January 7, 2018

Go Make Disciples

The annual Rose Day Pro-Life Rally, which takes place inside the Oklahoma State Capitol each February, will be held Feb. 7. The event will feature the new president of The Heritage Foundation, Kay Coles James, and the Most Rev. David Konderla, Bishop of Tulsa.

During Rose Day, attendees will bring red roses as a symbol of their pro-life stance and deliver them to the governor, lieutenant governor and their state senators and representatives. Following the distribution of roses, a rally will take place in the fourth floor House Chamber where attendees will hear from notable speakers, including Kay Coles James. James has served in many roles at the local, state and federal levels, including serving former U.S. presidents George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) and George W. Bush.

Kay Coles James to headline 2018 Rose Day event

continued on page 3

First chapel in Oklahoma dedicated to Blessed Stanley Rother

OKARCHE – Surrounded by residents and staff members of the Center of Family Love, Archbishop Coakley celebrated the dedication of Oklahoma’s first chapel to be named in honor of Blessed Stanley Rother.

Blessed Stanley, a native of Okarche, was beatified on Sept. 23 in Oklahoma City.

“The Blessed Stanley Rother Chapel at the Center of Family Love is a fitting tribute to our Oklahoma shepherd who heroically gave his life for his flock and provided an example of pastoral charity to all of God’s people. May this place of prayer and worship provide comfort, celebration and community for generations to come,” Archbishop Coakley said.

The chapel, located at the Center of Family Love will serve the 130 developmentally disabled adults who live at the center as well as their families, friends and the community. The dedication marks a major milestone for the organization that was founded in 1981 by members of the Oklahoma Knights of Columbus, some of whom are related to Blessed Stanley.

“At the Center of Family Love, we do not

continued on page 5
The mystery of the Cross already casts its shadow over the Christmas season. Very soon after the birth of Jesus, Joseph was forced to flee with his young family because of the murder of King Herod. The Holy Family made the treacherous journey to Egypt where they remained safe for them to return (Mt 2:13-15).

One of the most disturbing by-products of this massive movement of peoples is the phenomenon of human trafficking. Sometimes as the result of abduction and kidnapping, persons are sold into slavery, prostitution, and smuggling or are forced to work in sweated labor, conditions of hopelessness. Children are kidnapped, bought and sold to unsuspecting adoptive parents by traffickers posing as adoption agents. Very often people who are desperate to migrate to find work and leave their families take the risk of traveling to foreign lands where they can be expected to give up their basic rights or be killed. But it is not enough. It is also in our best interest to provide adequate means of legal access for migrants, we diminish our great- est assets when we fail to recognize the devastating impact that illegal entry has on our borders from hostile intruders who are already here legally. It is in everyone’s best interest that these migrants and refugees he welcomed with respect, protected from exploitation, that they have full access to social, health, and educational opportunities and better futures, like many of our Greenville residents who have come to America.

Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are forces that we are forced to flee because they have been displaced by war, religious persecution, political oppression and greed. Unfairly, they are the easy targets of these mass movements of peoples are frequently viewed primarily as political concerns rather than from the perspectives of human solidarity and the Gospel.

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley

Memorial Christmas Eve Mass

In our own time, a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believers find in the Church the spiritual nourishment of their faith, the Church’s sacredness and identity. The Lord entrusts to the Church’s motherly love every搬迁 persons and the tremendous human potential they bring for contributing to the common good, it is incumbent upon us as Catholics and as Americans to work for a just and comprehensive reform of our immigration system.

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19 spiritual resolution ideas for the New Year

By Mary Rezac

Our Catholic News

The Sooner Catholic

By Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY – Pope Francis began the New Year with an appeal to the faithful to motivate a marked increase in solidarity and welcome for migrants and refugees.

“Let’s not extinguish the hope in their hearts; let’s not suffocate their hope for peace,” the pope said during a prayer vigil at the Angelus with a crowd gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

For the New Year’s celebration of World Peace Day, Pope Francis set as his main theme of prayer the feast of Mary of God, Pope Francis had invited migrants and refugees to join them for their evening prayer.

“Dear Mary, the mother of God, we re- 

17. Volunteer. If you are not an active vol-
unteer, consider a new way to serve in your community.

16. Try a new way of prayer. Struck by a rut? Try a new devotion. Check out the Liturgy of the hours or inter-
cesary prayer, God speaks in many different ways.

15. Volunteer at a hospital or a shelter.

14. Go to confession. Has it been awhile? Resolve to make the sacrament a more regular habit this year. Once a month or even more frequent-
you will never miss the chance to reflect on how the day has gone.

13. Find a Bible study. Check out the Bible study offered by the Office of Religious Life. You will learn about the entire Bible and its meaning.

12. Find a parish to become involved with.

11. Set a time to go to confession each week.

10. Support a parish by giving.


8. Participate in the life of your (again, registered-at) parish.

7. Volunteer at a shelter.

6. Start a study group. Give to your (new-
ly registered-at) parish.

5. Adopt a priest or religious sister or brother.

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Bridges over troubled borders

Celebrate the Mass honoring the value of every human life
Sanctity of Life Mass acknowledging the anniversary of Roe v. Wade

The Sanctity of Life Mass, a Mass honoring life from conception to natural death, was celebrated by Archbishop Coyle at 5 p.m. Jan. 17, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City.

The sanctity of human life is at the very heart of the Christian message, Father Brian Bartlett, pastor of Sacred Heart in Lawton, said. Therefore, in order to follow the path God has for each one of us, we must recognize the inherent truth of this principle and incorporate it into the way we encounter God and our neighbor.

Following the Mass, there will be presentations for high school students and adults that focus on the dignity of life. Father Bartlett will make a presentation to the youth titled, “I Have Called You Friends,” and will talk about how the beloved disciple Saint John offers us a unique model in being a young person that desires nothing more than to be close to God.

Saint John’s life invites us to renounce everything the world offers, and live according to the will of God, he said.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend Mass. It is presented in cooperation with the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s Sanctity of Life Committee. For more information, call Father Bartlett at 405-399-2250 or contact Blessed Sacrament in Lawton.

Contagious Faith

One of the funny little ways the Lord works in my life is that I will occasionally encounter a twentysomething who isn’t always looking for any word circling through my head. I say, “Do you think about anything when you put your feet up?” and I get a glazed look as people pretty much scan an answer that doesn’t exist. Sometimes it’s his way of answering the question, or sometimes it’s his way of avoiding the question or attitude or outcome. I go up the unfamiliar word in the dictionary and find out that there is divine guidance.

One day, the word “tragedy” was selected for me, and I was weaving in and out of a topic that involved discovering. As usual, I took that word and turned it into a “tragedy” was a “cure word.” Why would the Lord put such a word in my mind? Was this perhaps just an intellectual stunt-bunny that had made its way into the public space in my heart? No, funny enough—this became the great question that led me to Rome in 2017, and possibly my whole life, as an adult Catholic.

A few months later, I was sitting at my desk. A month later, I was in Israel with my sister. As we arrived in Nazareth, the trajectory of my life took off. My conversion began to explain the topology of the area the town was in, and could possibly explain every single thing about the whole town. Nazareth is situated on a rocky mountain with many caves—which for thousands of years have been inhabited by both Jews and gentiles.

Recieved, I visited Saint Mark Paulic in El Paso and I have a chance to work with volunteers who staff the parish’s RICO ministry. The work is in faith-inspired mission under the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

RICO is an acronym for Refugee Islamic Community Organization. It was also named after the pastor’s nephew RICO, who was killed in Mexico. It was established in 2017 by Padre Bartulas, who knows too many stories of violence such as that which the pastor’s nephew faced.

When working with the Border Angels, Father Bartlett discovered that there was no real first-hand contact with anyone, their children could hardly tolerate solid food. He writes, “I am bishop of a flock frightened by the flashes of lightning in police cars, refugees on the border with ICE custody, or the sound of a voice in your ear. People realize the unprecedented damage that drive home from work will be the last. I am spiritual father to thousands of border patrol agents, ICE agents, who work on the line to stem the flow of weapons and drugs that some call their job. We have been given the grace to provide such bridges in our troubled world.”

Tim Muldowney is an author and serves as director of mission education in Catholic Extension.
USCCB at 100: Bishops’ conference arose out of national crisis a century ago

By Russell Shaw
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops arose out of a national crisis a century ago, when the United States entered World War I.

In responding to this historic event, the Catholic Church sought how best to serve both its own people and the larger community at a time of great need, and today the needs of the church and the common good at large continue to guide the USCCB and those who work for it.

As national mobilization began in 1917 following U.S. entry into the war, the American bishops established the National Catholic War Council to coordinate Catholic responses to the emergency.

In the months that followed, the council’s efforts included recruiting military chaplains, providing recreational services for servicemen, and, via a women’s committee, encouraging war-related activities focusing on displaced persons and child welfare.

“The bishops felt they wanted to make sure they were directing the Catholic effort and not just kind of watching it take place,” Bishop Earl A. Boyea of Lansing, Mich., said.

“And, the best way to do that was to get all of the bishops together to figure out how we act as a national group of bishops to help lead Catholic efforts in various areas of need regarding our own country.”

After the war, the bishops decided to continue and expand their collaboration on the national level.

In a letter to the Vatican, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, the hierarchy’s de facto leader, said the bishops sought to create “a united force ... directed to the furthering of these general policies that are vital to all.”

Pope Benedict XV approved the plan for a permanent organization to be called the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the precursor to the USCCB, whose mission remains the same a century later.

The conference’s mission statement identifies three broad forms of activity:

— Acting collaboratively on vital issues confronting the church and society;
— Fostering communion with the church in other nations, within the Church universal (under the leadership of the pope);
— Offering appropriate assistance to each bishop in fulfilling his particular ministry in the local church.

As an early expression of this vision was the postwar program of social reconstruction, issued by the bishops’ Administrative Committee in February 1919.

Declaring “social justice and a contented people” to be the “only safeguard of peace,” it urged policies — now generally taken for granted — that included minimum wage legislation; progress toward inclusion of a maximum-hour work week; national health insurance and other programs to protect the health of all workers; fair labor relations; measures to aid the aged; and strict anti-monopoly enforcement.

Msgr. John A. Ryan, a professor of political economy and moral theology at The Catholic University of America, drafted the document.

The priest came to head the NCWC social action department for the next quarter-century.

NCWC soon became a strong and effective voice for the U.S. church, articulating Catholic views on a variety of issues.

Archbishop Edward J. Hanna of San Francisco was the NCWC’s first chairman and Paulist Father John J. Burke was its first general secretary.

At its headquarters in Washington, the NCWC had departments for education, legislation, social action, lay organizations and press and publicity, along with a bureau for assistance to immigrants and an international news agency serving the Catholic press.

NCWC provided information and resources to help counterpart offices in dioceses in their work, and served frequently as a model for the establishment of similar conferences of bishops in other countries.

Archbishop John F. O’Hara of Philadelphia, a former NCWC general secretary, is pictured in 1924 at the Vatican.

Archbishop Edward J. Hanna of San Francisco, the NCWC’s first general secretary, during a news conference in Washington. The conference was the precursor to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

During World War II, they established Catholic Relief Services to provide material assistance to displaced persons and people in war-torn nations. Today CRS, based in Baltimore, remains the primary source of relief and development aid in many parts of the world.

In the Cold War years, anti-communist crusades and action and action were features of many NCWC programs.

“We really are unique and our experience brought us all of the way up to the Second Vatican Council at which point, this was recommended for all of the bishops’ groupings and national and international groupings to have conferences,” Bishop Boyea said.

“We became in a sense almost a model for the rest of the world.”

Vatican II (1962-65) in the Decree on Pastoral Office of Bishops commended existing bishops’ conferences, urged that conferences be established in places where they did not yet exist, and sketched their functions.

In 1986, the U.S. bishops replaced the NCWC with a dual structure: the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, for canonical, doctrinal and church life affairs; and the U.S. Catholic Conference, for temporal concerns. Programs.

Wade decision legalizing abortion, pro-life education and advocacy became even higher priorities for the hierarchy. The bishops also established a major new domestic anti-poverty program, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The 1980s brought widely discussed collective pastoral letters — “The Challenge of Peace” (1983) and “Economic Justice for All” (1986).

After extensive study, planning and discussion, the bishops adopted a restructuring plan that combined the NCBC and USCC into the present USCCB in 2001.

Committees of bishops — which in many cases have now been replaced by lay consultants — deal with such matters as worship, vocations, clergy and consecrated life, international justice and peace, domestic social development, evangelization and catechesis, marriage and family, youth, communications, child protection and cultural diversity in the Church.

Regarding immigration, the USCCB continues to carry out its commitment to advocacy and direct assistance through its Migration and Refugee Services.

The body of bishops, usually meeting in general assembly twice a year, sets policy for the USCCB. Oversight is provided by the administrative committee of bishops, and the secretariat for the hierarchy. The bishops also established “Economic Justice for All” (1986).

Today’s USCCB mirrors the vision expressed by Cardinal Gibbons when he told the Vatican of the formation of a bishops’ committee on “General Catholic Interests and Affairs” to plan a permanent national structure for the hierarchy.

There were general agreement among the bishops that the Church needed such a body to present its interests and needs to serve the nation, the cardinal wrote.


...to the multitudes of sacrifices and opportunities of that vision of collaboration in accords and confessions. Bishops are the author of more than 20 books and numerous articles and commentaries. He was information director of the NCWC/USCCB (1967-1967). Mark Pattison and Chaz Muth contributed to this story.
Unburdened in the New Year

By J.E. Helm

The Sooner Catholic

The Holy Father has plenty of good advice for families in this little book. Here, Cotter offers comforting words, asking, “What does our heavenly Father teach us about parenting patiently?” and “What are your family’s dreams? How are you working toward them?” The Holy Father has plenty of good advice for families in this little book. Here, Cotter offers comforting words, asking, “What does our heavenly Father teach us about parenting patiently?” and “What are your family’s dreams? How are you working toward them?”

J.E. Helm is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

Kathleen Scott

Craiova Catholic High School seeks a social counselor to work closely with the principal and president/priest to nurture spiritual and religious life by designing and directing high-quality student development programs, community service opportunities, liturgical events and assemblies, and by supporting student clubs. Position starts June 30, 2018. Apply at www.cristoreyokc.org/careers.

Job Description:

The social counselor is a full-time member of the school’s staff and works with the principal, assistant principal, and classroom teachers to support students who need extra support in their academic and personal lives. The social counselor is responsible for providing individual counseling to students, establishing relationships with parents, and coordinating school activities that promote the social, emotional and academic growth of all students. The social counselor must be knowledgeable about a variety of counseling techniques and be able to provide individual, group, and family counseling to students.

Requirements:

- Bachelor’s degree in psychology, social work, or a related field from an accredited institution
- Certification in crisis intervention and suicide prevention
- Knowledge of best practices in counseling
- Knowledge of legal and ethical issues in counseling
- Evidence of successful experience in counseling or related field
- Excellent communication, interpersonal, and writing skills
- Ability to work effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Demonstrated ability to establish and maintain positive working relationships with students, parents, and staff
- Ability to work independently and as a member of a team
- Valid driver’s license and ability to drive for school-related activities
- Availability to work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends
- Must pass a background check and drug test
- Ability to maintain confidentiality

Send resume to St. John Bosco, 750 W. Britton Rd., (405) 721-0747.

Catholic Diocese of Oklahoma City

Job Openings

Director of Youth and Campus Ministry

The diocese is seeking a full-time director of youth, young adult and campus ministry. The position includes direct leadership of all archdiocesan youth evangelization and discipleship efforts, oversight of young adult and campus ministry efforts, and the summer youth camp program. Bachelor’s degree in theology, religious education or related field preferred; master’s degree preferred. Previous experience in leading youth ministry on the parish level required; a strong background in youth ministry formation highly desired. Bilingual skills preferred.

Interested persons should submit resume to nlargent@archokc.org.

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Jornada Mundial del Migrante y del Refugiado 2018

El misterio de la Cruz ya arroja su sombra incluso mientras encarnamos la temporada Navideña. Muy poco después del nacimiento de Jesús, José se vio obligado a huir con su joven familia debido a las amenazas asesinas del rey Herodes. La Sagrada Familia hizo el difícil viaje a Egipto como inmigrante que traspasó su filo en una tierra extranjera donde permanecieron hasta que los fue posible regresar (Mt 2: 13-15).

La historia de la Sagrada Familia, el Pueblo Eclesial, la experiencia de la Iglesia y la historia de nuestra nación comparten esta característica similar: hemos sido un pueblo itinerante, y a menudo nos encontramos como desconocidos en un país extranjero, un pueblo peregrino. Nuestro legado de inmigrantes es una de las características distintivas de nuestra experiencia e identidad estadounidense.

En los últimos años, sin embargo, el gran volumen de inmigrantes indocumentados y nuestras respuestas a este fenómeno se han convertido en algunos de los temas más desafiadores y divisivos de nuestra época. Nos dañan a lidiar con esta situación de una manera justa y compasiva. Pero la inmigración y la migración de personas no son exclusivas de la experiencia estadounidense.

La migración es un fenómeno global. En todos los continentes, los mercados de trabajo están en movimiento. A veces, los migrantes abandonan voluntariamente su tierra natal en busca de nuevas oportunidades y mejores futuros, como muchos voluntariamente su tierra natal en beneficio de sus familias. Lo que a menudo no vemos es que estas personas no son exclusivas de la inmigración y la migración de personas. La gente está en movimiento. A veces, se hacen pasar por agentes de adopción siendo adoptados indocumentados. En todos los continentes, personas no somos exclusivas de la experiencia estadounidense.
Becoming Catholic

Celebrating Catholic Education

The second annual Celebrating Catholic Education Breakfast is scheduled for 6:30 a.m. on Feb. 9 at the Skirvin Hilton Hotel in Oklahoma City. The theme of the breakfast will be "The Power of Marian Influence." The event will feature several speakers, including Bishop Paul E. Coakley, president of the National Catholic Educational Association, and Archbishop William E. Lori, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The event is open to the public, and registration is available online at okcatholic.org. For more information, contact Bishop Coakley at (405) 552-1240.

Catholic Men’s Conference

The 22nd annual Catholic Men’s Conference, "In the Father’s Footsteps," will be March 3 at Egan Basin Wesleyan Conference Center, Norman. Visit www.catholicmen.com for more information.

Oklahoma Catholic Women’s Conference

Registration is open for the 2018 Oklahoma Catholic Women’s Conference on March 10 at the new Egan Basin Wesleyan Conference Center. Speakers include Immuculate Ilbengan, Maria Ruiz-Schumacher and Donna Heckler. Register at www.acwomenconference.com or on the Facebook page.

Come and see weekend

Fr. David Gordy will facilitate and lead a weekend retreat at the Spiritual Formation Center in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s American Indian Catholic Outreach and Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Spiritual Center of Oklahoma City. To present "The Shepherd Cannot Be Without a Sheep," Fr. David will engage participants in a discussion of the importance of the laity in the church. The retreat will be held at the Spiritual Formation Center in Oklahoma City. For more information, contact Fr. David Gordy at (405) 552-1240 or okcatholic.org.

Lenten Mission


School of Lectio

The next session of St. Joseph Monastery’s School of Lectio Divina will be held at the monastery on March 17. The theme for the session will be "The Risen Christ in Our Daily Lives." The session will begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 11:30 a.m. with lunch. For more information, contact Fr. Ray Ackerman at (405) 552-1240 or okcatholic.org.

Silent retreat on creativity

The Lenten retreat is a weekend where people can develop creative skills, work on a project, discern their path or just rest and get closer to God. The retreat is 9 a.m. March 2 - Noon March 4 at the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s Northwest Retreat Center. For more information, contact Fr. Ray Ackerman at (405) 552-1240 or okcatholic.org.

Prey for the Four Directions

Save the date for the second annual Prayer in the Four Directions retreat by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s American Indian Catholic Outreach and the Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Spiritual Center of Oklahoma City. "The Power of the Holy Spirit," Feb. 24-25, at the American Indian Catholic Outreach Conference Center. Contact Toni Calvey, (405) 630-0539, tcalvey1990@gmail.com or visit www.4direcions.org for more information.

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The 22nd annual Catholic Men’s Conference, "In the Father’s Footsteps," will be March 3 at Egan Basin Wesleyan Conference Center, Norman. Visit www.catholicmen.com for more information.

Oklahoma Catholic Women’s Conference

Registration is open for the 2018 Oklahoma Catholic Women’s Conference on March 10 at the new Egan Basin Wesleyan Conference Center. Speakers include Immuculate Ilbengan, Maria Ruiz-Schumacher and Donna Heckler. Register at www.acwomenconference.com or on the Facebook page.

Come and see weekend

Fr. David Gordy will facilitate and lead a weekend retreat at the Spiritual Formation Center in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s American Indian Catholic Outreach and Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Spiritual Center of Oklahoma City. To present "The Shepherd Cannot Be Without a Sheep," Fr. David will engage participants in a discussion of the importance of the laity in the church. The retreat will be held at the Spiritual Formation Center in Oklahoma City. For more information, contact Fr. David Gordy at (405) 552-1240 or okcatholic.org.

Lenten Mission


School of Lectio

The next session of St. Joseph Monastery’s School of Lectio Divina will be held at the monastery on March 17. The theme for the session will be "The Risen Christ in Our Daily Lives." The session will begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 11:30 a.m. with lunch. For more information, contact Fr. Ray Ackerman at (405) 552-1240 or okcatholic.org.

Silent retreat on creativity

The Lenten retreat is a weekend where people can develop creative skills, work on a project, discern their path or just rest and get closer to God. The retreat is 9 a.m. March 2 - Noon March 4 at the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s Northwest Retreat Center. For more information, contact Fr. Ray Ackerman at (405) 552-1240 or okcatholic.org.

Prayer in the Four Directions

Save the date for the second annual Prayer in the Four Directions retreat by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s American Indian Catholic Outreach and the Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Spiritual Center of Oklahoma City. "The Power of the Holy Spirit," Feb. 24-25, at the American Indian Catholic Outreach Conference Center. Contact Toni Calvey, (405) 630-0539, tcalvey1990@gmail.com or visit www.4direcions.org for more information.

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Meet the woman who helped revive Catholic art after the Reformation

By Hannah Brockhaus
Catholic News Agency

ROME, Italy – Baroque Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi is hailed as a “feminist icon” based on her portrayal of the female “hero,” who through violence enacts symbolic revenge against men, and her supposed defiance of Counter-Reform taboos.

But, the artist should actually be remembered for the significant role she played in supporting the Catholic revival of art in the wake of the Protestant Reformation as well as for her depiction of the core Christian struggle between virtue and vice, Vatican art historian Elizabeth Lev said.

Considered one of the most accomplished artists in the generation following Caravaggio, her work was showcased this past year in an exhibit at Rome’s Palazzo Braschi, which brought 30 of her paintings together in a single space for the first time.

Born at the end of the 16th century, Artemisia Gentileschi’s life has become predominantly known for the unfortunate circumstance of her rape at the young age of 17 or 18, and the difficult trial that followed, Lev said.

It is this story that art historians have “hi-jacked” as the basis for claiming her as a feminist hero. But should they? Anti-Church?

Many art historians “build a sort of feminist box around her,” Lev said. “And, the feminist box has no time for anything Christian, overlooking the fact that this is a young woman who is working in the heart of Counter-Reformation art. Art patrons in that period are all on board with the Counter-Reformation.”

The Counter-Reformation, also called the Catholic Reformation, was the Catholic Church’s effort to revive and truly reform Catholicism in Europe following the Protestant Reformation.

One of the Church’s many reforms during this period was a renewed effort toward funding the creation of sacred art, especially in the face of Protestants’ iconoclasm, the destruction of religious images.

Artemisia’s career first took off in the Medici court in Florence, “where you have a circle of people who are deeply involved in the Church’s Catholic response to the Reformation,” Lev said.

Reforming the Church through art and beauty “is a very, very important thing to the Church” at that time. Patrons continue to commission art “in the face of the Protestant iconoclasm,” but the art they commission “can’t be part of the problem, it has to be part of the solution,” she explained.

“You need to find artists who make works of art that are inspiring, that are exciting, that are stimulating, that are new, but that also are directing the correct message in an extremely difficult time for the Church.”

One of the reasons Artemisia was so successful is because this is, in fact, what she did, Lev said. “She’s not going to be successful in Italy if she’s producing art about how much she hates

This is why Caravaggio’s “innovative view, his light/dark contrast, his sense of struggle, his intense graphic passion, would appeal to her, and be kind of attractive as an art form.”

Artemisia’s paintings also are compared to Caravaggio’s in their treatment of the human form, chiefly the female: Artemisia’s women are portrayed less ideally than many of Caravaggio’s.

“But when you put one of her works next to Caravaggio’s works, you’ll see, that particularly in draftsmanship of hands and of anatomy, she’s superior,” Lev said, noting Artemisia’s considerable skill.

A Catholic perspective

In the context of religious art, the image of Judith and Holofernes has always been about virtue conquering virtue, Lev said.

“That’s the whole point of the story, the whole point of the painting,” and why so many were made during the Counter-Reformation.

“There is nothing easy about conquering our desire toward lust, desire, honesty, power, whatever it is that we have to fight,” Lev said. “This is a woman who understands, the same way Caravaggio does, that battling sin, we don’t all get to look like Saint Michael, with perfect skin and perfect curls.”

The repentant sinner

Another favorite subject of Artemisia’s is Mary Magdalene. For every heroine “sawing off the head” that she painted, she also painted an image of Mary Magdalene; the number of paintings only differing by one or two.

Artemisia’s “Conversion of the Magdalene” (c. 1620) as the image of repentance, Lev continued, Saint Mary Magdalene “rises to the highest echelons of art in the Counter-Reformation, together with Saint Jerome.”

While Saint Jerome was preferred in Rome because he’s a model for priests, bishops and cardinals, Mary Magdalene “becomes the model for every other person in the world.”

Lev said that people don’t seem to bother looking at her from that perspective today, and instead simply conclude that the content of her paintings must be connected to the tragic events in her life.

But, the “real struggle is not coming to terms with an injustice that happened to her, because injustices happen to us every single day – that’s not her real struggle. The real struggle that everyone in that period – and they make that plain to you every minute of every day – is who are you before God and who are you going to be at the last day?”

“Her paintings accompany that struggle. And, particularly for women. And, so she is a magnificant role model.”