. And it was in the course of that speech that the hearts of the disciples commenced to burn within them. It was that deeply Jewish speech that led them to conversion.

Now happily, in recent decades, a new generation of biblical scholars have emerged who have endeavored to recover the Jewishness of Jesus. One thinks of, among many others, E.P. Sanders, Richard Bauckham, James D.G. Dunn, N.T. Wright, Joseph Ratzinger, Brant Pitre, and Richard Hays. Their instincts are in line with the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*, which insisted upon the positive relationship between Judaism and Catholicism and with the consistent teaching of St. John Paul II, the first pope to visit the Roman synagogue.

When William F. Buckley was endeavoring to launch his journal *National Review* in the 1950s, he was eager to recruit the best and brightest among the conservative thinkers in the Anglosphere. But he was scrupulous in eliminating from consideration any who exhibited anti-Semitic attitudes, for he knew that they would undermine his project, both morally and intellectually. If the comments on my social media regarding a simple statement of amity between Catholics and Jews is any indicator, we have come, in the church, to a similar crisis. In the great work of evangelization, I want all the help I can get. I want the most convicted and intelligent Catholics. Period. But I cannot have anti-Semites, because they are, by definition, enemies of Christ.

May we rejoice in the God who deigned to become a little Jewish baby.

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

Whether it's abortion or irregular blessings, 'accompaniment' will be messy

By Elizabeth Scalia

It's not an easy discussion but it's one Catholics should have. The United States just watched an abortion drama in Texas that ended when 31 year-old Kate Cox, then over 20 weeks pregnant, left the state in order to procure a legal abortion. The Texas Supreme Court had ruled that Cox and her doctor had not demonstrated that possible complications to her pregnancy (including previous cesarean sections and what doctors called a "high risk" of developing gestational hypertension and diabetes) arose to a life-threatening level.

Testing showed the child in utero had trisomy 18, a condition that is usually fatal before birth or within the first year of life. In a statement Cox declared, "It is not a matter of if I will have to say goodbye to my baby, but when. I'm trying to do what is best for my baby and myself, but the state of Texas is making us both suffer."

First, let's acknowledge that nothing about this situation was simple or easy, no matter how much one's pro-life instincts might argue otherwise. It is unthinkable that a pregnant woman, particularly one who knows the joy of holding her newborn children, as Cox certainly did, would receive a trisomy 18 diagnosis without feeling grief, fear, headache and a very human instinct to want to "just make this situation go away."

Lots of women with problematic or "crisis" pregnancies have had that thought, however fleeting. Most human behavior moves upon a balance beam of love and fear; though human imagination can and does build upon both, our ability to entertain fear often leads to dread-filled anxiety that overshadows all else and becomes re-

flected in our actions. It is at that point the choice for abortion is usually made. In a case like Mrs. Cox's, one can easily imagine all the specters whispering fear into her heart: "How can you dare to love what you know you will lose? Why tempt a third C-section on a heartbreak of a baby, instead of one you can love and raise?" Ugly, ugly questions, but they're the sorts of questions a fearful heart, trained toward pragmatism in our utilitarian society, will allow and entertain until they all start to sound pretty reasonable and the notion that one truly can love and accompany a less-than-perfect baby is forgotten.

"Accompaniment" is the key notion here, one we increasingly jaw about within the church, even as we try to figure out what it actually looks like or to define its parameters. For instance, one could certainly argue that consenting to deliver and love an imperfect baby for as long as it survives is a wrenching bit of self-sacrificial accompaniment to an infant soul.

But a parent facing such a grievous situation would need accompaniment, too. This would have been the time for the church, leadership and lay, to have told the Cox family (even if they were not Catholic), "We will accompany you as you go through this very difficult pregnancy; we will be there as you hold your child and witness the life your baby has; we will be there as you say goodbye, too. We will be there for you, in all you need, in the service of your life and the life of this precious soul that has been entrusted to you by God."

To my knowledge we Catholics, as church, did not do that. Accompaniment can be diffi-

cult and even messy. As I write this, news is breaking that the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has released a statement on the blessing of irregular unions, including same-sex couples, and the matter is jolting because — make no mistake — despite how some are underplaying and others are overplaying the news, the highly pastoral document is a signal change to how things are understood and how they will proceed from here on.

It's all about accompaniment, this declaration, but — both theologically and pastorally — some will doubtlessly find it confusing and yes, messy.

We need to figure out what we're doing about accompaniment and decide whether we, as a catholic and apostolic church, mean to accompany the whole world through difficult things (in which case we might have been the missing presence that may have helped Kate Cox make a different decision). Or whether accompaniment will mean something more pastorally comfortable but less catechetically precise — landing somewhere between "Come, deepen your relationship with Christ" and "Do what you will as long as you're a good person, because God always loves you."

It would probably be wise to start small on accompaniment until we figure out how to navigate it theologically, pastorally, spiritually, collectively and personally. Because outreach accompaniment cannot help but put real skin in the game, regardless of which issue we're working on.

Accompaniment is good. But, yes, it's going to be messy.

Elizabeth Scalia is culture editor for OSV News. Follow her on X (formerly Twitter) @the anchoress.

Where will children play?

The laughter and shouts of children playing at a park remind us how important it is to have spaces where our young ones, and those who care for them, can spend time freely, spontaneously and without too many worries.



Hosffman Ospino
Catholic News Service

Journeying Together

Yes, there are tears, complaints, demands to do what our adult bodies can no longer do, and the occasional boo-boo — a fall, a scraped knee, some entangled hair. Parents, grandparents and sitters know it's all part of going out to play.

Watching our children as they play in parks or fields is an act of contemplation. As they immerse themselves in those playful moments, we derive joy as well, watching to ensure that they are safe and happy. Sometimes, I imagine that this is how God looks at the world.

Playing outdoors gives everyone the opportunity to meet other people. Children play with other children without prejudice. We strike up conversations with neighbors and strangers who bring their children to play in the same space where our own children do. We learn their names. We share similar stories and realize that we have much in common. We remember that we are not alone.

The fresh air flows! Trees adorn the contours of the park; the vastness of the open space extends and merges into multiple horizons. The natural silence that engulfs open spaces is interrupted by the sounds of children's voices. As the day ends, the silence returns, waiting for the next day when the children will return to play.

To play is much more than mere engagement in organized games guided by rules, or the drive to compete. To play is to express ourselves freely as we enter in communion with others and with the very space where playing happens. All of it contains a unique sense of timelessness. Children do this in spontaneous and innocent ways. They don't have to explain it; most likely, they can't. They simply play.

As I contemplate my children playing outdoors, I am compelled to reflect on how beautiful it is to be human. We are embodied beings, called to find joy in the spontaneous encounter with one another while enjoying the gift of the created order where that encounter takes place.

What a privilege it is to have spaces where children can play and be human. We are blessed in our society to enjoy the conditions that give our children the time and space to play freely, spontaneously, without worries.

Voces Catolicas

¿Dónde jugarán los niños?

En 1992, la agrupación mexicana Maná lanzó uno de sus éxitos musicales más reconocidos con el título "¿Dónde jugarán los niños?" La canción en sí es una invitación a pensar en las consecuencias de vivir sin espacios en donde los niños puedan ser niños. Después de más de tres décadas, el interrogante sigue haciendo eco.

Las risas de los niños en un parque nos recuerdan qué tan importante es tener espacios seguros en donde los más pequeños, y quienes los cuidamos, podamos pasar tiempo de manera libre, espontánea y sin muchas preocupaciones.

Sí, también hay lágrimas, quejas, invitaciones a que hagamos lo que nuestros cuerpos adultos ya no pueden hacer, y de vez en cuando un pequeño golpe. Los niños se caen, se raspan las rodillas, se les enreda el cabello. Mamás, papás, abuelas y abuelos, y otras personas que cuidan niños sabemos que todo esto es parte de la experiencia de salir a jugar.

El observar a nuestros niños jugar en el parque o patio de recreo es un verdadero acto de contemplación. A medida que ellos se concentran en sus juegos, quienes les observamos experimentamos un sentido de gozo. Les observamos atentamente para estar seguros de que estén seguros y disfruten lo que hacen. A veces imagino que ésta es la manera como Dios mira a la humanidad.

Salir a jugar en un espacio abierto nos da la oportunidad de conocer a otras personas. Los niños juegan con otros niños sin prejuicio. Conversamos con vecinos y extraños que también traen a sus hijos a jugar en el mismo espacio en donde nuestros niños juegan. Aprendemos sus nombres. Compartimos historias y descubrimos lo mucho que tenemos en común. No estamos solos.

El viento sopla juguetonamente; árboles y otras



Hosffman Ospino
OSV News

Caminando Juntos

plantas adornan el parque; la magnitud del espacio abierto se expande hasta perderse en múltiples horizontes. El silencio natural que caracteriza a los espacios abiertos es interrumpido por los sonidos de las voces y las risas de los niños. Al terminar el día reanuda el silencio, ansiando la llegada del siguiente día cuando los niños regresarán a jugar.

Jugar es más que participar en juegos estructurados guiados por reglas con el propósito de competir. Jugar es ante todo expresarse libremente mientras entramos en comunión con otras personas y el espacio en donde uno juega, enfocados en el presente y casi inconscientes del pasar del tiempo. Los niños hacen esto de manera espontánea e inocente. Ellos no tienen que explicarlo; seguramente no podrían hacerlo. Simplemente juegan.

Al contemplar a mis propios hijos jugando en un parque, me siento inspirado a reflexionar sobre lo hermoso que significa ser humano. Somos seres encarnados llamados a encontrar alegría en el encuentro espontáneo con otras personas mientras que disfrutamos la belleza del orden creado en donde dicho encuentro ocurre.

Qué privilegio es tener espacios en donde los niños pueden jugar y sentirse humanos. Somos ben-

decidos al disfrutar las condiciones que les dan a nuestros hijos el tiempo y el espacio para jugar de manera libre, espontánea y sin muchas preocupaciones.

Desde esta perspectiva, son muchos los eventos recientes en nuestro mundo me interrogan y me invitan a pensar en la realidad de cientos de millones de niños que no tienen espacios seguros, tiempo, saludo o el apoyo necesario para jugar como niños.

Las imágenes de ciudades y pueblos destruidos por causa de guerras nos deben interpelar profundamente como seres humanos. Lo mismo aquellas de pueblos abandonados porque no proveen la seguridad necesaria para vivir y formar a las nuevas generaciones Sin parques, ni campos deportivos, ni patios de recreo en las escuelas, ¿dónde jugarán los niños?

Son muchísimos los niños a los que nuestro mundo actual les está robando su infancia y la oportunidad de jugar como niños, viviendo bajo la amenaza constante de la violencia generada por el terrorismo y la guerra, el desplazamiento forzado, el tráfico de personas, gobiernos despóticos, mala legislación, hambre y abandono, entre otros males sociales. Son muchísimos los niños que mueren antes de su tiempo por causa de estas realidades sin darles siquiera la oportunidad de jugar como deberían jugar todos los niños.

Estos niños son los santos inocentes de nuestro día. Los podemos ver. Tienen nombres. No podemos permanecer pasivos frente a su sangre, sus lágrimas y sus temores. Abogar por la vida de todos los niños tiene que ir de la mano del compromiso de abogar por espacios seguros en donde los niños puedan jugar.

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

Definir los términos de inmigración: Refugiado, solicitante de asilo y 'parole'

En los dos últimos años, hemos visto dos grandes flujos de refugiados en los medios de comunicación: primero la gente que huía de Ucrania tras la invasión rusa y, más recientemente, el pueblo palestino que se desplazaba desde el norte de Gaza hacia el sur.

En la migración palestina, vimos a muchas personas utilizando carretas tiradas por burros para huir, lo que nos recuerda a la familia de refugiados de Nazaret que una vez huyó en burro a Egipto por la carretera de Gaza para proteger al niño Jesús. Ahora, mientras nos preparamos para celebrar la Navidad, recordamos lo que un acontecimiento migratorio significó para el mundo.

Como preparación para este tiempo sagrado, podría ser útil que aclaráramos algunos términos utilizados en el debate sobre la migración que a veces resultan confusos. Son etiquetas que se ponen a las personas y que no describen correctamente la realidad de sus vidas.

El término "refugiado" está consagrado en el derecho internacional y se define como la persona que huye de situaciones de guerra que amenazan su vida. Por desgracia, en los últimos 100 años hemos visto muchas migraciones de refugiados, muchas personas escapando de grandes conflictos, incluidas las dos guerras mundiales y numerosos conflictos civiles. A los que se desplazan se les llama desplazados internos, ya que lo hacen dentro de su propio país, mientras que a los que cruzan una frontera internacional se les llama refugiados. Se enfrentan a una amenaza inminente para sus vidas y su bienestar.

Los solicitantes de asilo son refugiados que llegan a las fronteras de otra nación y solicitan protección, a menudo contra la guerra, pero también contra condiciones injustas en sus países de origen. Entran en otro país solicitando asilo, que está regulado tanto por el derecho internacional como por el nacional.

Recientemente, nuestra nación ha sido testigo de una gran afluencia de solicitantes de asilo procedentes de diversos lugares por motivos muy variados. Es importante que pongamos nombre a cada grupo para comprenderlos y llegar a diferentes soluciones. En mi experiencia de más de 50 años trabajando con inmigrantes, nunca he conocido a nadie que hubiera huido de su país — dejándolo todo atrás — porque quisiera tomarse unas vacaciones.

Las horribles condiciones que han puesto en peligro la vida de los migrantes durante los dos últimos años para encontrar un lugar seguro, como caminar durante



Obispo
Nicholas DiMarzio
OSV News

Caminando con
Migrantes

días por el Tapón del Darién entre Colombia y Panamá, o viajar encima de "La Bestia", el tren de carga de México que parte del estado de Chiapas, en el sur de México, cerca de la frontera con Guatemala, demuestran que muchos prefieren abandonar la persecución en sus países que permanecer allí. La ley de inmigración permite a nuestro presidente conceder el Estatus de Protección Temporal, o TPS, a quienes buscan asilo temporal en Estados Unidos y huyen de condiciones de guerra y desastres naturales. Esta designación puede concederse a ciudadanos de una nación concreta que hayan llegado a Estados Unidos antes de una fecha determinada.

La ley de inmigración de nuestro país tiene dos formas de clasificar a quienes no están autorizados a estar allí. En primer lugar, están los que entran sin inspección (EWI) y los que sobrepasan la duración de sus visados, o "visa overstayers". La primera categoría describe a quienes cruzan una frontera sin ser interceptados por la Patrulla Fronteriza de EE.UU., y la segunda a quienes suelen entrar por nuestros aeropuertos con un visado de visitante u otro tipo de visado, pero no regresan a casa cuando su visa caduca. Históricamente, son más los inmigrantes que se quedan más tiempo del permitido en sus visados cada año que los que cruzan la frontera ilegalmente.

Otra solución que se ha utilizado en la evacuación afgana y en la guerra de Ucrania son los permisos de permanencia temporal o 'parole'. Por decisión ejecutiva, el presidente puede autorizar una entrada general en Estados Unidos por motivos humanitarios, pero no incluye una vía para la residencia permanente, que en algún momento debe ser concedida por el Congreso.

Estos permisos se utilizan en situaciones de emergencia, como la evacuación de Afganistán y para los refugiados que huyen de la guerra en Ucrania. De hecho,

los afganos en libertad condicional no tienen un estatus permanente y la legislación en el Congreso — que les daría una 'tarjeta verde' para la residencia permanente — conocida como Afghan Adjustment Act, está languideciendo.

Cada año, el presidente de Estados Unidos tiene la responsabilidad de fijar un objetivo y un presupuesto para el reasentamiento de refugiados dentro del país. Se trata de refugiados que han sido procesados en el extranjero, en su país de origen o, más probablemente, en segundos países. Han solicitado el reasentamiento y son identificados y procesados por el Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados y agencias de voluntarios, como Migration and Refugee Services de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB). Una vez que estas personas entran en Estados Unidos, reciben ayuda de los grupos de reasentamiento, incluidas las organizaciones confesionales, para integrarse en nuestro país.

El pueblo palestino de Gaza lleva casi 70 años en condición de refugiado. Tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial, se produjo una partición de Palestina para dar cabida a una patria judía para los refugiados del Holocausto. Muchos palestinos fueron desplazados y ahora viven en Cisjordania, Gaza y otros países. Una división especial de las Naciones Unidas (UNWRA) es responsable de ayudar a estos refugiados, porque el asentamiento permanente en otros países árabes fue prometido, pero nunca permitido por esas naciones. La reciente guerra vuelve a poner de manifiesto la necesidad de resolver su tenue situación. Si finalmente se negociara una solución de dos Estados, tendrían una patria palestina.

El fenómeno migratorio no es fácil de comprender, pero entenderlo no es tan importante como nuestra preocupación por quienes buscan protección para sus familias, especialmente por los muchos niños implicados en estas situaciones migratorias. La mayoría de los emigrantes asumen muchos riesgos por el bien de sus hijos, como hicieron María y José por Jesús. El ejemplo de la Sagrada Familia de Nazaret en esta Navidad debería tocar nuestros corazones para tender la mano a quienes necesitan nuestra ayuda.

Mons. Nicholas DiMarzio es obispo emérito de la Diócesis de Brooklyn, Nueva York. Él escribe la columna "Walking With Migrants" para OSV News.

The ethics of neuroimplants and brain-computer interfaces

Neuralink, a company run by Elon Musk, announced in September that it had received approval to implant wireless brain-computer interfaces (BCI) into human volunteers.

A BCI is a neural device that translates a person’s brain activity into external responses, enabling, for example, the movement of a prosthetic limb via brain signals.

The goal of Musk’s study is to enable people with paralysis to use their thoughts to control external devices, especially computers, through the BCI.

While this end is clearly worthwhile, some future uses of BCI technology will probably not be equally praiseworthy, and some foreseeable applications of this technology will likely be unethical.

In an *MIT Technology Review* article, Professor John Donoghue at Brown University mentions how as a child he spent time in a wheelchair, which later motivated him to try to help individuals who were paralyzed.

One time after he delivered a speech at Google, he was surprised to encounter an engineer who was an avid gamer who wanted to know if it would be possible to have a “third thumb.”

“That’s taking things to an extreme,” commented Donoghue. “I don’t want to implant electrodes into people so they can be better gamers. I always challenge all of these ideas because I don’t see what it gets you. But I don’t dismiss it, either... that is what is driving people. It’s the cool factor, that you could have this new interface.”

Restoring lost function offers an obvious benefit, but enhancing people’s abilities beyond their typical talents raises ethical concerns. When it comes to “therapies” vs. “enhancements,” the former will generally be OK, but the latter will often be problematic.

Yet such a distinction, for all its usefulness, still falls short.

For example, consider a hypothetical device that, when implanted into the brain of a person with advanced dementia, would improve his or her ability to remember and recall facts at a level similar to pre-dementia times. Suppose further that in a healthy person, the same device would confer a new ability, the power of a photographic memory. Would this mean it would be ethical to use it for the dementia patient, but not for the healthy one?

Suppose there were a BCI that not only improved hand-to-eye coordination and motor control for Parkinson’s patients having movement deficits, but also improved the acuity and coordination of healthy athletes, so a professional pitcher could now throw a baseball even more accurately. Would it be OK to use the BCI for the Parkinson’s patient but not for the athlete?

What if the therapeutic implant for the Parkinson’s patient not only restored his ability to move in a coordinated way, but also gave him the ability to play baseball essentially as a professional, something he had never been able to do at any point prior in his life?

The apparent blurring of the distinction between therapy and enhancement by BCIs can become complicated to sort out.

As BCIs become more sophisticated, they may be able to capture and interpret more and more intimate aspects of a person’s thoughts. When it comes to the collection of brain data from sensors, it seems fitting to require that such data be protected like other medical information. The confidentiality of our neurodata will need to be assured, even as we seek to safeguard and expand the notion of mental privacy.

What if students in the future had BCIs that allowed for the monitoring of the pupils’ attention in class by scanning or recording their brain activity? What if workers in a factory could be monitored in this way for lapses of attention? Could BCIs enable the modulation of sleep patterns, so employees could be made to put in extra hours of work time?

It seems that coercive scenarios involving BCIs might arise relatively easily.

What about the non-voluntary implantation of BCIs, enabling control of some individuals by others without their consent? One could envision forced implantation of chips to “neuter” a criminal’s bad behavior, for example.

Furthermore, the degree to which a neuroimplant would interfere with human autonomy would be vital to assessing its morality. A BCI might serve to increase or decrease human autonomy. If someone addicted to drugs, for example, received a brain implant that generated specific stimulation patterns to break his addiction, this could be therapeutic and helpful. But what if the setting were adjusted, and it instead became possible to dial in an electrically-induced “high” that provided an experience far more intense than any illegal drug?

Using BCIs to mimic the effects of recreational drugs, or to pursue more intense erotic experiences, for example, by directed neural stimulation, could contribute to the enslaving of future generations through novel addictive behaviors, generating a raft of new concerns. Moral objections invariably arise any time men and women experience a loss of freedom or “personal agency” on account of addictions or other compulsive behaviors.

In sum, while BCIs could offer important medical and therapeutic uses in the future, they also are poised for dubious or clearly immoral uses. Careful ethical discernment around selective deployment of this technology, therefore, will be essential going forward.

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



Father Tad Pacholczyk

Making Sense of Bioethics

Catholic Voices

Five events in 2024 to help us be better Catholics

By Gretchen R. Crowe

As we flip the calendar to 2024, I must admit the thought of the coming 12 months fill me with a certain amount of dread. Entering into another election year, with all of the related political drama, can feel anxiety-inducing, to say the least.

Thankfully, as people of faith, we know that our hope is found not in political parties or their candidates but in Jesus Christ and his church. So, instead of dreading the first Tuesday in November and the inevitably contentious lead-up, here are five events Catholics can anticipate with joy this calendar year.

The National Eucharistic Congress and related events

In the unlikely off-chance that you haven’t heard, the first National Eucharistic Congress in the United States in almost 50 years will be held in Indianapolis in July. The event will include nationally-recognized speakers, opportunities for worship and eucharistic adoration, and plenty of time to deepen one’s understanding and love of the Eucharist. The organizing committee has taken several steps to make the event more affordable for families in recent months, including adding the option of purchasing day passes. Leading up to the national event will be four pilgrimages, starting from different points in the country. And parishes will continue planning and holding events as part of the National Eucharistic Revival’s parish year — events that Catholics should make every effort to participate in.

Synod on Synodality, Part 2

In October, the second part of the two-part Synod on Synodality will take place in Rome. After round one this past October, we have more of a sense of what to expect this year. We also have a synthesis document that we can continue to digest. And we have more ideas of how we might incorporate synodality in our parish communities and in our lives in general. It’s always a good time to listen to and learn from one another, especially within the context of faith, but doing so in 2024 is particularly timely in the life of the church.

Reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in December

Five years ago this coming April, the world

stopped in its tracks as flames devoured portions of the historic and beloved Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. It was an event that brought nations together in sorrow. On Dec. 8, 2024, the world once again will come together — but this time in joy for the cathedral’s scheduled reopening. “Never has anyone alive seen Notre Dame as we shall see it,” Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, rector-archpriest of the cathedral, told OSV News in a recent interview. It’s enough to make you want to book a flight to the City of Light to celebrate.

10 years since sainthood

On April 27, the church will mark 10 years since the canonization of Sts. John Paul II and John XXIII. This milestone offers us the chance to pause and reflect on these two monumental figures of the 20th century. “They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them,” Pope Francis said at the canonization Mass. “For them, God was more powerful; faith was more powerful — faith in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man and the Lord of history; the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful; and more powerful too was the closeness of Mary our Mother.” This year is the perfect time to grow in devotion to these two saints who made such an impact on the church.

A new jubilee year

Finally, the start of the 2025 ordinary jubilee year, a time of great grace for the church, will begin on Dec. 24, 2024, with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica. Pope Francis has asked that Catholics worldwide prepare for the jubilee year by studying the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially its four constitutions. The pope has also asked that Catholics enter into a year of preparatory prayer in 2024. To that end, forthcoming from the Dicastery for Evangelization will be an “in-depth series” called “Notes on Prayer” that will promote “the centrality of prayer, personal and communal,” according to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect for the dicastery.

We might be facing a contentious election season this year, but we can never forget how much we have to look forward to. May your 2024 be filled with joy.

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

The greatest New Year's challenge: Letting go

Undoubtedly, some will be glad to see the end of 2023 and others will mentally designate it for the “Best Year Ever” file. Most of us will find ourselves reviewing what has transpired over the past 12 months with an eye to the future. We’ll contemplate things left undone in the previous year and recommit ourselves to them. And we’ll recall those “well-enough” things we ought to have left alone but didn’t. Whether quietly or out loud, we’ll express our hopes for what the next year will bring. And many of us will try to take the bull by the horns by making resolutions about self-improvement and self-care and plans about what to take with us as we move forward.

What most of us won’t do is consider what we ought to leave behind.

If I’ve learned anything about following Christ, it’s that I must let him lead. Jesus won’t drag me along if I’m not willing to move, but he won’t let me pull him in the direction of my every whim either.

The world as God created it is full of marvelously shiny and genuinely good things and my natural inclination is to chase after them but — when I focus myself on getting and keeping what I want — I’m unlikely to receive what God wants for me.

Being attached to anything other than God himself will prevent me from living in the fullness and freedom of his grace.

Learning to leave things behind might be even more important than figuring out what we should take with us into the new year. For Christians, self-help programs, radical self-sufficiency, and independence are at odds with the call to community, surrender and trust. Of course, there are things in our hearts and lives that need to change,



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

OSV News

but bootstrapping and white-knuckling our way through the year until we (inevitably) hit the wall won’t help us to be made new. Relying on God’s grace, on the other hand, will.

Letting go is an art and a discipline that every follower of Christ is called to practice. But we often manage to avoid it by convincing ourselves that we aren’t perfectly certain of what to detach from.

What should we leave behind? First of all, our sins. Too many of us justify, rationalize and excuse behaviors we know we shouldn’t be indulging. Beyond that, we must let go of our affection for the “little peccadillos” that often masquerades as nostalgia for “good ole days” that were anything but good for us or for anyone else.

And then we should let go of everyone else’s sins: the ones we facilitated or encouraged, certainly, but especially the ones that hurt us. It’s hard to forgive, but it’s even harder to live the Christian life when we do not. Any who have struggled with unforgiveness know that it is both a poison and a prison, not for those we hold in contempt, but for ourselves.

The ongoing prayer of a rosary garden

The word rosary comes from the Latin word “*rosarium*,” meaning “rose garden.” In the mid-1500s, “*rosaire*” came to mean “a garden of prayers,” from the medieval concept of compiling a collection of items, which could include flowers, into bouquets. This apparently originated in the late 1400s with the printing of a prayer book, *Hortulus Animae*, that literally meant “little garden of the soul.” Creating a “bouquet” of prayers eventually led to a string of knots or beads to track one’s praying. It was during the 15th century that the rosary evolved into its present form.

In this and the following months I will be offering a five-part series on creating a rosary garden for your home or parish; each month I present a group of rosary mysteries, list a companion plant for each meditation, and conclude this series in May with instructions on how to build your rosary garden, one step at a time.

For a smaller Marian-themed garden, you may decide that rather than create a four-part rosary garden, a plant or two from each mystery is sufficient to represent the rosary.

With so many plants relevant to Christian symbology, I must narrow my suggestions to only one plant per meditation, which will be quite a fun challenge. You may know of other plants that will fit just as well within the theme, and more suitable for your USDA Hardiness Zone.

Let us begin with the Joyful Mysteries:

The Annunciation — Mary’s humility: the violet’s symbolism is humility and perseverance. Legend has it that the violet was in bloom outside the Virgin Mary’s window when she gave the Archangel Gabriel her fiat to God’s plan of the Incarnation. As the angel left, the story goes, he stopped to bless the tiny flowers that Mary loved, bestowing upon them a delicate sweet fragrance as a reminder of the sweetness of Mary’s humility.

The humility of the *Viola odorata* shows in its lowness; it blooms amid more prominent species. Saints and scholars alike have written that the sturdy diminutive Viola was a clear example of Mary’s unassuming beauty and her humility before God’s plan as she persevered with their son to his death.

The Visitation — Charity: the bluebell denotes gratitude. Elizabeth’s humble recognition of Mary’s role in God’s plan inspired her young cousin to blossom into the Magnificat in thanksgiving.

The bluebell (*Scilla bifolia*) flower is associated with the humility with which Our Lady showed her constancy in faith. Because of this plant’s prolific nature, it reflects an earlier translation of the Canticle of Mary, “My soul magnifies the Lord” (Lk 1:46), and her gratitude in the second half of the verse, “my spirit rejoices in God my savior.”

To avoid bluebell invasiveness, depending on where you



Margaret Rose Realy
OSV News

live, use the spring-blooming and less prolific Virginia bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*.

The Nativity of Jesus — Love of God: the oxeye daisy, in the Christian tradition, is considered a guide to salvation.

A sweet legend is told that by night the three wise men were guided by the star, but as the sun rose the star’s brightness diminished. The Magi found during their morning travels that a small white flower grew in such a way so as to create a bordered path in the direction of the star.

The brilliant white diminutive daisy was the day-star guiding them to the baby Jesus.

The Presentation in the Temple — Sacrifice: the juniper tree is symbolic, here.

The juniper has a strong identity in Catholic history and legend as it is considered both a symbol of God’s strength and glory, and the scars suffered for the sake of his glory. The thorny branches allude to the crown of thorns and are artfully depicted in many Nativity and presentation scenes, and in depictions of the Madonna with child.

The Finding in the Temple — Witnessing: the amazingly prolific petunia that tolerates the most adverse conditions symbolizes hope, watchfulness, and promise.

The introduction of the petunia into Europe took place during the Renaissance. The artists of that period, the Old Masters, would often include the petunia in still life works to indicate anticipation — a watchfulness in life, looking forward to what waits in eternity. As witnesses to the Word of God, we, too, speak with eager anticipation of the eternity taught by Jesus.

Choose blues for Mary’s mantle, reds and magentas for her Immaculate Heart, white for purity, or yellows (which are also used for the fifth Glorious Mystery) for her crown as Queen of Heaven.

In February I will offer plants for the Luminous Mysteries.

Margaret Rose Realy is a Benedictine Oblate and the author of *A Garden Catechism: 100 Plants in Christian Tradition and How to Grow Them* (OSV, 2022).

How can we help the church transform away from scandal to real healing?

With a kiss, Judas betrayed Jesus.

With a kiss or other intimate touch, some people with power and influence betray the trust placed in them by those in their care.

A number of recent scandals in the church involving allegations of sexual grooming and abuse of adults may tempt us to despair. There is, however, an opportunity for the church to move from such scandal to transformation.

Recently, concerns have been expressed about possible grooming in the relationship of Father Alex Crow, formerly of Corpus Christi Parish in Mobile, Ala., with a now 18-year-old woman.

Outrage erupted when news spread about the incardination of dismissed Jesuit Fr. Marko Rupnik, an alleged abuser of adult women in his spiritual care, into the Diocese of Koper, Slovenia. Similarly, there were reports in 2000-1 that women religious in several African countries were sexually exploited by priests.

Locally and globally, there is much work to be done to safeguard adults in the church -- not only in faith communities, but also in families, workplaces, and institutions of higher learning -- where adult men and women are sometimes at risk of being abused by those in positions of perceived, or real, authority.

Regardless of the setting, when one person holds more spiritual, physical or financial power over another, what some see as consenting sexual activity may often be compliance -- a situation wherein a victim feels they have no choice, or that they will offend or hurt the feelings of a predator who holds great psychological or spiritual sway over them.

Those adults sexually abused by clergy with whom I have spoken fall into one of two categories: those who



Lea Karen Kivi
OSV News

See KIVI, Page 19

Make a resolution for the climate, for the sanctity of life

Want some good news?

The Archdiocese of Chicago announced on Dec. 17 that its nearly 400 parishes, schools, cemeteries, and offices will switch to 100% renewable energy for electricity needs beginning Jan. 1.

This covers about 2,000 buildings and is the equivalent of removing 15,000 cars from the road annually.

In his announcement, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich said the action was taken “as an expression of our commitment to the sanctity of life.”

It was part of an attempt, he said, “to ensure generations to come have a future.”

Think of what we could do for the climate as Catholics if we all advocated for this kind of change. What Chicago’s decision says to me is that there is something we can do about this crisis, and one powerful way to help is by an institutional commitment. And what better institution to lead the charge than our church?

In another piece of good news from Chicago, the University of St. Mary of the Lake at Mundelein boasts the only solar installation at a U.S. seminary. Okay, the fact that it’s the only one isn’t part of the good news, but let’s focus on the positive.

Father John Kartje, rector/president of the seminary, said his seminarians are from 25 dioceses in the U.S. and abroad. Together, they will “carry the commitment to good stewardship of the earth with them.”



Effie Caldarola
OSV News

According to a CNN survey nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults say they are worried about the threat of climate change in their communities. According to the poll, 73% of U.S. adults say “the federal government should develop its climate policies” to cut the country’s planet-warming pollution in half by the end of the decade.

In a divided country, that’s a lot of agreement. Good news.

As Pope Francis has reminded us, our whole ecosystem is challenged, almost to the point of no return. The pope, in his 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*, spoke of our relationships: with God, our neighbor and the earth itself, all of whom are intimately connected.

In his 2023 follow-up, *Laudate Deum*, the pope said our responses have not been adequate and that “the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.”

But here’s another piece of good news, something positive we can all do. In 2006, the U.S. bishops, along with other groups, founded Catholic Climate Cov-

enant. This nonprofit offers a pledge you can take, and what better New Year’s resolution to make than a commitment to our common home? At their website, catholicclimatecovenant.org, you can take the pledge, selecting the things you feel you can do, saying “no” to those that are too challenging right now.

You can also add your own commitments. Mine, for instance, involves enrolling in a program in which I collect my food scraps — peels, pits, coffee grounds, filters, paper plates — which are picked up by a local company that composts them, keeping them out of the landfill, where they would contribute to greenhouse gasses. It’s a few dollars a month for a great cause.

Remember “Bill Nye the Science Guy?” Here’s some good, positive advice I heard from this science educator the other day. Recycling is fine, he said, but for real change, there are two things we must do.

We should be “talking about climate change” just as much as we talk about other major issues. And we should vote with climate in mind.

Share the good news with your parish, your diocese, your legislators. If we’re serious about saving our world for our grandchildren, let’s make some noise.

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

Cartoon Corner



MENARD

Continued from Page 1

“Father Mark Woodruff was the leader of this project,” Bishop Sis said. “For years I had been encouraging the community in Menard to find a way to restore that historic church, but it took Father Mark to serve as the catalyst to get people on board.” Father Woodruff was able to raise over \$200,000 for the project, most of which was donated by individuals outside of Menard. “Father Mark worked closely with the Liturgical Commission of our diocese in restoring the church interior and in planning the dedication Mass,” the bishop added. “He oversaw the efforts of the workers. He ordered beautiful new pews.”

Another local Catholic the bishop named as instrumental is Terry Kelley, president of the Menard County Historical Association. “He is very dedicated to the exploration and articulation of our Catholic history here in West Texas,” Bishop Sis said.

For his part, Father Woodruff said that Buddy Garza of Menard, “with his long experience with working for historical preservation, was a God-send to the project.” Thanks to Garza’s efforts, “we have a 21st-century chapel that respects its history as much as it reminds us of its 19th century origin,” the parish pastor said.

Father Woodruff also encourages all local communities to explore and embrace their history. “All parishes, whether old or new, should have a good feel for their parish history,” he said. “The courage and ingenuity of priests and congregations of long ago can give us stunning examples to guide us in the future.”



Diocesan seminarians Jesus Martinez, Jessie Ortiz, Sabastine Nwosu, and Charlie Cisneros covered relics of saints placed inside the new altar at Old Sacred Heart chapel.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Faith in freedom: sharing a common history

Angelo State University president Ronnie Hawkins and Bishop Michael Sis of the Diocese of San Angelo lit menorahs as part of an interfaith Hanukkah service hosted at First Methodist Church in San Angelo Dec. 13, 2023. As part of the service, Bishop Sis spoke on the topic of faith in freedom. The bishop and other faith leaders were joined by members of San Angelo’s Congregation Beth Israel.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

PERSECUTION

Continued from Page 2

of numbers, more Nigerian Christians (have) died" in recent months, "several thousand, at least, most of them in Benue State and in the Diocese of Makurdi in particular."

Open Doors reported that 90% of the more than 5,600 Christians killed for their faith last year were from Nigeria, with the total number of Christians killed in 2023 up 80% from five years ago.

Koopman said ACN's latest annual report noted that more than 7,600 Nigerian Christians were killed between January 2021 and June 2022.

On Christmas Eve, at least 140 Nigerians were slain across some 15 central villages by rampaging herders wielding guns and machetes, the worst such attack in the region since 2018. The area has for several years been prone to clashes between Muslim Fulani herdsman and mainly Christian farmers.

Koopman told OSV News that such "radicalized Muslim Fulani herdsman" have "continued their killing spree, and no one is brought to justice.

"There was some hope that the fact that the new Nigerian president (Bola Ahmed Tinubu) is married to a practicing Christian would translate into government action against the Fulanis, but nothing has been done," he said.

To the east of Nigeria, Islamist militia have terrorized Christians in Burkina Faso, singling them out and "forcing them to adopt Muslim dress and customs," said Koopman, noting that Burkina Faso "has fallen victim to a terrorist takeover of the Sahel region," the 10 African nations located between the Sahara Desert and the continent's tropical south.

As they face the third year of a full-scale invasion by Russia — which continues attacks launched in 2014 — Ukrainians, most of whom identify as Christian, "are feeling very, very tired. People are exhausted, because there is no sign that the conflict is coming to an end," Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the worldwide Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, told ACN. "The population is terribly traumatized by the war. ... Some are physically injured, but above all they are wounded in their souls."

Russia's invasion, declared a genocide in two joint reports from New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights, has seen Russian troops arrest and kill clergy; destroy Catholic, Christian, and other houses of worship; and "outlaw" the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and several other faith confessions in at least one occupied territory. Two Redemptorist priests, Father Ivan Levytsky and Father Bohdan Heleta, remain unaccounted for after being detained in November 2022 and reportedly tortured since their arrest.

In Nicaragua, "the regime of (President) Daniel Ortega ... is determined to continue to oppress the church, effectively silencing it," said Koopman. "Ortega sees the church as a threat to the regime, because of its powerful witness and sympathy for the opposition, which has practically disappeared."

Under the Ortega regime, clergy, religious and laypeople have been harassed, detained, imprisoned and expelled — most notably Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, stripped of his citizenship and now serving a 26-year sentence for refusing to be exiled to the U.S. Charges against the bishop, an outspoken critic of Ortega, included treason, undermining national integrity and spreading false news.

On Dec. 21, Bishop Isidoro Mora was arrested, with

some reports indicating the bishop had briefly asked for prayers for Bishop Álvarez and his diocese in a homily.

On Dec. 28, Nicaraguan lawyer Martha Molina reported on X, formerly known as Twitter that Msgr. Carlos Avilés, vicar general of the Archdioceses of Managua, was abducted by the Ministry of Interior.

The pro-Ortega congress has closed 3,500 nongovernmental organizations and expelled priests and women religious, including the Missionaries of Charity. Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez of Managua has lived in exile since 2019 and ministers to a growing Nicaraguan diaspora in Miami.

Pakistan "continues to be a country of concern," where a "tiny Christian minority suffers severe discrimination" and multiple accusations under the nation's blasphemy laws, said Koopman. In August, a rumored desecration of the Quran by two brothers led to mob rampage that destroyed hundreds of homes and several churches in the industrial district of Faisalabad.

In China, "believers are monitored and sometimes harassed for attending Mass," said Koopman, with the government "pushing churches to take on a Chinese communist identity and become a patriotic front."

Koopman also questioned the efficacy of the Vatican's "provisional agreement" with the Chinese government, by which the two entities coordinate on the appointment of bishops.

"It is unclear what good the Sino-Vatican agreement is doing. The regime has appointed bishops without any input from Rome," said Koopman, noting that some imprisoned bishops and clergy "have been disappeared and not heard from in a long time."

- - -

Gina Christian is a national reporter for OSV News. Follow her on X (formerly Twitter) at @GinaJesseReina.

WOLFE

Continued from Page 16

It is also a barrier to grace. Once we abandon everything connected to sin, the work of sanctification can begin in earnest. But if holiness is our goal, it’s important for us to recognize that we cannot conform ourselves to the image of Christ. Only God can do that. Only God can make us godly. Only the Holy Spirit can make us grow in holiness.

So why isn’t the church full of saints? Because it’s hard to let go of what we’re attached to. And yet, attachments — even to spiritual goods and practices — can easily become idols. The only desire or bond that cannot devolve into idolatry is our attachment to God himself. When it comes to everything else and anything less, all bets are off.

Every one of us would do well to begin the new year by letting go and leaving behind not only all that is not of God, but all that simply is not God himself. If we do, 2024 will be a banner year for spiritual growth and for living more faithfully than ever before.

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

KIVI

Continued from Page 17

engaged in the activity through grooming, and those who did so through compulsion. These male and female victims were from the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations.

Three women shared with me that in the context of spiritual direction or marriage counseling, priests have pointed to the close spiritual friendship between St. Francis and St. Clare to begin a process of grooming them towards more intimacy. Holding hands while praying and conflating spiritual and physical love are among the techniques used to cross professional boundaries.

Other women in financial distress were employed by pastors who demanded sexual favors. Trauma researchers point to four different ways that people respond to threats: flight, fight, freeze and fawn. Fawning, in these cases, pleased their abusers, and meant being able to put food on the family table.

Although those who deal with church canon law and criminal law tend to assign a specific age of legal consent to sexual activity, coercion founded upon a spiritual, emotional, economic or psychological dependency that has created a vulnerable state within a victim deeply impacts the reality (and exposes the limitations) of legal consent.

The question must be asked: How do we, as the Body of Christ, recognize and respond to the victim-

ization of adults and bring justice and healing to their suffering?

The good news about these scandals is that they are in the news. We are hearing about them, so we can take steps to prevent them.

Bishops and diocesan employees must create policies tackling abuse of adults and procedures on how victims may report when they believe they have been abused. Training must be advanced to help the faithful spot signs of grooming or coercion when seeking spiritual care. A sample template with such information is available in the “Resources” section of www.angelasheart.ca.

Just as the Catholic Church led the way in providing educational, medical and social services to the society at large, the church can and should lead efforts to address power imbalances that can lead to the sexual abuse of trusting adults. Having facilitated discussions at the parish level on the abuse crisis, I have learned that many don’t have the opportunity or the skill to express their own feelings on the matter.

If we, as the People of God, embrace this continuing and heavy cross of sexual abuse scandals -- instead of trying to minimize the extent of its horrific reach -- we can gain the skills necessary to become a truly transformative and holy body through which to bring Christ to this world.

Lea Karen Kivi is the president of Angela’s Heart Communications Inc.

OSPINO

Continued from Page 14

Recent events throughout the world give me pause, however, inviting me to be mindful of the reality that hundreds of millions of children do not have safe spaces, time, health, or the appropriate support to play.

Images of cities and towns left in ruin and rubble because of war, or deserted because they are no longer safe places to live and raise children, are an indictment to contemporary humanity. With no playgrounds, sports fields, parks or schoolyards left, where will our children play?

Far too many children are being robbed of their childhood and the opportunity to play as children while living under the constant threat of violence engendered by terrorism and war, forced displacement, human trafficking, despotic governments, bad legislation, hunger, and abandonment, among other ills.

Far too many children are dying early because of these realities, without the opportunity to play as children do.

These children are the holy innocents of our day. We can see them. They have names. We cannot remain indifferent before their blood, their tears, and their fears. Advocating for the life of all children must go hand in hand with advocating for having safe spaces where children can play.

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

NICARAGUA

Continúa de Página 3

publicadas en X por Martha Patricia Molina, una abogada nicaragüense en el exilio, que ha documentado la represión católica en el país.

Poco antes de la medianoche del 24 de diciembre, el régimen liberó a otro sacerdote de la diócesis, Jader Guido, segundo vicario de la Catedral de San Pedro Apóstol en Matagalpa, después de casi 12 horas de detención.


"Su pecado: elevar plegarias por el obispo de la Diócesis, monseñor Rolando Álvarez", informó Confidencial el 25 de diciembre.

El obispo Álvarez fue condenado en febrero por cargos de conspiración y difusión de información falsa tras un juicio en el que no tenía derecho a elegir su propio abogado defensor. Fue condenado a 26 años de prisión, pero rechazó todos los intentos de exiliarse.

La represión navideña se ha extendido a la prohibición de celebraciones religiosas y expresiones de piedad popular que son importantes para muchos en Nicaragua. Más recientemente, la policía visitó a los sacerdotes para advertirles contra la organización de las tradicionales posadas, según Molina.

La policía ha anunciado que no permitirían posadas al aire libre y que sólo se permitirán dentro de las iglesias.

David Agren escribe para OSV News desde Buenos Aires.



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS #3203

CASINO NIGHT

24TH ANNUAL

SATURDAY-FEBRUARY 10TH 2024

SAVE THE DATE

ODESSA-MARIOTT DOWNTOWN

7:00PM-12:00AM

CONTACT: WILLIE BALERIO 432-924-0421 / FRANK JACOBO 432-638-5571

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT ST.MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Member
OSV News

Catholic Media Association

Published the 1st Monday following the 1st
Saturday of each month and delivered to all
registered parishioners in the San Angelo Diocese.

Subscription rate for all others:

\$10 per year

THIRD CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT
SAN ANGELO, TEXAS

Printed by
Livestock Weekly
San Angelo, Texas

Submissions:

Story suggestions, calendar items, parish briefs,
and all other submissions should be emailed to
bbodiford@sanangelodiocese.org

COPY, PHOTO DEADLINE:
Third Friday of every month.
Photos should be in jpeg format.

Letters to the editor are welcome,
and should be emailed to
bbodiford@sanangelodiocese.org
Letters to the editor are printed at the discretion of
the editor and identities of the writer are subject to
verification. Please include name, address and
phone number when submitting letters.

Bishop Michael J. Sis
Publisher

Brian Bodiford
Editor
Director of Communications

The West Texas Angelus
Official Newspaper of the
Diocese of San Angelo, Texas
POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to:
WEST TEXAS ANGELUS
P.O. Box 1829
SAN ANGELO, TX
76902-1829

Eucharistic Revival in the Diocese of San Angelo



John Michael Talbot, a Grammy and Dove award-winning Catholic Christian musician, performed at the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart Dec. 7, 2023. The night of adoration, music, and eucharistic teaching was part of the parish year of the National Eucharistic Revival. Talbot also held performances Dec. 3 at St. Ann in Midland and Dec. 5 at Sacred Heart in Abilene.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Laura Strube and June Jost visited an exhibit on eucharistic miracles after Mass at St. Ambrose Parish in Wall Dec. 9, 2023. The exhibit, purchased by the diocese and available for parishes to reserve for display, is a recreation of the church-approved eucharistic miracles described on the website created by Blessed Carlo Acutis.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Pilgrimage to the National Eucharistic Congress

INDIANAPOLIS
JULY 17 - 21, 2024

with Bishop Michael Sis and the Diocese of San Angelo



Participate in this pivotal moment in the Church and draw into a deeper intimacy with our Lord. Join our diocese by registering today! Scan the QR code or click Book Now to attend this historic event.



[BOOK NOW!](#)





NATIONAL Eucharistic Congress

Adult Pricing*

\$1,049
Triple/Quad

\$1,249
Double

\$1,649
Single

* Price reflects an early booking discount of \$100 for registrations made before January 15th

Family Pricing

-\$200
off prices above for children ages 3-12

FREE
for lap children (0-2) when rooming with two paying adults in double occupancy

A CATHOLIC EXPERIENCE UNLIKE ANY OTHER

This historic 5-day gathering of missionary disciples will be a new Pentecost, a powerful anointing and personal commission to invite others to know Christ.

Tour Inclusions

- NEC Congress Pass (5 Days)
- Four (4) nights' accommodations in or near Indianapolis
- Continental breakfast daily
- Daily transportation from hotel to the Indianapolis Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium
- Gratuities payable to motorcoach drivers

Optional Group Air Package (selection to be made during registration)

- Roundtrip flights from San Angelo to Indianapolis
- Airport transfers to and from hotel

Tour Does Not Include

- Meals and beverages not specifically identified
- Items not specifically mentioned above

3 Step Registration Process

1. Scan the QR Code on the cover of the flyer or click [HERE](#) to access our online registration site.
2. Follow the prompts to enter your personal information, select your rooming configuration, enter payment information, and acknowledge our terms and conditions.
3. Upon completion, you will receive a confirmation email with your diocesan code and a video tutorial providing instructions for finalizing your registration on the official National Eucharistic Congress' website.



Payment Schedule:

\$250 per person deposit due upon registration
\$500 per person due January 15th, 2023
Remaining balance due April 17th, 2024

All payments are non-refundable. By registering for this tour, you understand and agree to CTS Terms and Conditions and accept our CTS Liability Release. All cancellations must be received in writing.

Travel Insurance: The Archdiocese and CTS strongly encourages passengers to purchase CFAR (Cancel for Any Reason) travel insurance. See Travel Insured link: www.travelinsured.com/agency?agency=47907&p=CTS21



CORPORATE TRAVEL

866.468.1420 | NEC@CTSCENTRAL.NET



NATIONAL Eucharistic Congress