DEATH IN NIGERIA

Local priests shaken by attacks in homeland

In January, Fulani herdsmen in the Diocese of Makurdi, Nigeria, killed 80 in an attack on a remote village. The picture here shows a woman weeping Jan. 11 as a truck carries the coffins of some of the people killed then. On April 24, two priests and more than a dozen parishioners were killed in a similar attack. Those deaths shook members of the Nigerian community here. For stories on this and other signs of growing unrest in Africa, see stories beginning on page 3.
Msgr. Fuller celebrates 62 years of ministry and service in the Diocese

By MICHAEL BROWN
Managing Editor

Msgr. Robert D. Fuller, 87 - pastor at St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Tucson, known for his brief but poignant homilies, his embrace of lay leadership and the changes of Vatican II - is retiring.

He will be feted at a parish celebration June 3 in the church hall, honoring his 31 years there as pastor. Father Jay Jensen takes over as the first new pastor at St. Frances since Ronald Reagan was president.

Msgr. Fuller looked back last month at 62 years in ministry, all but five of which were spent in the Diocese of Tucson.

Msgr. Fuller was born in Iowa, but his father died when he was young, and his mother moved the family to Tucson in 1941. Although he went to Catholic elementary schools, he attended and graduated from Tucson High School in 1948. Msgr. Fuller said he wasn't heavily involved in church, although he attended Mass weekly. “During my high school years, I had no association with my parish at all.”

“It was June of 1948 and I had this idea that maybe I wanted to be a priest. You are never sure, you know. That’s what seminaries are for,” he said, adding, “I pick up the phone and called Father Green.”

“Father” Green, then pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Tucson, would later become Bishop Francis J. Green, the Fourth Bishop of Tucson.

“I said, ‘Father, this is Bob Fuller,’” he recalled. It quickly became clear that Father Green had no idea who the young man was on the other end of the phone, Msgr. Fuller said. However, when the caller indicated that he was interested in the priesthood, the pastor warmed up to him right away. The caller was told to come right down to discuss it.

Minutes later, he was at the rectory, talking to Father Green. “He says, ‘Bob, there’s something about you that I always thought you might be a priest. ... I think it may be the way you walk,’” Msgr. Fuller recalled, adding that the pastor’s newfound recollection of him was “very imaginative.”

Bishop Daniel J. Gercke needed to approve anyone entering the seminary from the Diocese, so the two went to visit the bishop. “Bishop Gercke was a linguist. He was very much into classical languages – Latin and Greek. He insisted that every student know Latin before he can go to the seminary.”

Msgr. Fuller had never been an altar server and with only one year of Latin in high school, he flunked Bishop Gercke’s oral exam, he said. “Father Green started pleading for me, ‘Please just give him a chance.’” Bishop Gercke agreed.

Msgr. Fuller was at the minor seminary in Los Angeles, but about a month after enrolling, the vice rector stopped him in the hall, he recalled. Bishop Gercke had sent a letter to the administration instructing them to send home any student who was deficient in Latin.

To this day, Msgr. Fuller said, he has no idea why he wasn’t dismissed. “Maybe they negotiated something with the bishop.” His Latin skills improved quickly, and eventually, his knowledge of church rituals. Initially, “I didn’t know how to serve Mass,” he said. “I couldn’t give the 15 decades of the rosary.”

Of the 40 students in his minor seminary class, 25 went on to major seminary and only 10 were ordained. “That’s why I believe that vocations really come from your heart,” he said.

Years later, he learned about another hurdle he had to overcome. In documents he obtained from the seminary, he received a special dispensation from the Vatican. It turned out that his father was a Shriner, a member of the Masons, so special approval was needed.

In 1956, Bishop Green, as an auxiliary bishop, was allowed to ordain Msgr. Fuller to the priesthood at Sts. Peter and Paul Church. His first assignment was at Queen of Peace Parish in Mesa, which was still part of the Tucson Diocese before the Diocese of Phoenix was formed.

One day, he received a call from the head of the Tribunal, saying that Bishop Gercke was thinking about appointing him to the Tribunal. “I said, ‘I don’t want to go. I am very happy with what I am doing here,’” Msgr. Fuller said.

Later, he consulted with his pastor, Msgr. Loyola O’Dougherty, who encouraged him to call back and apologize. “‘What I said to you remains true. I am just sorry if I didn’t say it the right way,’” he said.

The following week, Msgr. Fuller received notice of the appointment typed on a notecard. “After one year, I was down at the Chancery office.”

“Why he did that, I don’t know,” Msgr. Fuller added. “The bishop and I ended up being good friends, actually.”

“He was not a guy you would take to really quickly,” he said. “He was an interesting person. ... He gave a very gruff impression, but underneath it all, it wasn’t true.”

In 1960, Bishop Green succeeded Bishop Gercke and two years later, when the Tribunal appointment expired, Msgr. Fuller was named Chancellor. It was 1962, and that fall was the first session of the Second Vatican Council.

“That was a very interesting time,” he said.

Bishop Green was “very much in favor of the council. His biggest problem was getting pastors back here to become interested.”

Bishop Green attended all the sessions of Vatican II, so he spent long periods away from the Diocese. Msgr. O’Dougherty was then vicar general, but was not often in the office, so much of the daily duties of running the Diocese became his responsibility, Msgr. Fuller said.

In 1963, Msgr. Fuller was named director of the diocesan Bureau of Information, which included oversight of the diocesan newspaper, then called the Arizona Register. The Bureau, a precursor to the Communications Office, issued press releases to media outlets throughout the state at a time when the relationship between television, newspapers and the bishop was frayed.

Msgr. Fuller cited one example: Sentiment had been growing to start a diocese in northern Arizona as the Phoenix area developed. While Bishop Green was attending Vatican II, Msgr. Fuller said, a call came in from a reporter at the Arizona Republic to discuss a few questions, including whether or not Phoenix would have its own diocese. Given its size and growth, it would make sense for Phoenix to have its own diocese “someday,” Msgr. Fuller said. “The next Sunday’s newspaper on page one (the headline) all the way across the page said, ‘Church official says Phoenix to be diocese.’”

The bureau succeeded in helping daily newspapers pay attention to important stories, including the Bishop’s Charity and Development Fund, precursor to the Annual Catholic Appeal. The bureau also began a partnership with radio stations with large listening audiences, reading the news of the Arizona Register over the air.

By the late 1960s, he was ready to step away from full-time diocesan leadership, Msgr. Fuller said. Bishop Green, however, had one more task for him: the creation of the Phoenix Diocese and the reallocation of resources. It was established on June 28, 1969, and the first ordinary BISHOP ROBERT D. FULLER
Father Samuel Jandeh, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Superior, was angry, scared and frustrated, but mostly angry.

He and two other Nigerian priests serving in the Diocese of Tucson were talking about the murder of their friends, Fathers Joseph Gor and Felix Tyolaha, and the more than a dozen parishioners at St. Ignatius Church in Mbalom, of the Benue state. The murders occurred following Mass April 24.

Father Jandeh said that reports from social media indicated that Mass had just finished, and Father Joseph was headed to his car when he and others were ambushed by Fulani herdsmen. He was shot but able to warn the others, including Father Felix, to try to escape.

Media reports say that the Fulani attacks began about six years ago when the herdsmen, identified as Muslims, began grazing their cattle in the fields of farmers, predominantly Christians, residing in the central state, one of the most fertile areas in Africa. It has led to attacks by the herdsmen upon farmers, resulting in areas being abandoned as residents flee from farms they have inhabited for generations.

“Father Felix was running for his life, when he saw some women struggling to run away. He went back to encourage them to run. They pointed to a young boy who had fallen behind. Father Felix went back to pick up the boy and carry him. When the women looked back, they did not see him. The herdsmen had shot him and slit his throat. The boy was also killed,” Father Jandeh said.

Father Jandeh and Father Richard Kusugh, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Parker, are members of Via Christi, a society of apostolic life indigenous to the Diocese of Makurdi, Nigeria.

Father John Ikponko is a priest from the Makurdi Diocese who served as chancellor before coming to Tucson in 2017.

Father Ikponko said that Father Felix had served in a mission church in Yogboh. The church had been destroyed earlier this year and its members displaced by Fulani attacks, so Father Felix had been working as a “supply” priest, helping Father Joseph at St. Ignatius.

On New Year’s Day, Fulani coordinated attacks killed six dozen in six Benue communities.

“They are just killing people, a rampage, and burn their houses before they return to hiding,” said Father Jandeh.

Father Kusugh said that the conflict is confusing because it is influenced in part by jihadism and by economic interests. There are also tribal tensions, with the Fulani reacting to a recent anti-open grazing law.

“How do they get away with it? It seems the federal government is giving them protection,” he said. “To see this happening in 2018 defies human logic.”

“The government there is just not willing to enforce the law. They are just letting this happen,” he added. “It just doesn’t make sense.”

Other news reports note that while Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has pledged to send in troops to locate and arrest the killers, he is politically linked to the herdsmen.

Father Jandeh said that federal troops only arrive after the Fulani have returned to hiding or fled to other states, and do not maintain a presence in Benue despite the ongoing raids.

“The president is an imam (a Muslim leader). He’s also a patron for the ranchers,” the priest added.

“It’s the government’s job to provide security for its citizens. It’s not doing that,” said Father Ikponko.

See NIGERIA on page 8
Two new priests to be ordained
St. Augustine Cathedral, 192 S. Stone Ave., June 2, 10 a.m., Tucson
Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger will preside at the priesthood ordination of Fathers John Gonzales and Thomas Quirk.

Three to be ordained transitional deacons
St. Augustine Cathedral, 192 S. Stone Ave., June 9, 10 a.m., Tucson
Seminarians Justin Agbir, Peter Pedrasa and Jesus Haros-Mendez will be ordained as transitional deacons by Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger.

Charismatic renewal at Sacred Heart
Sacred Heart Church, 601 E. Fort Lowell Road, June 14, 6:30 p.m., Tucson
The Diocese of Tucson Renewal Committee will hold its monthly “Alive in Christ” event with the theme “Witnesses ... To the Ends of the Earth.” All are welcome. For more information, call Gloria (520) 237-7060 or visit tucsoncr.org.

Registrations accepted for women’s retreat
Radisson Suites Tucson, 6555 E. Speedway Blvd., July 27-29, Tucson
The women’s retreat ministry Vine of Grace will hold its annual retreat with the theme “I Am God’s Masterpiece.” The guest speaker is Holy Names Sister Linda Koontz, founder of the Spirit of the Lord International Mission. Space is limited. For more information go to vineofgrace.org.

Two Salpointe students named National Merit winners
Salpointe Catholic High School students Christopher J. O’Connor and Peyton R. Lewis.
Salpointe Catholic High School students Peyton R. Lewis and Christopher J. O’Connor were among six Tucson-area students named National Merit Scholarship winners.
Most of the awards are renewable for up to four years of college undergraduate student tuition and provide stipends ranging from $500 to $10,000 per year. Some provide a single payment between $2,500 and $5,000.
Students entered the 2018 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2016 PSAT/NMSQT. Semifinalists were narrowed down to about 7,500 winners, based on the strongest combination of academic skills and achievements, extracurricular accomplishments and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

Judicial vicar to speak on marriage
St. Christopher Church, 12201 W. Moore Road, June 3, noon-1 p.m., Marana
Franciscan Father Manuel Vieira, judicial vicar for the Diocese, will speak about “Marriage and the Annulment Process.” All are welcome.

St. Mark’s to study Bishop Barron’s book
St. Mark Parish, 2727 W. Tangerine Road, Fridays, June 8, 15, 22 and 29, 9 a.m., Oro Valley
A weekly book study of “To Light a Fire on the Earth” by Bishop Robert Barron will be held on Fridays in June. Each session will last approximately two hours and include a speaker, small group discussion and social time. To register, visit stmarkov.com or call the office, (520) 469-7835.

Bishop to bless, install Santa Catalina icon
Santa Catalina Church, 14380 N. Oracle Road, June 20, 6:30 p.m., Tucson
Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger will be blessing and installing a new Mother of Perpetual Help icon at Santa Catalina Parish. It will begin with a procession followed by a Mass. For more information, visit santacatalinaparish.org or call (520) 825-9611.

St. Mark’s registers religious ed students
St. Mark Parish, 2727 W. Tangerine Road, Aug. 6, Oro Valley
St. Mark’s will begin accepting applications for its religious education program for young people in grades K-12. The parish offers education for families and for children with special needs and has a ministry for adult Bible students with special needs. Classes begin in September. To register, visit stmarkov.com or call the office, (520) 469-7835.

Bishop’s Calendar – JUNE-JULY 2018

JUNE
2 10 a.m., Priesthood Ordination, St. Augustine Cathedral
3 9:45 a.m., Confirmation Mass, Corpus Christi Church, Tucson
7 Episcopal Ordination, Los Angeles, CA
9 10 a.m., Transitional Deacon Ordination, St. Augustine Cathedral
10 2:30 p.m., Catholic Bible Institute of Southern Arizona Graduation, St. Augustine Cathedral
12-15 USCCB Spring General Meeting, Fort Lauderdale, FL
16 10 a.m., PCIC Hispanic Leadership Group, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Tucson
17 11 a.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Superior
20 6:30 p.m., Blessing and installation of icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Santa Catalina Parish, Tucson
21 11:30 a.m., Diocesan Review Board, Pastoral Center
7 p.m., Confirmation Mass, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Church, Tucson
23-29 Vacation

JULY
1 10 a.m., Confirmation Mass and Closing of 100th Anniversary Year, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church, Miami
4 Independence Day - office closed
20-25 Vacation

27 7 p.m., Mass, Vine of Grace, Radisson Suites Hotel, Tucson
30-Aug. 3 Workshop for Bishops, The Catholic University America, Washington

AUGUST
4 11 a.m., Mass, Deacon Convocation, Most Holy Trinity Parish, Tucson
Diocese announces spring assignments

The Diocese of Tucson announced new parish assignments for priests. All are effective July 1, unless otherwise noted.

NEW PASTORS (six-year terms)
Father Edward Lucero
To: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Tucson; From: St. Philip Parish, Payson - pastor

Father Jay Jensen
To: St. Frances Cabrini Parish, Tucson; From: St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Tucson - parochial vicar

Father Robert Rodriguez
To: St. Joseph Parish, Tucson; From: St. Rose of Lima Parish, Safford and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Solomon - pastor

Father Mohana Bathini
To: St. Jude Thaddeus Parish, Pearce/Sunsites; From: St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Wellton - administrator

Father Jose Manuel Padilla
To: San Felipe de Jesus Parish, Nogales; From: Our Lady Queen of All Saints Parish, Tucson - pastor

Father Arnold Aurillo (pro-tem)
To: San Carlos Apache Community, San Carlos; while continuing at St. Rose of Lima Parish, Safford and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Solomon - pastor

NEW ADMINISTRATORS (one year terms)
Father Bardo Antione Ola
To: Blessed Sacrament Parish, Mammoth; From: San Felipe de Jesus Parish, Nogales - pastor

Father Alan Valencia
To: Our Lady Queen of All Saints Parish, Tucson; From: St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Casa Grande - parochial vicar

Father Ricky Ordonez
To: St. Philip Parish, Payson; From: St. Joseph Parish, Tucson - pastor

Via Christi Father Nicodemus Shagel
To: Rose of Lima Parish, Safford and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Solomon; From: Immaculate Conception Parish, Yuma - parochial vicar

Father Gregory Okafor (Effective Oct. 1)
To: St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Wellton; From: St. Luke Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish, Douglas and St. Bernard Parish, Pirtleville - administrator

Father James Hobert (Effective Oct. 1)
To: St. Luke Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish, Douglas and St. Bernard Parish, Pirtleville; From: St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Tucson - parochial vicar

Spiritana Father Richard Awange
(Effective Aug. 1)
To: St. Margaret Mary Parish, Tucson; From: Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, Tucson - parochial vicar

NEW PAROCHIAL VICARS
Father Thomas Quirk
To: Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, Tucson, sacramental assistance; From: Mundelein Seminary, Hales Corner, Wis. - parochial vicar

Father Cayetano Cabrera
To: Most Holy Nativity Parish, Rio Rico and part-time sacramental assistance at San Felipe de Jesus Parish, Nogales; From: Most Holy Nativity Parish, Rio Rico - part-time parochial vicar

Father John Gonzalez
To: St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Tucson; From: Sacred Heart Seminary, Hales Corner, Wis.

Father John Ikponko (Effective Aug. 1)
To: Our Lady of Grace Parish, Maricopa; From: St. Pius X Parish, Tucson - parochial vicar

Via Christi Father Martin Bosco Ormin
To: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Tucson; From: St. Luke Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish, Douglas and St. Bernard Parish, Pirtleville - parochial vicar

Capuchin Father Robert Kose
To: St. Margaret Mary Parish, Tucson, sacramental assistance; From: Most Holy Nativity Parish, Rio Rico and Our Lady of the Valley Parish, Green Valley - sacramental assistance

Father Jesus Cordova
To: St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Casa Grande; From: St. Augustine Cathedral, Tucson - sacramental assistance

Father John Paul Shea
To: Holy Angel Parish, Globe, with residence San Carlos Apache Community, San Carlos; From: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Tucson - parochial vicar

Father Edson Elizarraras
Return to: Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Tucson

PRIEST LEAVING FULL-TIME MINISTRY
Father Joseph Lombardo: Retirement, some clergy support

Msgr. Robert Fuller: Retirement

Capuchin Father Walter Balduck: Retirement, some clergy support

Father Kishore Singh: Return to Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar

Franzalan Father Thomas Marathorum: Return to home religious order

Franciscan Father Ignatius DeGroot: Retirement to home religious order

JUNE & JULY 2018 - JMT EVENTS

6/1 11 TBD (St. Charles, San Carlos)

6/4 1.1-1: Sac of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist 2: Sac of Initiation: Eucharist (JMT)

6/5 1.1-1: Sac of Healing: Reconciliation & Anointing 2: Sac of Christian Vocation (JMT)

6/18-7/31 JMT office closed (summer break)

7/25 DOT New Teacher-Teacher Training

7/27 Faculty/Staff Retreat (Yuma Catholic H.S.)

7/30 1.1-1: Call to Ministry 2: Spirituality of the Ordinary 3: Prayer (San Xavier Mission School)

8/2 Sabbatical: Spirituality of Aging (Redemptorist Renewal Center)

8/3 Faculty/Staff Retreat (St. John, Santa Cruz)

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BOOTS & BLING
SAVE THE DATE
Sunday, November 4, 2018
3:30pm - 8:00pm
Tanque Verde Ranch

Guest Speaker: Pam Tebow
MISSIONARY AND PRO-LIFE ADVOCATE
Mother of Heisman winner Tim Tebow
Cristo Rey model helps the poor, continues rapid growth

San Miguel Catholic High School in the Diocese of Tucson illustrates the network’s goals

By MICHAEL BROWN
Managing Editor

It’s been 22 years since the first Cristo Rey school opened in Chicago, and with three more schools opening in 2019, there soon will be 35 member schools, with projections that there may be as many as 50 schools nationwide by 2028. That is good news and bad news.

Elizabeth Goettl is president and chief executive officer of the Cristo Rey Network. She visited Tucson for the group’s annual meeting April 16-20. Goettl is not new to the area; she was president of San Miguel Catholic High School here 2006-09.

The good news about the expansion is that the school model, begun by Jesuit Father John Foley, exclusively targets students in poor communities who otherwise might never receive a college-preparatory, Catholic high school education. The bad news is that with so many pockets of poor communities, there is no end in sight to the need for Cristo Rey schools.

Cristo Rey’s siting team “receives one to two calls a week” from representatives of existing but failing schools or from community leaders desperate to find a way to help educate their children – a key factor in helping them out of poverty.

Goettl said that Cristo Rey Network has a precise formula for determining where to open a new school, and then garnering the necessary resources. Each process takes up to 18 months to complete, she said. The three schools slated to open next fall are in Oakland, Calif., Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, Texas.

“ar model is complicated and the work is challenging,” she added.

Requests require enlisting partners from three critical areas, Goettl said: a bishop or diocese, a religious community and community leaders. Because a Cristo Rey school offers a Catholic education, it must have the approval and support of the local bishop. Nationally, there are 38 religious communities sponsoring Cristo Rey schools; in some areas, two communities work together in the same school.

The Jesuits partner with 12 Cristo Rey schools, the most of any religious community. San Miguel partners with the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

As independent schools, the Cristo Rey model uses the president-principal structure.

It taps local leaders - nearly 700 nationwide - to serve on the local board. According to the Cristo Rey Network website, by 2020, Cristo Rey schools nationally will enroll about 14,000 students.

One hallmark of Cristo Rey schools is that students are required to work in an actual workplace in the community one day a week, which requires developing relationships with local businesses. This is called the Corporate Work Study program. Students earn a wage, based on market values, that helps pay for their tuition. It also provides the student with valuable workplace experience that prepares them for life after college.

Students work all four years. Some students choose to stay in the same “job” for all four years, although most attend different job sites every year.

The average wages earned per student is $7,500 per year.

“They learn to develop the skills they need to make it in the workplace,” Goettl said. “We help them develop ‘soft’ skills, like persistence, initiative and self-direction.”

Local business support is key. During her time at San Miguel, Goettl recalled, the school had partnerships from scores of local businesses, including hospitals, law firms, high tech industries and engineers. The University of Arizona Business Affairs office was a founding partner, and remains active, along with five other departments, according to sanmiguelschristorey.org, the high school’s website.

The Diocese of Tucson also is a founding partner still involved in San Miguel’s work program.

Students work all four years. Some students choose to stay in the same “job” for all four years, although most attend different job sites every year.

Another Cristo Rey characteristic is that every student graduating from a Cristo Rey school is accepted to a two-year or four-year college. Nine of every 10 graduates enroll in college.

“Our college partners are committed to carefully considering all of our students,” Goettl said.

Cristo Rey recently began a partnership with Berea College in Berea, Ky. The school’s website features a “No-Tuition Promise.”

“We are able to provide this level of financial assistance due to the generous support of alumni, friends, organizations and others who believe, as we do, that a student’s income should not dictate their outcome,” said the school website, berea.edu.

However, only 40 percent of Cristo Rey school graduates complete their college programs. “That’s a challenge we are working very hard to address,” Goettl said.

Cristo Rey leaders studied the college drop-out problem and identified three reasons: financial, social/emotional and academic.

Schools and colleges partnering with Cristo Rey are required to provide financial aid packages that make them affordable. However, sometimes it is the incidental costs - such as textbooks that cost hundreds of dollars each semester - that force students to step away.

The Cristo Rey Network added a position at its See CRISTO REY on page 7
CRISTO REY continued from page 6

high schools - a resource for college-enrolled alumni - to help them with unexpected financial expenses that might force them out of school.

For the social and emotional issues, Cristo Rey schools have included a course called “College 101,” which students take before graduating to help prepare them for the challenges they face at the next level.

Helping Cristo Rey graduates overcome the academic challenges has meant doubling the size of their “academic support teams,” which provide help to Cristo Rey principals as they try to boost their students’ academic performance.

Goettl cited efforts like employing common curriculum and assessments as ways to boost student performance. The Cristo Rey Network offers instructor, professional and leadership development, along with programs that promote management training to continue build potential principals for future needs.

Professional development for teachers is a critical area, she said. Teachers - for public and non-public schools - are in high demand throughout the country. Because of the long hours and low pay, many leave within five years of entering the profession, Goettl said.

“We are working hard to develop our teachers.”

Coming from poor families often means students aren’t ready for high school when they enter Cristo Rey schools, she added. “Most come in achieving below a ninth-grade level.”

“We have longer school days and longer school years,” Goettl said. “We are trying to get six years of learning into four years of school.”

Increasing the college completion rate and boosting academic achievement are just two challenges facing the Cristo Rey Network, Goettl said. Another challenge is trying to increase the student retention rate within Cristo Rey schools. She cited national figures that showed only 62 percent of students who entered schools in the Cristo Rey Network as freshmen eventually graduated.

The highest percentage of those leaving the schools drop out between freshmen and sophomore years. After several years, they have boosted the retention rate from 80 percent to 87 percent nationally. Goettl noted that in Tucson, the school has one of the highest retention rates for students advancing from freshmen to sophomore year: 95 percent.

The schools use the federal school lunch programs and try to assist students’ families in other ways. “We try to get to know the (financial) situation of our families as well.”

Tuition is on a sliding scale, with some families paying as little as $20 per month. The average monthly tuition is $90, Goettl said, adding “every family pays something.”

If there are deeper issues in the family that touch on behavioral or mental health issues, Cristo Rey staffs can provide referrals to local agencies equipped to provide those kinds of services.

Goettl, who became president and CEO in 2017 after three years as Chief Academic Officer of a Chicago charter school network, said she was pleased to be involved again in the Cristo Rey Network, and praised the mission of the poor and neediest children.

“It’s an audacious vision.”


Benedictine jubilarians

FERDINAND, Ind. — Three Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand who served in the Diocese of Tucson celebrated the 50th anniversary of their monastic profession June 2 at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand.

Jubilarian Sisters Sharon Hollander, Patty Lasher and Linda Campbell, entered Monastery Immaculate Conception in 1966 and professed their monastic vows in 1968.


Sister Lasher served in parish ministry at St. George Parish in Apache Junction (1982-83). Sister Campbell also served in parish ministry at Omos (1976-77) and St. George’s (1977-83).

Founded in 1867, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand serve in various ministries, including education, parish work, health care, retreat and spirituality work, social services and counseling.

More than a dozen religious brothers joined Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger for the Second Annual Mass marking Religious Brothers’ Day on May 1 at Most Holy Trinity Church, Tucson. Dozens more religious attended the Mass, which was followed by dinner in the church hall. Included in the photo are some Capuchin priests living as “brothers in community.” Front row, from left are De La Salle Christian Brothers Jesus Lara and Martin Vu, Capuchin Father Walter Balduck, Bishop Weisenburger, Capuchin Father Robert Kose, Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity Brother Andres Rivera and Franciscan Brother Sam Nasada. Second row, from left are De La Salle Christian Brother Jack Henderson, Franciscan Brother David Paz, Capuchin Father John Francis Samsa, Redemptorist Brother Bill Cloughley, Salvatorian Brother Jeffrey St. George, Franciscan Brother Peter Boegel and Carmelite Brother Kevin Keller. Rear row, from left are Franciscan Brother David Buer, Carmelite Brother Mike Joyce and Franciscan Father Ponchie Vasquez.
Connections with Nigerian priests are spiritual and brotherly

By BISHOP EMERITUS GERALD F. KICANAS

The Diocese of Tucson has had a relationship with the Diocese of Makurdi and the Via Christi community (a diocesan religious order in Makurdi) for over 20 years. Bishop Athanasius Usuh, bishop of Makurdi, agreed to send two priests initially to serve in Tucson: Fathers Matthew Asemenea and Francis Iber who both served in the Yuma area. Later, Father Iber was pastor of St. Francis Parish in Superior. Several years later, I met with Father Angus Fraser, the founder of the Via Christi community, and he agreed to send three priests, Fathers James Aboyi, Sebastian Bula and Richard Kusugh to help us minister to our parishes. What a gift these priests have been, coming as missionaries into a different culture to help care pastorally for our people!

Several years ago, I had an opportunity to visit in the dioceses of Gboko, Lafia, Katsina-Ala and Makurdi. They each have sent us priests to serve here. It was a marvelous experience to witness the living, active faith of the priests and people there. I was privileged to ordain 10 young men for the Diocese of Gboko. The music and participation of the people was incredible; there was such joy in welcoming these new priests. While in Benue state, I had a chance to visit the Via Christi seminary and the seminary in Makurdi and to meet with so many young men who were studying to be priests. One could only admire their enthusiasm and eagerness to serve. During my visit, I met with each of the bishops who had sent priests to serve here including Bishops William Avenya (Gboko), Peter Adoboh (Katsina-Ala), Matthew Audu (Lafia), Wilfred Agnabe (Makurdi) and Cardinal John Onaiyekan (Archdiocese of Abuja), whose brother Michael lives in Tucson. At that time, it was my privilege to visit Bishop Athanasius Usuh who was retired and who was then very ill. He had visited us in Tucson some years ago and we developed a good friendship. He has since gone to the Lord.

You can only imagine, in light of our long friendship, the heartache I and others in our diocese feel in learning of the two priests, Fathers Joseph Gor and Felix Tyolaha, along with 17 parishioners who were murdered during Mass by Fulani herdsmen in a horrific attack in Ayar Mbalom a remote village in Benue state.

Our heart goes out to the bishops, priests and people in Benue state, Nigeria, where tensions are high. The week after this tragic event, I was in Rome and learned that all the Nigerian bishops were also in Rome visiting our Holy Father Pope Francis as part of the ad limina visit. I had called Bishop Agnabe and Father Theo (head of the Via Christi community) to express our sympathy at their loss.

We grieve together. We stand in solidarity with the Church in Nigeria which has made such an impact on our diocese. Our prayer is that they know of our concern. We ask the Lord to watch over and protect the community from further violence and loss of innocent life. May those who died rest in peace and may their families be consoled that they now stand in the presence of God.

NIGERIA continued from page 3

For the three priests in Tucson, these attacks shake them to the core.

“I feel helpless. Our families are under siege,” said Father Kusugh. He also said he feels guilty that he cannot be there with his family and the community where he grew up in Makurdi. “It’s all those things rolled up in one.”

“I feel angry, frustrated, devastated and helpless,” added Father Jandeh.

Father Ikonko said he wants to be able to help, but it’s not clear what he can do. “I am praying. I want to speak out any way I can, so the international community can help.”

Father Kusugh visited Nigeria last June for a general meeting of the Via Christi Society and renewed his friendship with Father Joseph. Father Kusugh recalled suffering from severe back pain, which his frie nd noticed and massaged his back every day. By the time the meeting was over, the treatments he had worked and he was able to move around without pain, Father Kusugh said.

“This was not an isolated case,” Father Kusugh said. “He lived his life for other people.”

Following Father Joseph’s ordination in 2013, people sought him out for spiritual guidance, Father Kusugh said. “At a previous parish, you would see people standing in line just to see him.”

“For him to die such a gruesome death…” he started, but not completing the thought.

Father Jandeh said that even though there appears to be little reason to think things will change, they must have hope. As their families and friends live so far away, they can’t help but think about what they are going through. “We are here because we once had a home there.”

“It’s not just the farming communities that are being hit by Fulani raids. Father Kusugh’s family lives in Makurdi, Benue’s capital. Last Jan. 13, there was a riot that left one person dead and cars and buildings destroyed. Father Kusugh’s father and siblings were forced to flee to one room with the family dog as looters ransacked the home.

“Father Kusugh knows that his parishioners here need him, but at the same time, he feels “survivors’ guilt.”

Sometimes, I feel like maybe people here don’t care,” he said. “Don’t people here care that you have a home, even if it is in Africa? Don’t they care what you are going through?”

There hasn’t been much published or broadcast about the Nigerian church massacre in the US or Arizona media, so most of his parishioners are not aware of the impact it has on the Nigerian priests serving in the Diocese of Tucson.

“Some people may think, ‘Oh, it’s over there. We are sure he’s doing OK,'” he said, adding that it helps to keep in contact with Fathers Jandeh, Ikonko and other priests from the area for support and information. “That way, I don’t have to deal with it alone.”

Editor’s note: To raise concern about the violence in Nigeria, please call the offices of US Sens. John McCain (520) 670-6334 and Jeff Flake (520) 575-8633.
Nigerian bishops to president: If you can’t stop violence, resign

By PETER AJAYI DADA
Catholic News Service

LAGOS, Nigeria — Nigeria’s bishops condemned repeated killings of innocent Nigerians by suspected ethnic militias in northeastern Nigeria and said President Muhammadu Buhari should resign if he could not keep the country safe.

Asking, “when will this barbarism end?” the bishops condemned the murder of two priests and their parishioners during the celebration of Mass, at St. Ignatius Church, Ayer Mbalom, April 24. Attackers also burned about 50 houses, nearly destroying the small community.

It was the latest in a string of violent incidents involving nomadic herdsmen and farmers, violence linked to grazing rights and dwindling fertile land. Benue state, where the incident occurred, has seen nearly 50 such attacks during the last three years.

The bishops issued their statement from Rome, where they were making a regularly scheduled visit to the Vatican, and said they received the news of the “gruesome, grisly and dastardly murder” with “deep shock, sorrow and utter horror.”

“These innocent souls met their untimely death in the hands of a wicked and inhuman gang of the rampaging and murderous terrorists, who have turned the vast lands of the middle belt and other parts of Nigeria into a massive graveyard,” the bishops said.

They said the unrestrained mayhem had become a metaphor for the untimely deaths that had now become the fate of many of Nigerian citizens.

“That our two priests, Father Joseph Gor and Father Felix Tyolaha, along with their parishioners were waylaid in the course of the celebration of the holy Mass early in the morning suggests very clearly that their murder was carefully planned,” the bishops said. Nineteen people were killed in the attack although other sources say there were 17 fatalities.

The bishops said that recent events showed Nigerians no longer could trust Buhari. They mentioned the repeated calls from them and many other Nigerian leaders, asking the president to take drastic and urgent steps to reverse the violence.

“It is clear to the nation that he has failed in his primary duty of protecting the lives of the Nigerian citizens,” the bishops said.

“Whether this failure is due to his inability to perform or lack of political will, it is time for him to choose the part of honor and consider stepping aside to save the nation from total collapse,” they said.

Often, the violence is characterized as a revenge attack, but the bishops asked, “Whom have these priests attacked?”

They cited a Jan. 3 tweet from Father Gor, in which he referred to the Fulani herdsman, a primarily nomadic group. The bishops quoted: “We are living in fear. The Fulanis are still around here in Mbalom. They refuse to go. They still go grazing around. No weapons to defend ourselves.”

“These innocent souls met their untimely death in the hands of a wicked and inhuman gang of the rampaging and murderous terrorists, who have turned the vast lands of the middle belt and other parts of Nigeria into a massive graveyard.”

The priests could have fled, the bishops said, but, true to their vocation, they remained to continue to serve their people right unto death.

“We are sad. We are angry. We feel totally exposed and most vulnerable. Faced with these dark clouds of fear and anxiety, our people are daily being told by some to defend themselves,” the bishops said, noting that most people had no weapons to defend themselves.

“How can the federal government stand back while its security agencies deliberately turn a blind eye to the cries and wails of helpless and (unarmed) citizens who remain sitting ducks in their homes, farms, highway and now, even in their sacred places of worship?”

The bishops recalled that during a Feb. 8 courtesy visit to Buhari, they expressed alarm about security in the nation.

“Since then, the bloodletting and the destruction of homes as well as farmlands have increased in intensity and brutality,” they said.

“Now our churches have been desecrated and our people murdered on their altars.”

They said they had consistently advised their people to remain peaceful and law-abiding, but they felt “violated and betrayed in a nation that we have all continued to sacrifice and pray for.”

“We are at a loss as to what excuse again we can continue to give about why things are the way they are in our nation, where a nation’s landscape is littered with the bodies of its own citizens,” they said.

“We are sad and fear that the clock is ticking. The bomb must be defused quickly before it explodes,” they said.

“Nigeria can return to normal times if we put our heads together with sincerity,” they said, offering prayers for the victims and for peace in the country.
Africa struggles to protect Christians, human rights

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<th>South Sudan religious leaders persist in hope amid new nation's turmoil</th>
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<td>Washington (CNS) — Christian leaders in South Sudan say they must hold out hope for peace in the war-scarred nation. “It seems to us the American influence is receding,” said Bishop Isaiah Majok Dau, head of the Pentecostal Church of South Sudan, part of the delegation. Father James Oyet Latansio, general secretary of the South Sudan Council of Churches, said America could declare that “no guns should be imported to South Sudan” as the armed factions - estimates put the number as high as 40 - squabble over wealth and territory.</td>
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<th>Central African cardinal warns against revenge after church attack</th>
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<td>Bangui, Central African Republic (CNS) — A cardinal in the Central African Republic warned against revenge after a priest and at least 24 lay Catholics were killed during a gun and grenade attack on a Mass in the country’s capital. “For decades now, what have we done with our country: coups d'état, mutinies, repeated rebellions?” said Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, president of the bishops’ conference, May 2, the day after an attack.</td>
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<th>Burundi’s bishops say people are too afraid to vote honestly</th>
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<td>Bujumbura, Burundi (CNS) — Catholic bishops in Burundi have criticized an upcoming referendum on constitutional reform, warning that voters will be too afraid to express their views. If passed May 17, the proposal would enable President Pierre Nkurunziza, already in power since 2005, to remain in office till 2034. “Many citizens are living in fear, even if they don’t say this openly, and don’t dare say what they think for fear of reprisals,” the bishops’ conference said in a statement.</td>
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<th>Nigerian bishops say Buhari should resign if he can’t stop violence</th>
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<td>Lagos, Nigeria (CNS) — Nigeria’s bishops condemned repeated killings of innocent Nigerians by suspected ethnic militias in northeastern Nigeria and said President Muhammadu Buhari should resign if he could not keep the country safe. See the story on page 9.</td>
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<th>Lay Catholics plan more protests in Congo</th>
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<td>ARU, Congo (CNS) — Catholics in Congo are planning more large-scale, peaceful demonstrations across the country to protest President Joseph Kabila’s refusal to leave power. “Let’s stay together, ready to face the worst, to snatch the best,” the Church’s lay coordination committee said in a May 1 statement.</td>
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<th>Cameroon archbishop survives gun attack after criticizing government</th>
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<td>Yaounde, Cameroon (CNS) — The Catholic Church in Cameroon said shots were fired at the residence of Archbishop Samuel Kleda, bishops’ conference president, after he criticized policies by the government of President Paul Biya. There were no reports of injuries.</td>
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Cornerstone Gala honors Lopezes, called ‘most successful’ ever

By SAMUEL KISER
Catholic Foundation

The 37th Annual Cornerstone Gala, “With Your Help, We Work Wonders,” was a successful night of entertainment, fellowship and recognition. Honoring Cornerstone Award recipients Czarina and Humberto Lopez, the Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Tucson paid tribute to the local philanthropic leaders who actively support the Diocese and the local community. Such support empowers diocesan programs, parishes, schools and social service agencies to serve the members of the Diocese of Tucson and the community in need. In attendance were more than 650 individuals, including Santa Fe Archbishop John C. Wester, Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger and Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas.

Edmund Marquez, master of ceremonies, highly energized attendees with his dynamic personality. Marquez introduced the evening’s entertainment, Carlos Zapién, Mariachi Sonido de Mexico and Viva Dance Folklorico Group. Viva Dance Folklorico Group utilized black lighting to give a one-of-a-kind glow-in-the-dark spectacular performance.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of receiving a Cornerstone Award, Ginny Clements introduced the Cornerstone Award recipients, sharing with attendees the importance of the award. Clements welcomed Czarina and Humberto Lopez and their two granddaughters to the stage.

Under the direction of the Catholic Foundation’s Gala Committee, chaired by Donal Drayne, the 37th Annual Cornerstone Gala proved to be the most successful gala in the history of the event, according to Foundation leaders. Thanks to more than 100 silent and live auction items, plus about 70 event sponsors, the Cornerstone Gala brought in more than $350,000 to support the work of the Catholic Foundation and the Diocese of Tucson. The live auction, introduced to the gala in 2017, featured trips to Rome, Ireland and the Kino missions. The auction also included a private dinner with the bishops, affectionately dubbed, “The First Supper.”

The Cornerstone Award recognizes distinguished service and is the highest award conferred by the Diocese of Tucson and the Catholic Foundation. It was established in 2002 to recognize those men and women who have distinguished themselves through service to the Diocese, the Catholic Foundation, the community and humankind. Czarina and Humberto Lopez are now among 46 distinct individuals, groups and entities recognized by the Catholic Foundation.

Kiser is the administrative assistant for the Catholic Foundation.

Bishop emeritus Kicanas receives Mexico’s prestigious Ohtli Award

Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas received the Ohtli Award May 4, the highest honor given by the Mexican government to a person in the US who has “contributed in an exceptional manner to the development of the Mexican community living abroad.”

The award was given to the bishop by Ricardo Pineda, Mexican consul, at the consulate in Tucson.

The bishop was “recognized throughout his ecclesiastical career as a defender of migrants and a strong promoter of their rights,” said a statement from the consulate. “From his position as a religious leader, he has promoted comprehensive immigration reform that would allow millions of undocumented people to regularize their situation in the US and has stated his rejection of the deaths of migrants in their attempt to cross undocumented through the arid zones of Arizona.”

The statement also recognized Bishop Kicanas’ support of the “contributions that the migrant community – particularly Mexican – and the refugees have provided to the US,” while bringing together other religious leaders to defend immigrants.

“Ohtli” is a word in the nahuatl or Aztec language, meaning “the path.” The award reflects the belief that the person receiving it has followed the right path.

In his comments following the receipt of the award – a medal, a pin and a certificate - Bishop Kicanas spoke about his trip earlier in the week to the Vatican to discuss Catholic Extension with Pope Francis and other Vatican officials. “He spoke very passionately, as he does, especially for immigrants and refugees,” the bishop said. “The Holy Father has made it clear that we are to be one family.”

“I appreciate so deeply the opportunity to receive this award,” Bishop Kicanas said.

Pineda said the bishop “has shown us the true path by how he has lived his life.”

Previous award winners include Raul Grijalva, John Arnold, Richard Fimbres, Virginia Martinez, Regina Romero, Raul Bejarano, Isabel Garcia, William Beazley, Jesus Manuel Gomez Made, Jonathon Rotshschild and Linus Lerner.
By Catholic News Service  

WASHINGTON — The 2018 observances of National Marriage Week USA and World Marriage Day allow the faithful to revisit the importance of love and family in the life of the church, said Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput.

In a letter to fellow prelates, Archbishop Chaput, chairman of the US bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, said the events provide opportunities “to focus on building a culture of life and love that begins with supporting and promoting marriage and the family.”

National Marriage Week USA was observed Feb. 7-14. World Marriage Day fell in the middle of the week on Feb. 11.

To assist in the observances, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops developed homily resources and a bulletin insert marking the 50th anniversary of Blessed Paul VI’s encyclical Humanae Vitae (“Of Human Life”), which reaffirms the church’s teaching on married love and responsible parenthood. Dated July 25, 1968, it was issued at a Vatican news conference July 29 of that year.

Archbishop Chaput invited dioceses to consider promoting Feb. 9 as a day of prayer and sacrifice in support of life, marriage and religious liberty.

The letter noted that online resources also are available at USCCB-created websites including ForYourMarriage.org, PorTuMatrimonio.org and MarriageUniqueForAReason.org. Various other resources in English and Spanish including books, prayer cards and pamphlets on marriage and family can be ordered from the USCCB online bookstore at store.usccb.org.

National Marriage Week USA began in 2010 as part of an international effort to mobilize people, organizations and businesses to strengthen marriage and influence the wider culture. World Marriage Day was first observed in 1983 as an initiative of Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

BY KELLY SANKOWSKI  
Catholic News Service  

WASHINGTON — Surrounding the 1968 release of Humanae Vitae (“Of Human Life”) was the cultural context of the sexual revolution and a widespread fear about overpopulation following World War II, said Donald Critchlow, a professor of history at Arizona State University.

At the time, there were movements in support of eugenics, abortion rights and sterilizations to curb population growth, Critchlow told an audience at The Catholic University of America.

Those who thought voluntary family planning was not enough then proposed other, more coercive ideas, such as requiring couples to get a license to have a child or requiring sterilization for couples with more than five children, he added.

Critchlow was one of several speakers at a 50th anniversary symposium in April on Blessed Paul VI’s encyclical Humanae Vitae. Keynotes and workshops examined the teaching and legacy of the document on the regulation of birth control.

The symposium was titled “Embracing God’s Vision for Marriage, Love and Life,” and brought together experts on a variety of topics related to the encyclical’s teachings on human sexuality and family life. In a session exploring the historical context of the times when the encyclical was released, Critchlow noted that prior to the drafting of Humanae Vitae, a commission was appointed to give suggestions for the Catholic Church’s response to new forms of contraception.

Most people on the commission recommended that the use of the birth control pill should be accepted and church teaching on the subject should be changed.

Blessed Paul rejected the commission’s report and in Humanae Vitae affirmed the church’s teaching on the sanctity of human life and its opposition to artificial contraception. In the document, the pope warned of the harm that widespread use of contraception would cause in society, such as lowering of moral standards, marital infidelity, less respect for women, and the government’s ability to use different methods to regulate life and death.

Critchlow said many US priests and laypeople dissented from this teaching. CUA students and faculty went on strike after the board of trustees denied the tenure of a professor, Father Charles E. Curran, who publicly disagreed with the encyclical’s teaching.


Humanae Vitae affirmed the church’s teaching on the sanctity of human life and its opposition to artificial contraception.

National Marriage Week, World Marriage Day resources from USCCB
Believing in God is as simple as falling in love

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once proclaimed, “God is dead.” Yet even the most basic logic tells us that God cannot die, because He was never born. Philosophers say order implies an orderly process: a design assumes a designer, a creation denotes a creator, a shoe comes from a shoemaker, and so on.

Poets’ arguments, on the other hand, exude an exquisite aura of beauty. 19th century Mexican poet Amado Nervo proclaimed: “God is inaccessible to scientific tools, to the crucible, the flask, to the most sophisticated microscope’s lens. Human complacency and hubris will never decipher the immense enigma of God as if it were an equation. He set His law and stands silent, His countenance veiled in the infinite so that the sad and restless spirit might seek Him as his greatest aspiration. And there, from His innermost being, the wondrous voice from the abyss will rise and lovingly say, ‘Here I am.’”

Alberto Cortéz, an Argentine singer and songwriter says: “How could I not believe in God, when He’s given me my children and my life? How could I not believe in God when He’s given me the woman I love? How could I not believe in God when He’s given me the outstretched hand of a friend? How could I not believe in God when He’s given me the sadness and joy of knowing that every day there is a tomorrow, for faith, hope and love?”

Poets never cease to capture and convey beauty with the colors of their words, in the cadence of their verse and through the magical touch of their pen. Where there’s beauty, that’s where God is.

Another poet said: “It is madness to hate all the roses because you were scratched by a thorn; it is madness to give up all your dreams because one of them didn’t come true; it is madness to condemn all your friends because one of them failed you; it is madness to lose your faith in God because a prayer wasn’t answered.”

Another Argentine songwriter, Facundo Cabral, says that many people don’t believe in God because they are distracted by the life that surrounds them: dolphins, forests, oceans, mountains and rivers. Life is wonderful, and its marvels speak to us of God. The love that God has for a person is an experience comparable to the experience of human love. God lovingly sends flowers to His beloved - humans - every spring; He sends sunset postcards every summer. If God had a refrigerator, He would have a photo of His beloved - his children - on it; if He had a wallet, He’d have a photo of His beloved in it. Every day, God sends a gift to His beloved one in very special wrapping.

Believing in God is a matter for the heart. It’s not merely an experience of the mind. Just as in the human love experience, the heart believes it’s in love. Believing in God is not a question for thinkers; it’s a matter of falling in love.

A new safety and protection curriculum for changing times

This month the Diocese of Tucson will be training parish and school representatives in a new children’s personal safety program called Circle of Grace.

The plan is to have the new program ready and in place for the fall. You may remember reading an introduction of this program in the May edition of this newspaper. Here’s some of the history behind this new direction.

For almost two years, the Office of Child, Adolescent and Adult Protection has been working with a committee representing parishes, schools and youth ministry to determine the educational needs of those enrolled in our safe environment program.

The previous curriculum, adopted in 2006, focused on strategies of education and prevention of sexual abuse. We now are concentrating on making children and parents aware of other trends: introducing various means of social media; coping with peer pressure, suicide and substance abuse; and human trafficking. These are the issues our families increasingly are encountering.

The committee developed a short needs assessment to determine which elements of instruction had worked for us in the past and which instruction could be improved. Committee members also reviewed several nationally recognized safety programs. The feedback and recommendations we received included more age-appropriate materials for children and young adults, videos to address bullying and cyberbullying for middle and high students, the need for a curriculum to address issues facing our parents and children, and simpler information about how to prevent many forms of abuse.

We now are concentrating on making children and parents aware of other trends: introducing various means of social media; coping with peer pressure, suicide and substance abuse; and human trafficking.

The Circle of Grace curriculum was the program recommended by the committee. Some of the key reasons for that selection included:

1. The curriculum considers the development of the child using relationships familiar to the child.
2. It incorporates safety and Catholic teaching.
3. There is strong emphasis on increasing conversation during activities.

4. There are tests before and after lessons to measure student understanding of the content.
5. The program provides parent guides about how to approach sensitive information.
6. There is a “Train the Trainer” guide.
7. The program is revised as trends change.

In September of 2017, the committee recommended Circle of Grace to Bishop emeritus Gerald F. Kicanas and to Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy, the diocesan Moderator of the Curia. The leaders reviewed it and gave permission to use the new curriculum. In addition, our the diocesan Presbyteral Council (comprised of priest representatives from each of the vicariates) concurred and approved use of the curriculum. Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger subsequently approved this program.

We look forward to this program improving our safety net throughout our diocese.

I am grateful to the following committee members for their commitment and passion in assisting the Office of Child, Adolescent and Adult Protection in this critical work: Mike Berger, Laura Stehle, Michelle Buhs, Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Veronica Loya, Meredith Clack and Megan Joyce.

Celaya-Alston is the director of the Office of Child, Adolescent and Adult Protection for the Diocese of Tucson.
Questions asked by a first generation digital immigrant
With all information at our fingertips, has contemplation eluded our grasp?

Information technology and social media aren't my mother tongue. I'm a digital immigrant. I wasn't born into the world of information technology but migrated into it, piecemeal. I first lived in some foreign territories. I was nine years old before I lived with electricity. I had seen it before; but neither our home, our school, nor our neighbors had electricity. Electricity, when I first saw it, was a huge revelation. While I grew up with radio, I was 14 before our family got its first television set. Again, this was a revelation - and manna for my adolescent hunger for connection to the larger world. Electricity and television quickly became a mother tongue. One lit our home and other brought the big world into it. The phone was still foreign to me. When I left home at age 17, our family still did not have a phone.

It would be years before I mastered recent innovations in information technology. Just look at the depth and scope of what now demands our attention: computers, the internet, websites, mobile phones, smart phones, television and movie access through the internet, cloud storage, social media, virtual assistants and a world Facebook being all I can handle, I still do not have either an Instagram or Twitter account. I'm the only person in my immediate religious community who still prays the office of the church out of a book rather than off a mobile device.

I'm not against information technology; mainly, it's just that I'm not very good at it. I struggle with the language. It's hard to master a new language as an adult and I envy the young who can speak this language well.

What's to be said about the revolution in information technology? Is it good or bad? Obviously, it has many positives. It's making us the most informed people ever in the history of this world. Information is power and the internet and social media have leveled the playing field in terms of access to information. This is serving well the developing nations in the world. Moreover, it's creating one global village out of the whole world. We now know all of our neighbors, not just those who live nearby. We're the best-informed and best-connected people ever.

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However, all of this also has a pejorative underbelly: We talk to each other less than we text each other. We have many virtual friends but not always many real friends. We watch nature on a screen more than we ever physically touch it. We spend more time looking at a device in our hands than engaging others face to face.

When I walk through a public space, I see most people staring at their phones. Is this a good thing? Does it foster friendship and community or is it their substitute? It's too early to tell. The initial generations who lived through the Industrial Revolution did not have any way of knowing what the long-range effects of this would be. The technological revolution, I believe, is just as radical and we are its initial generation. At this time we have no way of knowing where this will ultimately take us, for good or bad.

One apparent negative is that the technological revolution is destroying the few remaining remnants we retain in keeping “Sabbath” in our lives. The 13th-century mystic, Rumi, once lamented: “I have lived too long where I can be reached.” That’s infinitely truer of us today than it was for those living in the 13th century. Thanks to our electronic devices, we can be reached all the time. Too often, we let ourselves be reached all time. The result is that now we no longer have any time apart from what we regularly do. Our family times, our recreational times, our vacations - even our prayer times - are rendered regular time constantly by our “being reached.” My fear is that while we are going to be the most informed people ever, we may well become the least contemplative people ever.

Father Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, award-winning author and president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com.
Third in a 10-part series  
By CACKIE UPCHURCH  
Director of Little Rock Scripture Study

Recently, I heard a radio interview with a professor who once had been an evangelical, then what he called a “liberal Protestant” and finally now is agnostic. He is a learned man and took his faith seriously enough to wrestle with hard realities, and in the end he abandoned faith in God.

His reason? There is simply too much suffering in the world to believe in a God who would permit it to continue.

There is indeed too much suffering in the world, but I wonder if this man’s understanding of Scripture stood in the way of allowing God’s Word to fully speak. He indicated that he was raised to believe that the Bible is true in every way, and that prayer is answered for those who believe.

He began to struggle with why some people seem to have their prayers answered and others, such as children starving around the world, do not.

Perhaps we, like the professor I heard, expect the Bible to be “true” in every possible way - historically, scientifically, psychologically - and when we find discrepancies or inconsistencies, we begin to doubt or even abandon all of it, including the God who used this sacred writing to reveal himself.

Our Catholic tradition maintains that the books of Scripture teach “solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation” (Dei Verbum, 11).

In other words, the Bible teaches the truth God wants us to know for our salvation, the truth embodied in the person of Jesus Christ who proclaimed the fullness of God’s kingdom. While there are historical underpinnings to sections of the Bible such as the books of Kings or the Gospels or the letters of Paul, the Bible is not written as pure history.

Nor is it written as a science book. This is especially true considering that what was once considered science in the ancient world would not stand the test of accuracy by today’s standards. Science asks the question of “how” something occurred, and history asks the questions of “when” and “what” occurred.

The Bible is much more a book that addresses the question of “why”: Why did creation occur? Why does God engage a relationship with mere humans? Why are the commandments the foundation of the covenant? Why did God send his only Son and allow him to die? Why are we bound for new life promised in the resurrection?

When we ponder the larger questions, the “why” questions, we begin to see that the truth needed for our salvation cannot be limited to the simple transmission of facts. This truth goes much deeper. It has to do with God’s loving intention for the world and all its creatures, God’s generosity embodied in his Son, and God’s desire that we love God and neighbor so much so that we begin to embody God’s own generosity and goodness in the world.

As Catholic Christians, we expect to encounter God in the words of the Bible, and we expect to grow more in love with Christ each time we allow God’s Word to speak its simple and profound truths to us. When we pray and study the words of Scripture, we ask at least two fundamental questions of God: What do you want me to know in this reading? How do you want me to change?

What has Scripture promised and revealed to us about God’s truth? Here are a few ideas:

- God’s generosity cannot be outdone. God’s mercy and love are never withdrawn.
- The suffering and death of Jesus contained within them the promise that He would be with us in our own suffering.
- The resurrection ensures that suffering is never the final word.
- God sends the Holy Spirit to animate and direct us.
- Prayer is speaking to God, but it is also listening with the expectation of being moved to act, to be God’s love in the world.
- God’s loving kindness, manifest in healing and mercy and justice, is most often accomplished through ordinary people.

Reading the Bible is more than an intellectual exercise; it is a practice that instills in us the expectation that God’s truth will transform us so that we become the vehicles of God’s continuing work in the world.

We participate in building the kingdom of God.

Study Questions

What do you hope to find in the Bible when you read from it or hear it proclaimed at Mass? How might your expectations color what you hear and how you understand it?

Jesus teaches his followers, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:31–32). In addition to alert listening to the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, what practices do you have (or might you begin) to help you recognize God’s truth in your life?

What issues cause you to stretch your understanding of God? How does a prayerful reading of Scripture assist you?

Can you think of some examples of how Christians have responded to suffering in their midst as a way of responding to God? As a way of demonstrating God’s care?

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was Bishop Edward McCarthy, an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Ohio, installed on Dec. 2, 1969.

Less than a month later, Msgr. Fuller began his tenure as pastor at St. Pius X. Msgr. Fuller said that while some sources say he was the founding pastor at St. Pius, but it’s not quite true. When the parish was erected in 1969, Father Terence Sheridan was appointed pastor. However, Father Sheridan was diagnosed with terminal cancer and had to step back in December 1969. “I went to St. Pius X on Jan. 1, 1970.”

He began implementing the reforms of Vatican II right away. He had full elections for the parish council, including a seat for a non-Catholic member. “I wanted to open all the doors I could to people and invite them in to be, not just parishioners, but to give them a sense of ownership,” he said. “These were people who knew what they were doing, who worked hard and who had a tremendous interest in the parish.”

Msgr. Fuller acknowledged that it could have been a disaster. “I didn’t know what was going to happen. I had never been a pastor before.”

The priest stepped back as a parish building committee interviewed architects for the church, which the community intentionally want to limit to 500 seats.

Parishioners started meeting in small faith communities, and soon even religious education elementary school classes were meeting in people’s homes with teams of adults for supervision. “It must have been conducted in 30 different homes. The teens we would bring to the church, but the elementary was done in homes,” Msgr. Fuller said. “It was a logistical problem like the invasion of Normandy. It was complicated, but it worked. We had 400-500 kids in this program.”

“Pius X developed a reputation in town of being a wildly liberal parish,” he said, citing among its ground-breaking practices introducing lay ministers of Holy Communion, female altar servers and communal hand holding at the Our Father. “In some sense, it still has that reputation.”

Msgr. Fuller said he objects to that characterization. “We simply were open to try new ways, always within the limits of what the church is telling us.”

The parish also introduced adult education classes, called “Tuesday Night College,” that were so popular, they hosted 500-600 per session.

“Then-Father Robert Fuller celebrates Mass in 1963.”

These were taught by priests or University of Arizona professors, “and people could sign up like they were going to college.”

Throughout all these innovations, Msgr. Fuller said, he only received a phone call once from his mentor, Bishop Green. “I don’t think he agreed with everything I was doing out there, but he never called me on it except for one time when we invited Father Dan Berrigan to come out and give a talk.”

Father Berrigan, a Jesuit, was known for his protests against nuclear war and for other peace causes.

“This was the very first talk he would give outside of prison (in 1972),” he recalled. “(Bishop Green) said, ‘I am getting all kinds of calls about him. People are really upset over this.’ I said, ‘Bishop, I am really sorry to hear that. They shouldn’t be calling you. Tell them to call me. You didn’t invite him. I did.’”

“He asked, ‘Well, why did you invite him?’ I said, ‘Because I thought he’d have something interesting to say.’ That was his only call in 11 years,” Msgr. Fuller said.

Msgr. Philip J. Murnion, founder of the National Pastoral Life Center in New York, opened the door to the jump to Newark, N.J., Msgr. Fuller said. Msgr. Fuller had studied under Msgr. Murnion during a month-long session at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. “(We) were not real close, but I knew him from there,” the priest recalled. “I guess he heard enough from me to know that something was going on” at St. Pius.

Msgr. Thomas Kleissler was a cofounder of RENEW, a parish-based program structured along small Christian communities to help people study Scripture and other elements of their faith.

RENEW started in the Archdiocese of Newark in 1978 and quickly grew in popularity. Within three years, the three-year program had captured the interest of two other dioceses and the list was growing rapidly.

Msgr. Kleissler asked Msgr. Murnion for the names of vibrant “Vatican II” parishes, Msgr. Fuller said. “Msgr. Murnion gave him the name of my parish, St. Pius X,” he added. “The next day I get a phone call from Msgr. Kleissler saying he … wanted to come out and study our parish.”

Msgr. Kleissler and an assistant visited for about a week, attending meetings and speaking to parishioners. Before leaving, Msgr. Fuller recalled, the visitors said “I think you have a RENEW parish.” I said, ‘What is that?’ I had never heard of RENEW.”

Later, Msgr. Kleissler called him again and asked him to join the national RENEW team. After carefully weighing his pros and cons, Msgr. Fuller agreed.

“I got permission from Bishop Green to work there for five years. I got in my car and drove to Newark.”

“It was quite an experience for me, a desert rat, to end up in the greater New York area. It was really educational and interesting.”

RENEW began as a diocesan movement and grew into a national and international movement. It was incorporated into the archdiocesan structure under Archbishop Peter L. Gerety. “We had to provide our own funding, we had to raise our own money,” Msgr. Fuller said.

When he left in 1986, 35 dioceses around the world were involved in the program, he said. “After flying a million miles over five years, that was enough for me,” Msgr. Fuller said.

In 1987, he was assigned as pastor of St. Frances Cabrini, where he has remained ever since. He served a few years as Vicar for Parish Life under Bishop Manuel Moreno, and on several other advisory boards, but spent most of his time and energy on his pastorates.

His homilies became famous because of how they resonated with his listeners. He subsequently published a series of books called “Homilies from the Heart,” with proceeds benefitting the Casa Maria Soup Kitchen for low-income residents.

“I was always a good public speaker,” Msgr. Fuller said. “I speak from experience.”

As he prepares his homilies, the reflection on the readings often strikes close to home. “Many times, I am talking to myself. What is the message I need to hear? If it is what I need to hear, maybe it is what other people need to hear too,” Msgr. Fuller said.

He decided this year to finally step back from parish ministry, Msgr. Fuller said. “With my health, I am simply not able to do what I used to do. This parish deserves to have a full-time pastor and I just don’t have the energy to do it anymore.”

Msgr. Fuller looked back on his time in ministry and the bishops he served. He has many fond memories of Bishop Green, who retired in 1981 after 21 years as ordinary. After more than a decade of trying to implement the changes from Vatican II, battling difficult priests, his demeanor seemed to change overnight. “When he retired, he became a different person. He became like ‘Good old Grandad,’” Msgr. Fuller said. “He really loosened up and softened.”

Pope Francis rates as his favorite because “he believes in pushing compassion and mercy and has a real love for people.”

Msgr. Fuller said he still sees small Christian communities as an important dynamic in parishes, especially as parish communities grow larger.

Among all his accomplishments, however, Msgr. Fuller said he is most satisfied when administering the sacraments to the people. “My best years of being a priest have been when I was presiding at Mass and hearing confessions, a wonderful time when you know you are touching peoples’ hearts.”

“I would tell all young men to give serious consideration to the priesthood,” Msgr. Fuller said.

“There are no other options that are more fulfilling this this. It is living life in the best way possible.”
Este mes, la Diócesis de Tucson capacitará a representantes de parroquias y escuelas en un nuevo programa de seguridad personal para niños llamado Círculo de Gracia. Prevemos que el programa se llevará a la práctica en el otoño. Quizás recuerden que en la edición de mayo de este periódico publicamos una introducción al programa y su enfoque.

Desde hace casi dos años, la Oficina de Protección de Niños, Adolescentes y Adultos colabora con un comité que representa a las parroquias, las escuelas y el ministerio juvenil, a fin de determinar las necesidades educativas de los participantes de nuestro programa de ambiente seguro.

El currículo anterior, adoptado en 2006, se basaba en estrategias de educación y prevención del abuso sexual. Ahora, nos estamos concentrando en informar a los niños y a los padres sobre otras tendencias: los medios de comunicación social; la presión de pares, el suicidio y el abuso de sustancias; y el tráfico de seres humanos. Todos estos son temas cada vez más presentes en la vida familiar.

El comité elaboró una breve evaluación de necesidades para establecer qué elementos de la instrucción nos habían dado resultados anteriormente, y cuáles podríamos mejorar. Los miembros del comité también analizaron varios programas de seguridad reconocidos al nivel nacional. Los comentarios y recomendaciones que recibimos incluyen:

1. El currículo aborda el desarrollo del niño mediante relaciones que le son conocidas a él.
2. Incorpora seguridad y enseñanza católica.
3. Hace hincapié en fomentar la conversación durante las actividades.

Nuestros colegas, los presidentes de la Junta de Colegios, San Xavier del Bac, y San Xavier del Baco, los profesores y las profesoras de la escuela de secundaria, así como los directores de escuelas, han colaborado en estas recomendaciones con sus propias experiencias.

Un filósofo alemán llamado Federico Nietzsche proclamó: “Dios ha muerto”. Una lógica elemental capta pronto que Dios no puede morir, porque nunca nació. Los filósofos dicen: El orden presupone a un ordenador, el diseño a un diseñador, la creación a un creador, el zapato a un zapatero, etc. Pero la argumentación de los poetas no cesan de ver y plasmar la belleza. Nervo proclamó: “Dios es inaccesible al instrumento científico, al crisol, a la retorta, a la lente del ultra microscopio. Jamás instrumento científico, al crisol, a la retorta, a la lente del ultra microscopio. Jamás...”

Creer en Dios no es cuestión de pensadores, es cuestión de enamorados. Los poetas no cesan de ver y plasmar la belleza con el color de su palabra, con la cadencia de sus versos y el toque mágico de su pluma. Y donde hay belleza, ahí está Dios. Decía otro poeta: “Es una locura odiar a todas las rosas porque una te arañó; es una locura renunciar a todos tus sueños porque uno no se realizó; es una locura condenar a todas tus amistades porque una fracasó; es una locura perder la fe en Dios porque una oración no fue atendida”. Facundo Cabral dice que muchos no creen en Dios porque están distraídos de la vida que les rodea: los delfines, los bosques, los mares, las montañas, los ríos. La vida es maravillosa y sus maravillas nos hablan de Dios. El amor que Dios tiene a la persona es una experiencia comparable a la experiencia del amor humano. Dios, el enamorado cortesano, le manda flores a su amado –el hombre- en cada primavera, le manda postales de atardeceres en cada verano. Dios, el enamorado cortesano, le manda flores a su amado –el hombre- en cada primavera, le manda postales de atardeceres en cada verano. Dios, el enamorado cortesano, le manda flor...
Sacerdotes nigerianos de Tucson afligidos por violentos ataques y asesinatos

By MICHAEL BROWN
Director editorial

El Padre Samuel Jandeh, pártico de St. Francis of Assisi, en Superior, estaba enojado, atemorizado y frustrado, pero mayormente enojado.

El padre Jandeh dijo que aunque no parece haber muchas razones para creer que las cosas van a cambiar, deben tener esperanzas. Con sus familias y amigos tan lejos, los sacerdotes no pueden dejar de pensar en lo que estarán viviendo. “Nosotros estamos aquí porque una vez tuvimos nuestro hogar allá”.

Y no son solo las comunidades agrícolas que están siendo atacadas por los fulani. La familia del padre Kusugh vive en Makurdi, la capital de Benue. El 13 de enero pasado, hubo disturbios allí con un saldo de una persona muerta y varios vehículos y edificios destruidos. El padre y los hermanos del padre Kusugh se vieron obligados a refugiarse en un cuarto con su perro, mientras los vándalos saqueaban la casa.

“Hasta el día de hoy, no sé por qué el perro no ladró”, comenta. “Si hubiese ladrado, yo habría tenido que pedir licencia para viajar a casa a enterar a mi familia”.

Según la información divulgada en los medios de comunicación, los ataques de nómadas fulani, que se identifican como musulmanes, originaron hace alrededor de seis años cuando empezaron a pastar sus granjas, que quedan abandonados cuando los pastores fulani, que de esa manera logran hacerse con los pastos que quedan abandonados cuando los residentes huyen de sus granjas, que han habilitado durante generaciones.

“El padre Felix corrió por su vida cuando vio que unas mujeres se desmoronaban. Él regresó para animarlas a correr, y ellas señalaron a un niño que había caído. El padre Felix fue a recoger al niño. Cuando las mujeres giraron la cabeza hacia atrás, ya no vieron al padre. Los pastores le habían disparado y le cortaron el cuello. También mataron al niño”, dijo el padre Jandeh.

El padre Jandeh y el padre Richard Kusugh, pártico de Sacred Heart en Parker, son miembros de Via Christi, una sociedad de vida apostólica de la Diócesis de Makurdi, Nigeria. El padre John Ikponko, sacerdote de la Diócesis de Makurdi que fue canciller antes de venir a Tucson en 2017, dijo que el padre Felix había servido en una iglesia misión en Yobgo. Esa iglesia fue destruida a principios de este año y sus miembros fueron desplazados por los ataques de los pastores fulani, por lo que el padre Felix había estado trabajando como sacerdote ayudante del padre Joseph en St. Ignatius.

El día de Año Nuevo, pastores nómadas coordinaron ataques en los que murieron 36 personas en Benue. “Andan matando gente, arrasando con todo, y quebrantando las casas antes de fugarse”, dijo el padre Jandeh.

El padre Kusugh comentó que el conflicto puede confundirse porque tiene raíces yihadistas, hay intereses económicos de por medio, existen tensiones tribales, y los fulani han reaccionado violentamente a una ley que prohíbe el pastoreo de ganado en ese territorio.

“¿Cómo se salen con la suya? Parecería que el gobierno federal los está protegiendo”, dijo. “Algo como esto en el año 2018 resiste a la lógica humana”.

“El gobierno no está dispuesto a aplicar la ley. Está permitiendo que suceda todo esto”, añadió. “Sencillamente no tiene sentido”.

Otros informativos señalan que, si bien el presidente nigeriano, Muhammadu Buhari, ha prometido enviar soldados para localizar y arrestar a los asesinos, políticamente él está vinculado a los pastores. El padre Jandeh dijo que los operativos federales llegan solamente después de que los pastores fulani han desaparecido del sitio o se han marchado a otros estados, y que el gobierno no mantiene un contingente estable en Benue a pesar de los continuos asaltos.


El pasado mes de junio, el padre Kusugh había viajado a Nigeria para asistir a una reunión general de la Sociedad Via Christi y allí renovó su amistad con el padre Joseph. El padre Kusugh comentó que sufría de intensos dolores de espalda, y que su amigo, habiéndose percatado de ello, le hacía masajes todos los días. Para cuando terminaron las reuniones, los tratamientos habían surtido efecto, y el padre Kusugh ya podía moverse de un lado a otro sin dolor.

“Eso no fue un caso aislado”, dijo el padre Kusugh. “El vivía su vida para los demás”. Después de la ordenación del padre Joseph en 2013, la gente acudió a él en busca de guía espiritual, dijo el padre Kusugh. “En una parroquia anterior, uno veía a la gente formando fila nada más que para verlo a él”.

“Que haya muerto de una forma tan horrible…”, empezó a decir, pero no llegó a terminar la frase.

Algunas personas podrían pensar, “Oh, eso pasó allá. Seguramente él está bien”, dijo, añadiendo que le hace bien mantenerse en contacto con los padres Jandeh, Ikponko y otros sacerdotes de la zona para sentirse apoyado e informarse. “De ese modo, no tengo que afrontarlo solo”.

Padre Joseph Gor

Padre Felix Tyolaha

Padre John Ikponko
La Palabra de Dios nos enseña la verdad de Dios

La Palabra de Dios nos enseña la verdad de Dios incluyendo al Dios que utilizó la duda o incluso a abandonar todo, y psicológicamente — y cuando posibles — histórica, científica sea verdad en todos los modos escuché, esperamos que la Biblia sea verdad en todos los modos que fue criado creyendo que la de la Escritura de este hombre le permitiera que muriera? ¿Por qué ocurrió la creación? ¿Por qué entra Dios en una relación con meros humanos? ¿Por qué son los mandamientos el fundamento de la alianza? ¿Por qué envió Dios a su único Hijo y permitió que muriera? ¿Por qué estamos destinados a la nueva vida prometida en la resurrección? Cuando pensamos en las preguntas más amplias, las amemos a Dios y al prójimo tanto que empecemos a encarnar la propia generosidad y bondad de Dios en el mundo. Como cristianos católicos, esperamos encontrarnos a Dios en las palabras de la Biblia, y esperamos crecer más en el amor de Cristo cada vez que permitimos que la Palabra de Dios nos comunique sus sencillas y profundas verdades. Cuando oramos y estudiamos las palabras de la Escritura, hacemos por lo menos dos preguntas fundamentales a Dios: ¿Qué quieres que aprenda en esta lectura? ¿Cómo quieres que cambie?

Y ¿qué nos ha prometido y revelado la Escritura sobre este amor? Aquí hay algunas ideas:

- La bondad amorosa de Dios, manifestada en la sanación, la misericordia y la justicia, a menudo se realiza a través de personas corrientes. El leer la Biblia es más que un ejercicio intelectual. Es una práctica que nos inspira la expectativa de que la verdad de Dios nos va a transformar para que podamos convertirnos en los instrumentos de la continuación de la obra de Dios en el mundo. Participamos en la construcción del reino de Dios.

Preguntas para la reflexión o discusión:

¿Qué esperas encontrar en la Biblia cuando la lees o la escuchas proclamada en la Misa? ¿Cómo podrían tus expectativas influir en lo que oyes y en cómo lo entiendes?

Jesús enseña a sus seguidores: “Si permanecen en mi palabra, serán mis discípulos, y la verdad los hará libres” (Juan 8,31-32). Además de estar alerta a escuchar la Liturgia de la Palabra en la Misa, ¿qué prácticas tienes (o podrías comenzar) para ayudarte a reconocer la verdad de Dios en tu vida?

¿Qué asuntos te mueven a ensanchar tu comprensión de Dios? ¿Cómo te puede ayudar una lectura orante de la Escritura?

¿Puedes pensar en algunos ejemplos de cómo los cristianos han respondido al sufrimiento en medio de ellos como modo de responder a Dios? ¿Cómo un modo de demostrar el cuidado de Dios?

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Por el obispo emérito Gerald F. Kicanas

La Diócesis de Tucson ha estado vinculada a la Diócesis de Makurdi y la comunidad Via Christi (una orden religiosa diocesana de Makurdi) desde hace más de 20 años. En un principio, el obispo Athanasius Usuh, obispo de Makurdi, acordó enviar a dos sacerdotes a servir en Tucson: los padres Matthew Asemenga y Francis Iber, quienes brindaron servicios en la zona de Yuma. Más adelante, el padre Iber fue párroco de St. Francis, en Superior. Varios años después, me reúni con el padre Angus Fraser, fundador de la comunidad Via Christi, y el acordó enviar tres sacerdotes, los padres James Aboyi, Sebastian Bula y Richard Kusugh, para ayudarnos a atender a nuestras parroquias. Estos sacerdotes han sido toda una bendición, trabajando como misioneros en una cultura diferente de la suya para brindar atención pastoral en nuestras comunidades.

Hace ya unos años, tuve la oportunidad de visitar las diócesis de Gboko, Lafia, Katsina-Ala y Makurdi. Todas ellas nos han enviado sacerdotes. Para mí, haber sido testigo de la fe, el fervor y el dinamismo de los sacerdotes y la gente de esos lugares fue una experiencia maravillosa. Tuve el privilegio de ordenar a 10 jóvenes para la Diócesis de Gboko. La música y la participación de la gente fueron increíbles, y todos recibieron con gran júbilo a estos nuevos sacerdotes. En el estado de Benue, se me presentó la ocasión de visitar el seminario Via Christi y el seminario de Makurdi, y de conocer a muchos jóvenes que estudiaban para ser sacerdotes. Su entusiasmo y sus deseos de servir eran realmente admirables. Durante mi visita, me encontré con cada uno de los obispos que habían enviado sacerdotes a servir aquí: los obispos William Avenya (Gboko), Peter Adoboh (Katsina-Ala), Matthew Audu (Lafia), Wilfred Agnabe (Makurdi), y el cardenal John Onaiyekan (Arquidiócesis de Abuja), cuyo hermano Michael vive en Tucson. Él había estado de visita en Tucson hacía unos años, y nos habíamos hecho buenos amigos. Ahora él se encuentra con el Señor.

No se imaginen, tras tantos años de amistad y solidaridad, el gran dolor que yo y otras personas de nuestra diócesis sentimos al enterarnos de que dos de los sacerdotes, el padre Joseph Gor y el padre Felix Tyolaha, junto con 17 fieles, fueron brutalmente atacados y asesinados por pastores fulani cuando celebraban Misa en Ayar-Mbalom, una aldea remota del estado de Benue.

Enviamos nuestro apoyo y nuestra fuerza a los obispos, sacerdotes, y a la gente del estado de Benue, Nigeria, donde la tensión continúa escalando. La semana después de este trágico acontecimiento, estuve en Roma y me enteré de que todos los obispos nigerianos estaban también allí visitando a nuestro Santo Padre, el papa Francisco, en el marco de la visita ad limina. Yo había llamado al obispo Agnabe y al padre Theo (dirigente de la comunidad Via Christi) para expresar nuestro pésame por su pérdida.

Los acompañamos en el dolor, y nos solidarizamos con la Iglesia de Nigeria que ha tenido un impacto tan significativo en nuestra diócesis. Rezamos para que ellos sepan de nuestra preocupación. Le pedimos al Señor que vigile y proteja a la comunidad para que no haya más violencia ni pérdida de vida inocente. Que en paz descansen todos los que fallecieron, y que sus familias sientan el consuelo de que sus seres queridos ahora se encuentran en presencia de Dios.