El legado del abuso de menores
—Ver pagina 17

Catholic high school students speak out against gun violence
—See page 20

Encuentro
Spanish-speaking faithful on path to Church leadership
Tucson community celebrates Vietnamese New Year

The Vietnamese community throughout the city gathered at Our Lady of La Vang Parish Feb. 18 to mark the Vietnamese New Year. Pastor and Redemptorist Father Joseph Hung Le welcomed Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger to the annual celebration. Bishop Weisenburger, who earlier in ministry had served in a Vietnamese parish, noted that the parish festival attracted many local non-Catholics, because other groups that once sponsored New Year’s celebrations were no longer doing so. At left, one of the ceremonial “dragons” comes close to the crowd. Above, Bishop Weisenburger offers to feed another dragon.
St. John Paul II Awards given to teens involved in ministries

Bishop Edward Weisenburger celebrated Masses in Tucson and Yuma with young people receiving the St. John Paul II Awards. The awards are given for teen service in the categories of Prayer and Worship, Catechesis and Evangelization, and Community Service and Social Justice in their parishes, schools or communities.

The first award ceremony took place at St. Augustine Cathedral Feb. 17. A second ceremony in the Yuma/La Paz area was on Feb. 28 at Immaculate Conception Church.

“It is so important for youth to be as immersed as much as possible in the faith,” Bishop Weisenburger said. “These awards recognize how well our teens respond as vital and active members of our Church in action.”

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Registrations open for Bible study program
OMOS, 1800 S. Kolb Road, one Saturday each month, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Tucson

The Catholic Bible Institute of Southern Arizona will be starting another three-year session in August for Catholics interested in Bible studies and faith sharing. It follows the successful completion in June of more than 80 participants who will earn diocesan certification. The institute is sponsored by the diocesan Pastoral Services Department’s Office of Formation. Enrollment cost is $150 per semester.

Year One includes an introduction to the New Testament, with study of the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline letters, the epistles, Revelation, non-canonical writings, and an understanding of New Testament theology.

Year Two includes an overview of the Hebrew scriptures, with study of the Pentateuch and Torah, historical books, prophetic writings, wisdom literature, deuterocanonical writings, and Hebrew theology.

Year Three focuses on developing practical skills for working with small groups, with an emphasis on adult learning, facilitation skills, group process, Bible-study resources and leadership training. Register now by calling Isabel Madrid at (520) 838-2544 or by emailing imadrid@diocesetucson.org.

Couple Prayer Retreat/Marriage Retorno is an opportunity for husbands and wives to get closer God as a married couple using Scripture. For information or to reserve a spot, call Kevin or Kathie at (520) 722-2931 or email stogskk@ mindspring.com.

Charismatic renewal at Sacred Heart
Sacred Heart Church, 601 E. Fort Lowell Road, April 12, 6:30 p.m., Tucson

The Diocese of Tucson Renewal Committee will hold its monthly “Alive in Christ” event. All are welcome. For more information, call Gloria (520) 237-7060 or visit www.tucsonccr.org.

Jesuit to discuss ethics of space aliens
St. Thomas More Center, 1615 E. Second St., Curry Classroom, April 17, 7:30-8:40 p.m., Tucson
Jesus Father Paul Gabor, from the Vatican Observatory, will speak on “The Ethics of Aliens: Science, Faith and Wisdom.”

Jesuit Father Paul Gabor, from the Vatican Observatory, will speak on “The Ethics of Aliens: Science, Faith and Wisdom.”

St. Cyril’s offers three evening Masses
St. Cyril Church, 4725 E. Pima St., Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, 5 p.m., Tucson

At the request of local Catholics, St. Cyril’s began April 2 offering evening Mass three days a week. The request followed the closing and sale of the Benedictine Monastery of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. All are welcome.

St. Pius X, St. Rita Knights host Polish dinner
Arizona Room (St. Pius X Gymnasium), 1800 N Camino Pio Decimo, April 28, 6 p.m., Tucson

The Knights of Columbus St. Pius X Council 10762 and St. Rita in the Desert Council 14230 will co-host their annual Polish dinner. Parking is available on the north and west sides of the church. Dress is casual. The evening features authentic Polish cuisine, including homemade cabbage rolls, Polish sausage and smoked sausage, potato and cheese pierogis, polish sauerkraut, mashed potatoes, green beans with bacon, rye bread and butter and sheet cake dessert. Assorted non-alcoholic drinks will be served and a cash bar will be available. Music will be provided by the Bouncing Czechs and Polish folk dancing by the Jagi, Polish Folk Ensemble. The cost is $20 per person; $12 for children 12 and under. Tickets are available after Masses at both parishes or in their parish offices. Only 300 tickets are available.

St. Elizabeth’s celebrates Divine Mercy
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 8650 N. Shannon Road, April 8, 1 p.m., Tucson

At SEAS, the feast of Divine Mercy will be celebrated with a bilingual Mass followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and recitation of the chaplet.

St. Mark Life Teens hold rummage sale
Parish hall, 2727 W. Tangerine Rd., April 28, 6:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Tucson

St. Mark’s Life Teen ministry is sponsoring a rummage sale to benefit the parish Life Teen program. The parish also announced that it is taking applications for the fall session of Little Tots Children’s Center. For more information or to enroll, call the parish office at 469-7835.

Knights to sponsor Rosary dinner
St. Mark Parish, 2727 W. Tangerine Rd., May 29, 6-9 p.m., Tucson

The St. Mark Knights of Columbus will host a “Moon Shines Down On Our Lady of the Rosary” Dinner outside parish hall. For more information, call the parish office at 469-7835.

Bishop Kicanas on marriage document
St. Christopher Parish, 12010 W. Moore Road, April 8, noon-1:30 p.m., Marana

Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas will discuss Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia (“The Joy of Love”), after celebrating the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Lunch will accompany the presentation.

Interfaith groups host immigration forum
St. Christopher Parish, 12010 W. Moore Road, April 15, noon-2 p.m., Marana

Meredith Lynch, Immigration Services Program director at Catholic Community Services in Tucson, will lead a bilingual presentation titled “Know Your Rights: How to Become a Citizen.” This event is sponsored by the Pima County Interfaith Civic Education Organization and Southern Arizona Interfaith.

St. Christopher’s to host talk on opioids
St. Christopher Parish, 12010 W. Moore Road, April 29, noon-1 p.m., Marana

Dr. Jenitza-Serrano Feliciano, chief medical officer of the Marana Health Center, will make a presentation on “Opioid Crisis: A National and Local Emergency.” For more information, call the parish at (520) 682-3035 or email info@ stchristophermararana.org.

From the Catholic Outlook: We are updating our deadline for submissions to “In Your Area.” All items must be submitted 50 days prior to the event; for July and August, a 90-day notice is required.

If you have questions, please call Michael Brown at 520-838-2562 or email mbrown@tucsondiocese.org.
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**APRIL 2018 - JMT EVENTS**

**4/5** Laudato Si - RRC Sabbatical Program

**4/7** Lev I-1 Life: Celebration & Ritual 2: Sac of Initiation: Baptism & Confirmation 3: Sac of Initiation: Eucharist (Hayden-Winkelmann)

**4/10** Lev II-Theology Foundations (JMT)

**4/12** Parent Enrichment (SEAS)

**4/13-4/15** CFP

**4/13** Confirmation Retreat (St. Ambrose)

**4/14** Liturgical Ministry Enrichment (San Xavier Mission)

**4/15** Parent Enrichment (SEAS)

**4/17** Lev II-Theology Foundations (JMT)

**4/20** Lev I-TBD (OMOS) Lev I TBD (St. Ambrose)

**4/21** Lev I-1: The Church 2: Mary & The Saints 3: Cultural Diversity & Faith Expression 4: Liturgy-Celebration & Ritual (JMT)

**4/24** Lev II-Theology Foundations (JMT)

**4/27** Lev I-Human Faith Development (SSPP)

**4/28** Lev I-1: Spirituality of the Ordinary 2: Prayer 3: Introduction to the Bible (St. Anthony, Casa Grande and St. Patrick, Bisbee)

**5/1** Lev II-Theology Foundations (JMT)

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‘Living Our Faith Through Acts of Charity’ is theme of 2018 Appeal

By SUZANNE HOPKINS
Catholic Foundation

The Annual Catholic Appeal kicked off in parishes across the Diocese of Tucson this past January, calling Catholics to live out their faith and make possible the Church’s service to hundreds of thousands of individuals in Southern Arizona.

This year’s Appeal focuses on “Living Our Faith Through Acts of Charity” – a reminder of God’s call to love and serve our neighbor. Over the past few months, it has been amazing to see the inpouring of generosity from the community. Our faithful supporters recognize their call to charity and see the Appeal as a vehicle to reach beyond their parish boundaries in support of the mission of the whole Church.

Approximately 92 cents of every dollar raised goes back into the community in the form of direct services provided by local Catholic social service agencies, and the programs of the parishes and diocesan ministries. Through these efforts, the Diocese addresses various needs, including:

• More than $1.1 million for the formation of seminarians and the continued education of clergy.
• More than $1.1 million for the spiritual, temporal and social outreach to the poor and their communities.
• More than $900,000 for the evangelization and sharing of the joy of the Gospel and rich faith traditions of the Church through adult formation and youth ministries.
• More than $200,000 for the viability of parishes and schools through curriculum development, safety and security.

When you say “yes” to the Appeal, you say “yes” to “the primary channel by which our Diocese reaches out to help people who are in spiritual, emotional or physical need,” Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger said. “Your gifts represent a grateful acknowledgment of the many blessings that God has bestowed upon you; a gift based on love from your heart.”

The Catholic Foundation has set the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal goal at $4 million. To join the thousands of individuals who have contributed to the Annual Catholic Appeal, you can donate through your parishes with in-pew envelopes, online at www.cathfnd.org/donate, by calling the appeal offices at (520) 838-2504, or by texting ACA to 41444.

Hopkins is the Annual Catholic Appeal Manager for the Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Tucson Stewardship and Charitable Giving.

Tickets available for Cornerstone Gala

The 37th Annual Cornerstone Gala benefitting Catholic Foundation grants, will be held May 11. The 2018 Cornerstone Award recipients are Czarina and Humberto Lopez, who have been involved in numerous non-profit and charitable causes, including Salpointe Catholic High School, St. Cyril Parish Foundation, San Miguel Catholic High School, Catholic Community Services and the CCS Foundation. The Gala takes place at the Hilton Tucson El Conquistador, 10000 N. Oracle Road, beginning at 6 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m. Tickets are available through April 20; there is limited seating. For tickets, questions and information on sponsorships, please call Teresa Pierce at (520) 838-2525, email tpierce@diocesetucson.org or visit www.cathfnd.org.

Humberto Lopez was born in Sonora, Mexico; his family moved to Nogales, AZ, after the death of his father. After working odd jobs, he earned a bachelor’s in accounting from the University of Arizona in 1969. A short time later, he married Czarina Montana of Nogales, whom he met when they were U of A students.

He began a career in real estate in Los Angeles, eventually forming HSL Properties in 1975. Five years later, the family returned to Tucson. HSL Properties continued to grow and is the largest apartment owner in southern Arizona.
Benedictine Sisters Joan Ridley and Dawn Vercellino, from the Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration on North Country Club Road in Tucson, visit one last time with Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas and Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger and the diocesan Pastoral Center Feb. 20. At left, Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy, Moderator of the Curia, gives a gift to Sister Joan. At right, diocesan staff from other religious orders showed their appreciation for the years of the Benedictines’ prayer ministry in Tucson. From left are Vicar for Vowed Religious Sister of Charity Jeanne Bartholomeaux, Pastoral Services Director and Adrian Dominican Sister Lois Paha, Hispanic Ministry Coordinator and Dominican Sister Gladys Echenique and Human Life and Dignity Coordinator Franciscan Sister Leonette Kochan.

An international contingent from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious gathered at the border wall at Sasabe, AZ, Feb. 23. The meeting was to pray for migrants, especially for those who arrived here as children and faced possible deportation after March 5, when the executive order rescinding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was to take effect. A US Supreme Court ruling later made the deportation deadline moot. At left, some of the superiors of men stand next to the border wall. Above, the larger group prayed together.

Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas thanks those gathered in the Stevie Eller Dance Studio at the University of Arizona campus in Tucson, after receiving the Civic Leadership Award from the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona March 7. The award recognizes lifetime achievement by an individual committed to diversity and inclusion. Above, the bishop speaks with another guest prior to the event.
Marriage Retorno offers couples spiritual prayer retreat

By MICHAEL BROWN
Managing Editor

For couples in troubled marriages, there is Retrouvaille.

For couples looking to grow in their faith, there is Marriage Encounter.

Couples wanting to explore more deeply the spiritual nature of their marriage are invited to join a Marriage Couple Prayer Retreat.

Tucson couple Kevin and Kathie Stogsdill have been involved in all those programs, and the pre-marriage Engaged Encounter, at various points in their 56 years of wedded life, and now focus solely on the prayer retreat, also known as Marriage Retorno.

The Stogsdills made their first retreat in 1988 and became trained leaders. They led retreats at Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David and at the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration Monastery in Tucson, before announcing their latest venue at Immaculate Heart High School, 410 E. Magee Road.

The couple – parents of five, grandparents of 12 and great-grandparents of eight – also have been involved in the growth of the movement internationally. They visited Singapore in 1999 leading a group and training core team members.

The program follows a process approved by Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas, and is rooted strongly in Scripture. In fact, Kathie noted, non-Catholics who attend are far more at ease using the Bible than their Catholic counterparts.

“For many Catholics, this is the first time they have read the Bible,” Kathie said.

The prayer retreat follows four “movements,” beginning with a couple reconciliation, followed by individual prayer, praying as a couple and group sharing.

“We want to make sure people understand this is a prayer retreat,” she said.

Together since teens

Kevin and Kathie have been together since they were teens.

“Kathie and I have always prayed together,” Kevin said. “We were doing this when we were dating as teen-agers.”

The two grew up in Whittier, Calif., 37 miles east of Los Angeles. He was 15, raised Catholic and attended a Catholic boys high school; she was 14, not Catholic and attended a local public school. While they were inseparable, she insisted that he date other girls at the time.

“I wasn’t worried,” Kathie recalled. “He dated other girls, would take them home and then come over and see me.”

Kevin admitted that Kathie’s interest in Catholicism made him dive more deeply into learning about his faith. For her part, Kathie said she would spend Sundays in church just waiting to see him serve Mass. She later joined the Church.

Kevin served three tours in Vietnam, with his first deployment just after their wedding on March 3, 1962. During his tours, “my love wrote a letter to me every single day,” Kathie said. Overall, Kevin spent 22 years in the US Air Force. He spent another 19 years as a logistics engineer for Hughes Aircraft before retiring in 2001.

They made their first Marriage Encounter in 1974, after he returned from the war, and “it changed my life,” he said. “Before, my priorities were military, God and Kathie. After, it was God, Kathie and military.”

Not marriage counselors

Despite their successful marriage, the Stogsdills insisted that they are not marriage counselors; their title is “Coordinating and Presenting Couple.” Couples looking for counseling are encouraged to attend a Retrouvaille weekend.

Couples of all ages attend the weekend Couple Prayer Retreat. They range from those married six months to some who have been married more than 60 years. The curriculum is solidly rooted in Catholic teaching, but all are welcome “as long as they believe in marriage and love God,” Kevin said.

“People are just really thirsty for this.”

When they lead the couple retreats, Kathie said, it is more than just going through the motions.

“When we make the weekends, we also try to live it. It gives us time for deeper communication.”

The retreat weekends draw couples from throughout the region. At the last retreat in October, one couple came from Nevada and five from the Los Angeles area.

The Stogsdills have no immediate plans to retire from the Couple Prayer Retreat but have brought along other couples that can continue the ministry once they decide to step back. Juan and Patsy Lara and Werner and Annie Mammen are involved as presenting couples, and Armando and Susie Delgado provide support for the weekend.

Dedicated to marriage ministry

Father Robert Brazaskas retired from active ministry in 2010, but has dedicated his retirement years to marriage ministry, traveling throughout the region leading Marriage Encounter and Retrouvaille retreats. He also serves as chaplain for Couple Prayer Retreats.

He praised the Stogsdills and the program for showing married couples how they could deepen their relationship by joining a couple retreat. “Many married couples are not even aware that this is much, much more they could be doing,” he said.

Father Brazaskas said he has seen the impact of the couples’ retreats beyond the effect it has on the spouses. “It helps people stay together and pray together as a family.”

He said that in some cases, Sunday dinners have become opportunities for parents and children to discuss the homilies and lessons raised at Mass. Those values get passed from one generation to the next, he said.

“When you are open to holiness, you are open to the will of God,” he said.

Editor’s note: For more information about Marriage Retorno/Couple Prayer Retreat, call the Stogsdills at (520) 723-2935 or visit www.marriageretornocpr.org. For information on Retrouvaille, call Albert and Bertha Fresquez at (520) 403-6852 or email abfresquez@gmail.com. For information on Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial call Martin and Maria Huizar at (928) 446-3261 or email mmhuizar@yahoo.com. For information on Worldwide Marriage Encounter call Paul and Karen Hagert at (520) 477-2121 or email info@wwme-phx.org or info@wwme-arizona.com.
More than 660 ‘inspired’ by Mary’s example at Youthfest

More than 660 youths, teens and ministry leaders attended Youthfest 2018 at the Tucson Convention Center March 10. They heard Tony Vasinda and Michael Marchand from ProjectYM speak on the theme, “Inspired by Mary,” sang to the music of the Mary Castner Band, engaged in eucharistic adoration and enjoyed some play time on inflatables, all capped by a Mass celebrated by Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger.
The regional gathering of dioceses from the Southwest can be the model for US church, says speaker

By MICHAEL BROWN
Managing Editor

PHOENIX — “When the Hispanic Catholic community speaks, the Church speaks,” Hosffman Ospino, author and expert on the Hispanic presence in the US Church, told participants at the Regional V Encuentro meeting in Phoenix last month.

He added that Hispanic Catholics are being called “to be the ecclesial voice and conscience of the Church in the US.”

Ospino, a professor at Boston College, was the final keynote speaker at the V Encuentro regional gathering Feb. 25, drawing about 480 delegates from 10 Catholic dioceses in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

The delegates reviewed the diocesan reports and discussed recommendations for consideration at a national meeting to take place in Grapevine, Texas, Sept. 20-23.

Despite the wide geographic representation, Catholics from the Diocese of Tucson sent 99 representatives, more than 20 percent of the delegates at the regional meeting.

Msgr. Raul Trevizo, Vicar for Hispanic Ministry and pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Tucson, gave a stirring keynote to open the gathering on the topic of “Taking the First Step.”

Ospino spoke exclusively in Spanish, but allowed for simultaneous translation, to keep his remarks to the 45 minutes he was allocated. His topic was “Bearing Fruit,” on the beneficial effects of the integration of Spanish-speaking Catholics into American Church life. This process, focused through a series of national Encuentros, or “encounters,” has been going on for decades. This regional meeting was part of the process of the fifth Encuentro.

Ospino credited the US bishops for organizing the national dialogues to discuss the relationship between the institutional US church and the growing number and status of Hispanic Catholics.

“We are talking about walking together, smelling like the sheep, like Pope Francis says,” Ospino said.

He listed dynamics that show the “fruit” borne by Hispanic Catholics in the US church over the years. The US Bishops, seeing the influx of Hispanics from Central and South America, initiated V Encuentro to “clear space that allows you to express your prophetic voice without fear,” Ospino said. Now that they have spoken out, Hispanic Catholics “have the responsibility of acting.”
voice and conscience of the Church’

“IT would be unfair, irresponsible to stay where we are at,” Ospino said. “This is a great step of historic proportions. We are making history in the US Church.”

Ospino said that in many ways, the US Church is looking to this gathering – the dioceses from Region XIII – to become the national model.

“We need a new way of being the Church,” he added, especially in how young people are invited and encouraged to take on leadership roles. He also praised the region’s bishops and ministry leaders who have “rediscovered our calling to be missionary Catholics” that go out to the peripheries to the forgotten and rejected.

Ospino noted that some may believe the rise of Hispanic leadership comes in unconventional ways, but the reality is that the Holy Spirit is the one guiding the process. “It may not always happen the way we are planning it. Let’s let ourselves be surprised by the work of the Holy Spirit,” he said.

He used as a theme throughout his address the parable of the sower from Matthew’s Gospel. After decades of careful tending, the soil of the Hispanic Catholic community is heavy with plants bearing fruit and ready to serve the Church.

“Your dioceses are the good and fruitful soil,” Ospino said. “Every baptized person is being called to evangelize.”

He outlined a series of historic events, beginning with Vatican II and including bishops’ gatherings at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, and the 2007 meeting of bishops throughout the Americas at Aparecida, Brazil. Ospino said that V Encuentro marks a similar critical point in American Church history. He called on the leaders in the room to continue to move the conversation forward.

“When historians write about V Encuentro 100 years from now, what will they write?” he asked.
PHOENIX — Outreach to Hispanic youths, working toward the peripheries and a call for Hispanic parents to spend more time with their children were some of the highlights of a bishops’ panel at the regional V Encuentro gathering Feb. 24.

About 480 delegates from 10 Southwestern dioceses asked questions of nine bishops, including Tucson Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger.

Santa Fe Archbishop John C. Wester opened the evening by addressing a major theme of the Encuentro, reaching out to Hispanic youths. He urged people to see youths and young adults as honest partners in building the Church, who are not easily fooled by those who patronize or dismiss them.

“Young people have that amazing gift to know when you are being authentic with them,” he said.

Archbishop Wester responded to a complaint that came forward about the bishops not getting out of their offices enough to visit their parishes.

“The people (in parishes I visit) used to say, ‘Hello, Archbishop. Thank you for coming.’ Now they ask ‘When are you coming back again?’” he said. “In a large diocese, that’s a challenge, but as a Church, we have to encourage them and go to them where they are.”

Bishop Eduardo A. Nevares, an auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Phoenix, said that the family is “the basic building block of the Church,” and must be preserved and protected at all times.

He suggested that Hispanic families need to be very careful not to buy into the culture of consumerism, which drives many parents to work outside the home to try to keep up with the pressure to consume goods. “Maybe we have to do without having a TV in every room” to allow a parent to stay at home with their children, the bishop said. “After all, the children are our treasure.”

Bishop Michael J. Sheridan of Colorado Springs, Col., said that more must be done to encourage Hispanic young men to consider discerning a vocation to the priesthood.

“God doesn’t choose certain ethnic groups to not call for vocations,” he said.

Parents should start planting the seeds of the priesthood early and often in their sons, he added. “It starts in the family, and it can be done.”

Also attending the forum were Bishop Oscar A. Solis of the Diocese of Salt Lake City, Utah; Bishop Oscar Cantú of Las Cruces, NM; Bishop Jorge Rodriguez-Novelo, an auxiliary in the Archdiocese of Denver; and Bishop Stephen J. Berg of Pueblo, Col.

Encuentros have a history traced back nearly five decades

Editor’s note: Below is background information about the four previous Encuentros, courtesy of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ V Encuentro office.

The process of Encuentro has been the catalyst for developing ministries among Hispanics/Latinos during the past 50 years. Each of the previous Encuentros has been a watershed experience that has significantly changed the way in which the Church responds to the Hispanic/Latino presence, and the way in which Hispanics/Latinos respond to the ever-growing Hispanic/Latino presence.

- Encuentro 2000 (The IV Encuentro) helped the Church in the United States to recognize and appreciate its cultural diversity, through a “New Pentecost” experience.

- The First National Encuentro for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry (2005-06) opened new pastoral avenues in ministry to and with the Hispanic/Latino young church.

Appendix: Key Demographic, Social, and Religious Statistics for the Dioceses of Region 13

Percentage of Race and Ethnicity of the U.S. Adult Catholic Population by Generation

Source: V Encuentro
El Señor de Los Milagros’ David Rivera lives life dedicated to Yaqui community

Yaqui's Gran Maestro offers peek at Native American culture

By MICHAEL BROWN
Managing Editor

Gran Maestro David Rivera promised to provide an overview into Waehma, the conclusion of the traditional Pascha Yaqui Lent and Easter ceremonies.

It turned out to be a much deeper look into the spirituality and mysticism of Yaqui culture.

Speaking at a Lenten retreat at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Church in March, Rivera talked about how embracing Cuaresma, the Yaqui observance of Lent, has been handed down by elders for centuries and led him to his vocation as a maestro, or respected prayer leader, for the Yaqui tribe.

He leads ministry at El Señor de Los Milagros Mission in Tucson, but is treasurer of the St. Kateri Parish Board of Directors and a catechist at the parish.

When he learned of Rivera’s recent elevation to Gran Maestro by the Yaqui community, thinking Rivera might have less time for parish ministry, he said with feigned chagrin, “Oh Lord, there goes David again. (But) when you are called, you are called.”

Rivera explained that being a maestro is a total life commitment to the community. Similar to a religious vocation, maestros are given a call by God, or can be designated by parents or godparents when they are born, he said.

“We are consecrated to God and dedicated to helping the pueblo, the people,” Rivera said. Normally, they are joined by their wives, cantoras, who serve as partners in ministry. “Our lives now belong to the people.”

A conversion Cuaresma

Rivera said his parents died 40 years ago, which left him aimless and wandering. A short time later, he began a Cuaresma experience, following it all the way to Waehma, where he recognized God was calling him. “I was very glad that God was directing me to other things... It changed my life.”

After years of being trained and mentored, he earned the title of “maestro.”

A maestro can “represent” the priest to the Yaqui community, performing outreach such as comforting the sick and dying. He also can assist the priest at sacramental moments such as baptisms and weddings.

During a question-and-answer session, Rivera laughed when he was asked if only male Yaquis could be maestros. “Yaqui life and culture is male dominated,” he said, adding that it was similar to the way priests serve in the Catholic Church.

There is no set period of training for a maestro, Rivera said. As with other tribal Catholic groups, there is process of being mentored by those who are older and more experienced. He personally requires any aspiring maestros to serve at least three years as a type of apprenticeship.

“You have to learn what it is like to take orders,” he said. “You have to serve and be humble.”

Much time is also dedicated to transmitting the knowledge and understanding of Yaqui culture.

Maestros involved in the Waehma also must learn Latin, or at least to recite the dozens of psalms, hymns and prayers in Latin and Spanish that are part of the annual ritual. “We have to bring our customs and culture out so (they are) not forgotten. We have to keep it going,” Rivera said.

Maestros must be confident in their work, while listening and praying with the person to whom they are ministering. “We do things with confidence and are not be ashamed of our traditions. We have to be a good example for our kids,” Rivera said. “When we carry out our faith, we have to do it with all our heart.”

‘Respectful of our people’

“We have to be respectful of our people,” he added, “so they can be respectful of us.”

Stations of the Cross begin with the first Friday of Lent. Rivera described the ritual and its employment of various parish groups, representing groups from the Gospel accounts, as being active and involved in the ritual.

For example, Jesus always is portrayed as an old man disguised, trying to escape the Fariseos, or Pharisees. Matachin dancers (a society dedicated to the Virgin Mary), Pascolas (characters representing forest animals), Angelitas (boys and girls representing angels) and others try to hide and protect Jesus. Jesus’ mother Mary always is trying to find Jesus and to protect him.

Other parishioners take on the responsibility for building the tomb in which Jesus is later laid, and for planning and providing for the fiestas that occur during parts of the Waehma rites, such as the Palm Sunday vigil when Jesus enters Jerusalem.

Rivera described the parts of the Holy Week rituals in which he is directly involved, but more than once expressed deference to leaders of the other groups and societies involved in the events.

Prayerful intent

Despite Waehma’s reflection as a distinctly Yaqui tradition, it’s prayerful intent “is for the whole world. We take it upon ourselves.”

The public is invited to attend and witness the events, but are asked to be respectful, Rivera said. While it may look like a play with actors in costume, it is a religious rite with a history in the community that goes back 400 years. “I wish I knew how it got started but I don’t.”

The Yaquis strictly prohibit any photos, videos or visual representations of the rituals of Cuaresma or Waehma.

Rivera smiled when asked about a claim made by some younger members of the tribe that their participation reflected their Yaqui roots, but that they were not Catholic.

“We follow our Catholic faith,” he said, citing how the rituals include the Stations of the Cross and the Holy Week events. “I don’t know how else I could explain it.”

The complex rituals, some of which run throughout the night, can be physically, mentally and spiritually exhausting, Rivera said. “But the good Lord will give you the graces.”
Jesuit astronomers reflect on discoveries made with Mount Graham telescope for 25 years

Jesuits discuss their observations of the heavens to people on earth

By MICHAEL BROWN  
Managing Editor

When a young person turns 25 years old, the world sees opportunities that lie ahead. As the Vatican has given Mount Graham a special place through the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope, a benchmark, the Jesuit astronomers that use it view it with much the same promise.

Four Jesuits from the Vatican Observatory talked about their experiences and hopes for the VATT at a special forum at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in February called “Celebrate the Telescope: The Past and Future of an Evolving Instrument.”

Fathers Paul Gabor, Richard Boyle, Jean-Baptiste Kikwaya Eluo and Christopher Corbally talked about the discoveries made and the potential continuing work through international networks that make the telescope a valuable tool into the future.

They spoke to almost 100 avid astronomers and interested parties with an enthusiasm about their work that literally was out of this world.

Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno, Vatican Observatory director, moderated the event.

Father Gabor reviewed the history of the Vatican presence at Mount Graham in Safford, dating to the original agreement between the Holy See and the University of Arizona in 1980. He also spoke about fears that the Frye Fire in June would cause irreparable damage to the VATT. However, a well-timed air strike of flame retardant came to the rescue. “At the very nick of time, the telescope was saved,” Father Gabor said. Ultimately, the fire consumed more than 48,400 acres.

Success of the telescope moving forward will be found in the local and global partnerships with other telescopes and technologies helping with the study of images from the VATT and other locations, he added. The combined efforts record those countries.

The last presenter, Father Kikwaya Eluo discussed his studies, which successfully employed photometry as an alternative and complement to spectrometry – both of which are used to measure light wavelengths.

Father Kikwaya Eluo reviewed the history of the Vatican interest in astronomy leading up to the classification of “peculiar stars” called “lambda bootis.” Developments have shown the presence of iron and magnesium in unconventional percentages, and this has led to further study by experts in astroseismology.

Since first classified 75 years ago, lambda bootis have captured the fascination of astronomers, he said, and as data collection continues, scientists are on their way to better understanding the unique elemental composition of these objects.

“We may be able to solve this mystery,” he said, “in less than another 75 years.”

7 4 p.m., Confirmation Mass, Blessed Sacrament Church, Mammoth
8 11:30 a.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Mark the Evangelist Church, Oro Valley
9 5 p.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Thomas More Newman Center, Tucson
10 6 p.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Anthony of Padua Church, Casa Grande
11 7 p.m., Confirmation Mass, Sacred Heart Church, Tucson
12 6:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, Santa Cruz Church, Tucson
13 6:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, for confirmandi from Our Lady of the Valley, Green Valley; St. Theresa, Patagonia; and Lourdes Catholic High School, Nogales; in Our Lady of the Valley Church
14 5 p.m., Confirmation Mass, for confirmandi from St. Andrew’s, Sierra Vista; Our Lady of the Mountains, Sierra Vista; Our Lady of Lourdes, Benson;
15 7 p.m., Confirmation Mass, Sacred Heart, Tombstone; in St. Andrew Church
16 6 p.m., Reception honoring San Miguel Catholic High School founders and stakeholders
17 6:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Ambrose Church, Tucson
18 7 p.m., Confirmation Mass, San Xavier Mission, Tucson
19 Noon, Pima South Vicariate Meeting, St. Augustine Cathedral, Tucson
20 6:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, for confirmandi from Most Holy Nativity, Rio Rico and St. Ann’s, Tubac, in Most Holy Nativity Church, Rio Rico
21 1:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Bartholomew Church, San Manuel
22 5:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, for confirmandi from St. Odilia’s, Tucson and Immaculate Heart Catholic High School, Tucson, in St. Odilia Church
23 7 p.m., Confirmation Mass, Sacred Heart, Nogales
24-26 Priests’ Convocation, Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort, Chandler, AZ
27 6 p.m., Confirmation Mass, San Martin de Porres Church, Sahuarita
28 10 a.m., Confirmation Mass, San Felipe de Jesus Church, Nogales
29 10 a.m., Confirmation Mass, for confirmandi from St. Joseph’s, Hayden and Infant Jesus of Prague, Kearny, in St. Joseph Church
30 7 p.m., Confirmation Mass, Our Mother of Sorrows Church, Tucson

MAY
1 5:30 p.m., Religious Brothers Day Mass and Dinner, Most Holy Trinity Parish, Tucson
4 6:30 p.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Tucson
Christianity has listed seven sins classically as “deadly” sins, meaning that almost everything else we do which is not virtuous somehow takes its root in one of these congenital propensities. These are the infamous seven: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth.

In spiritual literature, the first three - pride, greed and lust - get most of the ink and attention. Pride is presented as the root of all sin, Lucifer’s primordial defiance of God as forever echoed in our own lives: “I will not serve!” Greed is seen as the basis for our selfishness and our blindness toward others, and lust has often been given the ultimate notoriety, as if the Sixth Commandment were the only commandment.

Not to deny the importance of these, but I suspect that the sin which most commonly afflicts us and is not much mentioned in spiritual literature is wrath; that is, anger and hatred. Most of us operate, however unconsciously, out of anger. This shows itself in our constant criticism of others, in our cynicism, in our jealousy of others, in our bitterness, and in our inability to praise others. Unlike most of our other sins, anger is easy to camouflage and rationalize as virtue.

At one level, anger often rationalizes itself as justified indignation over the foibles, stupidity, egotism, greed and faults of others. How can I not be angry given what I see every day? Here, anger shows itself in our constant irritation and in our quickness to correct, criticize and make a cynical remark.

Conversely, we’re very slow to praise and affirm. Perfection then becomes the enemy of the good, and because nothing and no one is perfect, we’re always in critical mode. We see this as a virtue rather than for what it is: namely, an inchoate anger and unhappiness inside ourselves.

Our unhappy cynicism isn’t even the biggest problem here. More seriously, anger too often parades itself as godly virtue, as righteousness, as prophecy, as a healthy, divinely-inspired militancy for truth, for cause, for virtue and for God. We define ourselves as “holy warriors” and “vigilant defenders of truth,” taking justification in the popular though false conception that prophets are angry people on passionate fire for God.

There’s a nearly infinite distance between true prophetic anger and the anger that today commonly parades itself as prophecy. Jesuit Father Daniel Berrigan, in his criteria for prophecy, says that a prophet is someone who takes a vow of love, not of alienation. Prophecy is characterized by love aching for reconnection, not anger pushing for separation.

Love isn’t what characterizes most “prophetic” anger in our world today, especially as it pertains to God, religion and defense of truth. This misconception is seen in its worst form in Islamic extremism where, in the name of God, every kind of hatred, violence and random murder puts on God’s cloak.

Philosopher Blaise Pascal captures this well in his “Pensees” where he writes: “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” He’s wrong on one thing: Mostly, we aren’t doing it cheerfully but angrily. One only needs to read the letters to the editor in our newspapers, listen to most talk-radio stations, or listen to any debate on politics, religion or morality to see raw hatred and anger justifying themselves on moral and divine grounds.

There is such a thing as healthy prophetic anger. It is a fiery response when the poor of God, the word of God, or the truth of God are being slandered, abused or neglected. There are important causes and boundaries to be defended. Appropriate prophetic anger is an anger that emanates out of love and empathy and always, regardless of the hatred it meets, still exhibits love and empathy, like a loving mother in the face of a belligerent child.

Jesus on occasion exhibits this kind of anger, but his anger is antithetical to most of what masquerades as prophetic anger today, where love and empathy are so noticeably absent.

Someone once said that we spend the first half of life struggling with the Sixth Commandment, and then spend the second half of life struggling with the Fifth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill. We see this illustrated in the famous parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son is effectively out of his father’s house as he wrestles with the seductive energies of youth. The older brother is just as effectively outside his father’s house, not through sin, but through wrestling with anger.

As a young boy I was catechized to confess “bad thoughts” as sinful, but bad thoughts then were defined as sexual thoughts. As we age, I suggest, we might continue to confess “bad thoughts,” but now those “bad thoughts” have to do with anger.

It’s said that a cynic is someone who has given up, but not shut up. He’s also someone who has confused one of the seven deadly sins, wrath, with virtue.

Oblate of Mary Immaculate Father Rolheiser - theologian, teacher and award-winning author - is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com.

The experiences of childhood abuse expose the darker side of the human spirit, along with the horrific long-term impact upon those who experienced the abuse. Child maltreatment - the abuse and neglect of children - is a global public health issue.

According to Centers for Disease Control, there are four types of child maltreatment:
- Sexual abuse, defined as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not understand, is unable to give consent to, or is not developmentally prepared to handle.
- Physical abuse, or the use of physical force that harms the child’s health, survival, development or dignity.
- Emotional abuse, or the failure to provide a supportive environment by, for example, verbally threatening the child.
- Neglect, or the failure to provide for all aspects of the child’s well-being.

Most child maltreatment is perpetrated by parents or parental guardians, many of whom were maltreated themselves as children.

Any form of maltreatment and abuse of a child does just that, abuses. Abuse shatters our sense of self into pieces. At the core of child development is that the individuals around them will protect, nurture and love them. Any child exposed to the unthinkable, unimaginable treatment of an adult who hurts them, will result in some level of trauma. Research shows that the trauma of abuse will impact a child’s brain development. We must remember that the maltreatment to which a child is exposed ultimately will alter the way the child’s brain is wired. How? By challenging their ability to cope, how they manage stress, distrust, anxiety and aversion to situations.

Know the factors that can be red flags of a child who may have experienced abuse: poverty, mental health problems, and alcohol and drug misuse. There is considerable uncertainty about the frequency and severity of child maltreatment. According to the World Health Organization, about 20 percent of women and 5-10 percent of men report being sexually abused as children. The prevalence of physical abuse in childhood may be 25-50 percent. Childhood abuse is clearly related to adult depression, aggression, hostility, anger, fear,
Las palabras “temor”, “pérdida”, “privaciones” y “abandono” pueden tener un efecto paralizante en la mente, el cuerpo y el espíritu. Y ese efecto puede resultar en un golpe devastador para el corazón y el alma de una persona.

Las experiencias de abuso de menores dejan al descubierto el lado más oscuro del espíritu humano, y tienen un impacto trágico a largo plazo en quienes han padecido el abuso. El maltrato de menores – abuso y descuido de niños – es un asunto preocupante de la salud pública en todo el mundo.

Según el Centro para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades hay cuatro tipos de maltrato de menores:

- el abuso sexual; definido como la participación de un menor en actividad sexual que no entiende, y a la cual no puede hacer frente porque no ha alcanzado el punto en su desarrollo que le permita hacerlo.
- el abuso físico; o uso de fuerza física perjudicial para la salud del menor, o que atenta contra su supervivencia, desarrollo o dignidad.
- el abuso emocional; es decir, no brindarle al menor un ambiente en el cual pueda sentirse apoyado y aceptado, por ejemplo, al amenazarlo verbalmente.
- el descuido; que se refiere a fallar en proveer al menor lo necesario para su bienestar en todos los aspectos.

Generalmente, el maltrato infantil es cometido por los padres o tutores, quienes, en muchos casos, fueron maltratados en su niñez.

Todo tipo de maltrato y abuso de un menor no es más que eso, abusos. El abuso hace trizas el amor propio. Para fomentar un desarrollo sano, es esencial que quienes rodean a un niño lo protejan, lo apoyen y lo amen. Todo niño expuesto al abuso emocional, inimaginable maltrato de un adulto que lo lastima, sufrirá algún tipo de trauma.

Las investigaciones demuestran que el trauma del abuso afecta el desarrollo cerebral. Debemos tener presente que el maltrato al cual un niño esté expuesto acabará por alterar el funcionamiento de su cerebro. ¿Cómo? Interferiendo con su habilidad para sobrellevar lo que le suceda y para manejar el estrés, la desconfianza, la ansiedad y la aversión a diversas situaciones.

Conozca los factores que pueden ser señales de advertencia de que un niño podría ser víctima de maltrato: la pobreza, los problemas de salud mental, y el abuso del alcohol y las drogas. Hay considerable incertidumbre sobre la frecuencia y la gravedad del maltrato infantil, pero según la Organización Mundial de la Salud, alrededor del 20 por ciento de las mujeres y entre 5 y 10 por ciento de las mujeres y entre 5 y 10 por ciento de los hombres reportan haber sido abusados sexualmente en su niñez. La prevalencia del abuso físico en la infancia podría situarse entre un 25 y 50 por ciento. Es un efecto paralizante en la salud del adulto, como trastornos de la personalidad, depresión, agresividad, hostilidad, ira, temor y ansiedad.

Romper el silencio que rodea el abuso ha sido útil y ha contribuido al proceso de sanación. Ahora, los pasos siguientes: necesitamos fomentar la enseñanza de la prevención, disponer de más recursos y aumentar la protección de todos.

Nosotros, como comunidad de fe, debemos hacer todo lo posible para ponerle fin a este mal de la sociedad que penetra hondo en nuestras familias y acaba por destrozar el corazón y la mente de los niños, perpetuando el ciclo vicioso del abuso generacional.

No hay remedios de efecto instantáneo cuando el abuso ha atorado en un alma, pero sí puede haber una respuesta rápida para prevenir mayores traumas de niños obviamente necesitados. En cualquier caso, debemos esforzarnos mucho más en la prevención y la protección contra el abuso.

Demasiadas veces he oído comentarios como “No te disgustes; no te entristezcas”, “Estás exagerando mucho el asunto”, o “Ya déjalo y sigue adelante”. Estos comentarios implican que hay algo mal con la persona que fue objeto de abuso. En lugar de preguntar “¿Por qué eres así?” tendríamos que preguntar “¿Qué te sucedió?”. Recién entonces podrá comenzar el proceso de sanación. Por cada ser humano ha habido una experiencia de sufrimiento, pérdida y dolor. Lo que necesitamos aceptar es que estamos juntos en esta vida. Y juntos podemos mejorar las cosas.
Dios quiere hablarnos

Por CACKIE UPCHURCH
Directora del Estudio Bíblico de Little Rock

La Biblia es una colección de libros, algunos de los cuales fueron escritos hace 2,700 años, y otros tan “recientemente” como hace 1,950 años. Se produjo en un lugar muy alejado del nuestro y en un tiempo que no tiene nada de parecido a la era moderna. Refleja una cultura que muchos de nosotros encontráramos totalmente distinta. Sus lenguajes originales ya apenas se hablan en alguna parte del mundo. ¿Por qué, entonces, molestarnos con leer la Biblia en nuestros días?

La Sociedad Bíblica Internacional indica que la totalidad de la Biblia se ha traducido a 550 idiomas modernos, y que el Nuevo Testamento está ahora disponible en 1,300 idiomas. Aparece en las estanterías y está disponible en formato digital en todos los continentes del mundo. Aparentemente, este libro es más que una colección de antiguos documentos de interés únicamente a algunos coleccionistas. Tiene un significado que atraviesa siglos y culturas, y estratos económicos y géneros y razas.

En esta serie de artículos exploraremos algunas de las razones principales por las que la Biblia sigue siendo el libro mejor vendido de todos los tiempos, comenzando con la verdad de que, a través de las Escrituras, Dios nos habla y habla con nosotros.

En nuestra tradición de fe Católica, sabemos que los escritores del texto eran autores humanos. Eran líderes tribales que conservaban sus historias familiares e interacciones con Dios, sacerdotes que ayudaban a moldear la vida ritual del pueblo de Dios, profetas y sus seguidores que hablaban con el fuego de la convicción divina, apóstoles que viajaban con Jesús o eran testigos de sus acciones, discípulos que escribían cartas para mantener la fe que se les había otorgado.

Pero estos autores humanos no se limitaban a moldear relatos y mantener las enseñanzas basándose en sus propias opiniones o preferencias. Estaban inspirados por Dios, lo que quiere decir que el propio aliento de Dios inspiraba su trabajo. La Constitución Dogmática sobre la Divina Revelación (DV, capítulos 11-12) afirma la plena humanidad de estos autores al mismo tiempo que la autoría divina. Es una asociación que se encarna en la plena revelación de Dios en la persona de Cristo Jesús, que es plenamente humano y plenamente divino.

Podemos estar seguros de que el deseo de Dios es estar en comunicación con nosotros, estar en comunicación con nosotros y estar implicado en nuestras vidas. Así que buscamos en la Biblia el testimonio de cómo Dios ha hecho esto a través de todos los tiempos.

Encontramos al matrimonio de ancianos Abraham y Sara incapaces de creer que pudieran tener un hijo, y mucho menos dejar descendientes tan numerosos como las estrellas del cielo. Y, sin embargo, escucharon la voz de Dios y se pusieron en marcha para establecerse en un nuevo lugar y empezar una vida nueva. Cada vez que sintamos la duda deslizarse dentro de nosotros, podemos regresar a su historia, que comienza en Génesis 12.

Encontramos a Moisés que había huído de Egipto por matar a un capataz que abusaba de un esclavo, y ahora está en su casa como simple pastor. Pero escuchó la voz de Dios que le llamaba a regresar a Egipto y a anunciar la liberación de Dios. Cada vez que vacilamos antes de responder a una tarea difícil, que sentimos que Dios nos está confiando, podemos regresar a Éxodo 3 y 4 y revisitarnos y nuevas enseñanzas de Moisés al encargo de Dios y la entrega final a convertirse en el siervo del Señor.

Encontramos a reyes que formaron la nación de Israel con la voz de Dios en sus corazones (los libros 1 y 2 de Samuel y 1 y 2 de Reyes) y profetas que escucharon a Dios y asumieron la ardua tarea de remodelar al pueblo de Dios a través del arrepentimiento y el retorno a Dios.

Encontramos el testimonio de los pastores en Lucas 2 y de los Magos en Mateo 2, que escucharon el mensaje de Dios a través de los ángeles y en la aparición de una estrella; un mensaje que puso sus pies en camino para dar homenaje a un niño nacido en un pesebre.

Encontramos a pescadores y recaudadores de impuestos y a escribas que lo dejaron todo porque escucharon que la voz de Dios los llamaba en las palabras de Jesús. Se quedaron con él, caminaron a su lado, y dieron sus vidas en respuesta a lo que habían testimoniado. A nosotros se nos pide que hagamos lo mismo.

La Biblia importa porque revela al Dios que desea tanto hablar con su pueblo, que da carne a su Palabra en la persona de su Hijo, Jesús.

Preguntas para la reflexión y discusión

• ¿Tienes una Biblia personal? ¿Con qué frecuencia te encuentras leyéndola? ¿Está bastante gastada, o aun esperando a que la abras?
• ¿Hay algún impedimento a tu capacidad o deseo de leer y comprender la Palabra de Dios? Si es así, ¿cómo podrías empezar a resolver tales obstáculos? ¿Quién te podría ayudar?
• ¿Qué historias de la Biblia te ayudan a creer en el deseo de Dios de hablarnos?
• ¿Cuánto te ha parecido que una historia de la Escritura te hablaba personalmente? Podría ser un pasaje que has leído privadamente, o que has oído en las lecturas de la Misa dominical, o incluso que se ha cantado.

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God wants to speak with us

Editor’s note: This is the first column in a 10-part series. It is created by the Little Rock Scripture Study from the Diocese of Little Rock, Ark.

By CACKIE UPCHURCH
Director of Little Rock Scripture Study

The Bible is a collection of books, some of which were written 2,700 years ago and some as “recently” as 1,950 years ago. It was produced in a place that is far removed from our own and in a time that bears little resemblance to the modern era. It reflects a culture that many of us would find completely foreign. Its original languages are hardly spoken around the world. Why do we bother with the Bible in our day and age?

The International Bible Society indicates that the entire Bible has been translated into more than 550 modern languages, with the New Testament now available in more than 1,300 languages. It appears on bookshelves and is accessible in digital format on every continent. This book is more than a collection of ancient documents, interesting to only a few collectors. It has meaning that crosses centuries and cultures and economic strata and gender and race.

With this series of articles, we will explore some of the key reasons that the Bible remains the best-selling book of all time, starting with the truth that through the Scriptures God speaks with us and to us.

In our Catholic faith tradition, we know that the writers of the text were human authors. They were tribal leaders preserving their family histories and interactions with God, priests who helped to shape the ritual life of God’s people, prophets and their followers who spoke with the fire of divine conviction, apostles who traveled with Jesus or witnessed his deeds, and disciples who wrote to one another to guard the faith they had given been.

These human authors did not, however, simply shape stories and preserve teachings based on their own opinions or preferences. They were inspired by God, meaning that God’s own breath animated their work. The “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” (Dei Verbum, 11-12) affirms the full humanity of these authors and their divine authorship. It is a partnership that takes flesh in the full revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, who was fully human and fully divine.

This book is more than a collection of ancient documents, interesting to only a few collectors. It has meaning that crosses centuries and cultures and economic strata and gender and race.

We can be assured that God desires to be in communion with us, to be in communication with us, and to be engaged in our lives. We look to the Bible for the witness of how God has done this throughout the ages.

We find the elderly couple Abraham and Sarah in disbelief that they could bear a child, much less leave descendants as numerous as the stars. Yet, they heard God’s voice and set out to settle in a new place and start a new life. Each time we feel disbelief creeping in, we can turn to their story beginning in Genesis 12.

We find Moses having fled Egypt for killing a taskmaster who abused a slave and now at home as a simple shepherd. He heard God’s voice calling him to return to Egypt and announce God’s liberation. Every time we feel hesitant to respond to a hard task we feel God may be handing to us, we can turn to Exodus 3-4 to revisit the multiple objections Moses made to God’s commission and the ultimate surrender to become God’s servant.

We find kings who shaped the nation of Israel with God’s voice in their hearts (the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings) and prophets who listened to God and took on the hard task of reshaping God’s people through repentance and return.

We find the witness of shepherds in Luke 2 and magi in Matthew 2 who heard the message of God through angels and in the appearance of a star, a message that put their feet on the path to give homage to a child born in a manger.

We find fishermen and tax collectors and scribes who left all behind because they heard God’s voice call them in the words of Jesus. They lingered with him, traveled by his side and gave their lives in response to what they witnessed. We are asked to do the same.

The Bible matters because it reveals the God who longs to speak to his people, so much so that he gave flesh to his Word in the person of his Son, Jesus.

Study questions

• Do you own a personal Bible? How often do you find yourself reading it? Is it well-worn or still waiting to be opened?
• Are there any obstacles to your own ability or desire to read and understand God’s Word? If so, how might you begin to address those obstacles? Who might help you?
• Which Bible stories help you to believe in God’s desire to speak to us?
• When has a story from Scripture seemed to speak to you in a personal way? It might be a passage you’ve read on your own, or heard in the Sunday readings at Mass, or even heard set to music.

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By BISHOP EMERITUS GERALD F. KICANAS

Editor’s note: Bishop emeritus Kicanas has been a long-time advocate for Catholic Relief Services. Here are his impressions of a recent trip to the Gaza Strip.

In February I joined a group of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) supporters for a two-day visit to see the work of CRS and its partners in the Gaza Strip first hand. The experience left me shocked and upset. Yet I was inspired by a resilient people who know how to survive amid untold difficulties.

The situation in Gaza remains dire and tragic. It is heartbreaking to see that despite the natural resource potential of a land bordering the beautiful blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, that those inhabiting the land struggle for a life of peace, freedom and work.

The Israeli and Egyptian blockades force Gazans to live confined as if in a jail, unable to leave the strip only with the occasional permits, begrudgingly granted. Little work, off and on electricity, a limited water supply, restricted import and export of needed staples and goods, and war-damaged buildings still in disrepair and health care in disarray all make life so difficult, and create a never-ending source of depression.

The streets teem with people. Horses, donkeys and sheep mingle between the cars and trucks. The culture has a foot in two worlds, holding on and modernizing. Gazans are among the most educated people anywhere but are blocked from turning their learning into a way of life and realizing their potential.

I became so angry when I learned that children or elderly with cancer often are refused permits to seek better treatment in East Jerusalem. Just as outrageous is the fact that young mothers of children with cancer cannot leave Gaza to accompany their child when a child with cancer is lucky enough to get a permit to leave for treatment. Oftentimes only the grandmother is allowed to accompany the child. Safety and security matter, but not at the expense of separating families in troubled situations or preventing access for life-saving treatment.

Gazans are mostly young. They have their dreams for the future, but they are stymied by their circumstances, and literally walled in from realizing their potential. Imagine wondering whether you will ever be able to find a job, to travel to see other countries or to visit friends or family abroad. Imagine what it would be like to be blocked at every turn, like running in a maze with no way out.

But there is hope in Gaza. It shows when meeting the people, listening to them and learning from them. They long for peace as much as anyone else. They acknowledge that some of their countrymen and women become radicalized; but say that it is because they cannot tolerate the oppression and so they erupt and they fight back. But that is not the vast majority of Gazans. The young people give me hope. We met young adult animators at a child friendly center funded by CRS. They were teaching the kids to dance and by the use of puppets to help the traumatized children learn how to cope with conflict and to manage feelings. Those animators are being paid by CRS from a USAID grant to provide internships and work opportunities to a society with 47 percent unemployment.

The laughter and energy of the kids as they danced gave a moment of respite and distraction from the struggle to eke out an existence in their bleak situation. Their laughter was like a balm that soothes.

The internship program managed by CRS called Envision 2020 provides job opportunities to professional and non-professional Gazans. When the program was introduced, 180,000 people applied for 10,000 places - obviously tough competition. The interns work in schools, factories and businesses for three to six months, after which it is hoped the employer will keep them on as paid staff.

One young woman teaching children with disabilities spoke of her hesitancy and fear when she began, and then how she grew to love the children. Clearly they loved her. She spoke on her last day as an intern. She said she was praying she could stay on and not have to leave the children. Regrettably, many employers lack resources to keep these young people on staff after the internship ends. One young intern was thrilled to have a chance to practice physical therapy, a profession he had studied at university. He had been sweeping floors in a restaurant before he got this opportunity through the internship program.

Another glimmer of hope came as we met the Missionary Sisters of Charity in Gaza who always inspire. In Gaza they serve children with massive disabilities. Most of their parents were ashamed that they gave birth to them. Their parents turn them over to the Sisters who call the children by name and tenderly care for them. Without the sisters, many of these children would not live long or would be abandoned on the street. But with the sisters, they are comforted and not considered shameful. The sisters’ constant smiles refuse to give into despair. They give people hope. CRS’ support could never be better used.

CRS’ work makes a difference, but an intolerable situation remains. The world is stymied to find a solution to the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. A two-state system seems the only possible solution, but at times it appears to be a mission impossible.

Two days taught us a lot, but I cannot imagine what living a lifetime under these circumstances must be like. The potential of the people in the Gaza Strip cries out to lift the heel that is crushing them. Giving people a future is the best way to inhibit violence and prevent radicalism.

Israelis need to live securely, free of fear from random acts of violence and Palestinians need their own land, a sense of independence and freedom. As these people and the international community seek to balance these two seemingly polarized ideas CRS will continue to do what it can to give people hope and to draw out the best in those they are privileged to serve.
Students at six Catholic high schools throughout the Diocese participated in the National School Walkout March 14, commemorating one month since 17 died in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Fla.

There were more than 1,000 high schools throughout the country participating in the mass event. The event was designed to last 17 minutes, one minute for each of the 17 victims of the shooting.

“Our students here, as in other parts of our country, are dealing with the devastating gun violence at schools and communities across the nation,” said Bishop Weisenburger in a statement released prior to the event. “We hope to assist them as they find their place as faithful citizens of the United States, and as they find their way of coping constructively against a problem that has become widespread. I am pleased that level thinking, combined with compassion, prayer and faith are elements of our students’ events on Wednesday.”

At Salpointe Catholic High School, Tucson, students walked to an open area at school, prayed and recited the names of the Parkland victims.

At St. Augustine Catholic High School, Tucson, Bishop Weisenburger prayed the rosary with students in the courtyard.

At San Miguel Cristo Rey Catholic High School, Tucson, students gathered and prayed, wrote to their elected officials, researched information about gun control, and had a mock debate.

At Immaculate Heart Catholic High School, Tucson, students gathered in their prayer garden, forming a circle. They prayed and recited the victims’ names, released balloons and placed roses in a vase for each one.

At Lourdes Catholic High School, Nogales, students assembled on the soccer field as the chapel bell tolled. A local police officer also spoke to them about non-violence.

At Yuma Catholic High School, Yuma, students gathered in the school quad and prayed for victims.

Above, San Miguel Cristo Rey Catholic High School, Tucson, students Gary Mungia, Anthony Estrada, Bruno Barra and Nathaniel Montijo work on letters and listen to instructions for writing to members of the Arizona congressional delegation March 14, as part of a mid-day exercise. Below, Father Martin Moreno, parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception Parish, Yuma, leads a prayer service at Yuma Catholic High School. At bottom, Students at Immaculate Heart Catholic High School, Oro Valley, hold pictures and remember those who died at the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Fla.