Father Kirby Hlavaty, one of two spiritual directors at the Emmaus Center, prays with Toni Schaar. She has been meeting with Father Kirby monthly for years in a desire to have a stronger prayer life. (Photo by Janet Jones)

**Spiritual directors help people explore God’s role in their lives**

“I guess I looked like I was striving,” Kotzur said.

Now, as he approaches his ordination as a deacon, he has had several years of working with Father Kirby Hlavaty, one of the spiritual directors at the Emnmaus Center in Victoria. Kotzur said Father Kirby has helped him realize all these years later what the late Monsignor Harrold was talking about.

“If nothing else, I’ve learned to never overlook silence, and the importance of just being in God’s presence,” Kotzur said.

Father Kirby, who is also pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ganado, fell in love with the study of spirituality – in particular Ignatian spirituality, based on teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order – while in seminary. “I had never heard the term ‘spiritual director’

See Spiritual directors help people, pg. 13

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**Families in formation**

**BY JANET JONES**

*The Catholic Lighthouse*

EL CAMPO – Even before the Year of the Family was proclaimed in the Diocese of Victoria, there were couples in the diocese discerning a new type of ministry as missionaries to the family.

See Families in formation, pg. 18

**Diocese getting 15 new deacons**

Bishop Brendan Cahill will ordain 15 men in Diocese of Victoria as permanent deacons on Nov. 21 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria.

Deacon Dennis Kutach, director of Deaconate Ministry and Life, said it is the largest group to be ordained in the diocese so far. He also called it “a real blessing” to have that many new clergymen ministering to the people of the diocese.

The ordination will be live-streamed on the Our Lady of Victory web site. Because of limited seating, invitations will be required to attend the Mass in person.

The next group of deacon candidates will begin the process of discernment and formation in January. The application process already has begun. Anyone interested should contact Deacon Charles Glynn, director of Permanent Diaconate Formation at cglynn@victoriadiocese.org.

The candidates for ordination are pictured on Page 20.
‘Take, Lord, and receive’

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For the past several years I’ve been considering the possibility of making a 30-day Ignatian retreat. I remember sharing the idea with my priest prayer group more than five years ago and being convinced of the value of some extended time in prayer for me and for my priestly ministry.

At that time I had turned 50 years old and was about to celebrate my 25th anniversary as a priest. Every year since then I’ve thought about the possibility, but I never seemed to be able to come up with the time.

This year, in the midst of the global pandemic, the idea of making an extended retreat re-surfaced. Now I’m more than 55 years old, I have celebrated 30 years as a priest, and I try to make a complete offering of myself to God for the good of the people of the diocese and the salvation of all the souls in our area.

During these past few months, I’ve had some extra time to pray and reflect in the midst of the tremendous stress caused by the uncertainty and fear of the pandemic. A few of the reflections led me to realize that this may be the right time to make a 30-day Ignatian retreat.

On the day after Christmas, I will be going to a retreat center in Boerne, Texas, and will be there in silence until Jan. 26. During that time, I’ll meet with a spiritual director each day for about 45 minutes and share about the spiritual insights from the prayer.

I’m kind of excited about this. I’ve never made a retreat longer than eight days before.

During that month, I will be praying especially for each of you. And, as I always ask, please keep me in your prayers.

I hope the Rosary Congress and the Year of the Family helps each of us to focus our prayers and actions for hope and healing in our world. Whether we are asking God to bring an end to the suffering of the pandemic around the world or to hold our families in His peace, our prayers are effective and may be the most important words we say each day.

May you and your families have a blessed and joyful Thanksgiving, acknowledging God’s grace and blessing in every moment, and thankful for the gift of faith in the presence of Jesus Christ in our world, +Brendan

A Shepherd’s Message

By Bishop Brendan Cahill

The kitchen a place to share more than food

With Thanksgiving in mind, let’s explore the “eat” part of the Year of the Family motto, “Pray, Eat, Play.”

The eat-in kitchen is the room where everyone crosses paths during the day, at least at my house. Because it’s a busy room, even if the little TV on the counter is on, it doesn’t have the same power to hold our attentions captive. It’s also the place where we are going to say at least one prayer, a prayer of thanks, together as a family.

More time in the kitchen together is more opportunity to talk about anything and everything. It’s also a good time to engage little ones in some family teamwork to prepare special foods. Most children love to help in the kitchen, so the holidays are a good time to break out the cookie cutters and sprinkles and look up some sugar cookie recipes.

One year my daughter and I made little Santa hats with Bugles chips, red candy coating, tiny white marshmallows and little pearly sugar beads. I borrowed the idea from someone else who had found the idea on Pinterest. It was a long, messy process but when we finished, we added the little hats to bags with other snack mix ingredients and had some super cute gifts. What it gave us is a lot of time to sit at the table together and visit.

If you already use Pinterest you know that you can show the slightest amount of interest in kid-friendly recipes and the website will hunt you down to offer you more “pins” than you can use in a lifetime.

In almost any family gathering food is important, if not the centerpiece. Even on an everyday basis, a favorite dish is something that can bring everyone together. It is precious family time. The Year of the Family is time to be very intentional about how we can make this time even better.

Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Canales, one of the couples becoming a Missionary to the Family for St. Robert’s (see Page 1) and one of the deacon candidates to be ordained Nov. 21 (See Page 20) offered his Ranchero Sauce recipe for others to make and enjoy together.

“We would do this especially on Sundays as a family,” he said.

Ranchero Sauce

1 can of original or extra hot Rotel tomatoes (10-12 ounce)
1/2 cup of diced link sausage
1/2 cup mozzarella cheese
pinch of salt
pinch of pepper
pinch of garlic powder
bacon grease

Instructions: Fry the diced sausage link in the bacon grease. After it is cooked, add the Rotel and all the spices and mix together. Last, put mozzarella cheese on top and let it melt. Put over scrambled eggs or over easy eggs. Delicious!
Stella Maris calling for Christmas gifts for seafarers

This year, Christmas at Sea, may be even more appreciated as COVID-19 has kept many ships’ crews onboard for much longer than they expected.

Christmas at Sea is part of the Seafarers program at the port in Point Comfort.

Last year, about 40 organizations, churches, scouting groups, schools, families and more donated 926 gifts to be delivered to ships.

In Point Comfort, 517 gifts went onboard 31 vessels with crews from 20 counties. Gifts also were distributed in the Port of Victoria, Corpus Christi and Port Arthur. All of the gifts donated reached seafarers during the holidays.

Delivery will begin after Thanksgiving this year and continue until all packages are delivered.

Gifts for crew members should be packed in standard-size shoeboxes or a drawstring ditty bag (about 12 by 15 inches). Monetary donations also can be accepted.

Items to put in the boxes include personal hygiene products, lip balm and lotion, crew socks, hand towels and washcloths, picture postcards, crew socks, gum and other snacks, flashlights with batteries, sunglasses, and more. After a box is filled, it should be wrapped securely in Christmas paper. The group requests men’s items, as there are very few women onboard the ships.

Completed packages can be dropped off at the Diocese of Victoria Chancery, 1505 E. Mesquite in Victoria, Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church, 415 W. Austin St. in Port Lavaca, Russell Cain Real Estate, 2025 State Hwy. 36 in Port Lavaca, St. John’s Episcopal Church, 300 3rd St. in Palacios, or Mike’s on Main Café, 458 Main St. in Palacios.

For more information, contact Rhonda at stellamaris@olgulf.org.

A complete list of items needed for seafarers go to www.victoriadiocese.org/christmas-at-sea. Here are just a few of the items needed: shampoo, tissues, cotton swabs, lip balm, lotion, powder, shaving stuff, dental stuff, nail clippers, wet wipes, Texas souvenirs, small towels, crew socks, t-shirts, ski or ball caps, small games, gloves, ink pens, and flashlights with batteries.
The Education of Seminarian Fund is a fund in which all of the monies donated to this fund, as well as the earnings, are available to cover the cost of educating seminarians. The proceeds of the special collection on Holy Thursday are deposited into the Education of Seminarian Fund. Publication of this fund will appear when new contributions are received.

Donation categories:  Lector – $.01 - $99.99; Acolyte – $100 - $499.99; Candidate – $500 - $1,499.99; Transitional Deacon – $1,500 - $2,499.99; Priest – $2,500 >.

Publication of this fund will appear when new contributions are received.

Happy Birthday to Our Seminarians

Ryan Kapavik this year is in his Pastoral year at St. Mary Parish in Victoria. Ryan’s hometown is Shiner. His birthday is November 14. Write to Ryan at: St. Mary Church, 402 S Main St, Victoria TX 77901.

Aaron Padilla is in Theology II at St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston. Aaron’s hometown is Victoria. His birthday is November 15. Write to Aaron at: St. Mary’s Seminary, 9845 Memorial Dr, Houston, TX 77024.

“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:18-22
When times are hard, remember the ultimate reward

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following sermon was written for the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Father Kram titled it “Hope for a Brighter Future.”

God has surrounded us with so many reminders of our mortality and of the fact that one day all things will pass away. The buds of spring growing to maturity and then the harvest time and finally the dead of winter; the infant growing into childhood, then youth, then maturity and finally old age; the decay and disintegration of things that were once new – all these things keep before our minds the thought of how one day all things will come to an end, and so will we.

Such realizations can make one angry or frustrated or anxious, but rather than say, “What’s the use?” we Christians say, “Death is the gateway to life,” and “Thanks be to God for the many blessings he hides in our trials.”

If we have no secure existence here, it is so much better to learn to hold on too tightly to anything God has given us and to learn to love and cherish HIM above all things.

When Pope John was nearing death, he said, “My bags are packed.” He got ready, and soon he died. One cancer patient I visited in the hospital kept saying, “I’m so ready,” and soon she died.

Many a faithful soul has seen God’s hand preparing him for his departure.

God has a kind way of preparing his children for their exit from this world. When the time comes, they are ready and can leave gracefully without any regrets.

So what if in the meantime many of our plans fail; what if happiness seems always to be just around the corner; what if we see the innocent suffer and the guilty prosper. God does not balance his books once a month, but there will one day be a day of reckoning that one day all things will pass away.

Counting cardinals: Congregations, continents represented increase

Related story, Page 17

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With Pope Francis’ new picks for the College of Cardinals, the body will be more religious than ever -- in the sense that the number of cardinals coming from religious orders will rise to 51.

The Jesuit pope’s confreres do not lead the tally; in first place are members of the Salesian order, which has nine cardinals. The Jesuits come next with seven.

Thanks to Pope Francis’ nominations Oct. 25, the cardinal-followers of St. Francis of Assisi would be tied with the Salesians if it weren’t for the fact that they live out their vows in three different communities: the Friars Minor, the Capuchins and the Conventual Franciscans.

Two Capuchins, a Conventual Franciscan and a Scalabrinian are among the 13 new cardinals Pope Francis plans to create during a consistory Nov. 28.

Those who will receive their red hats come from eight countries, including Brunei and Rwanda, which have never had cardinals before. They will bring the total number of cardinals to 231 from 91 countries.

For the first time, the number of countries represented by members of the College of Cardinals will go over 90; it was only three years ago – at the consistory to create cardinals in June 2017 – that the number first topped 80 nations.

Eighty is a significant number for the College of Cardinals. Since 1971, according to a law issued by St. Paul VI, when a cardinal celebrates his 80th birthday, he is no longer eligible to enter a conclave to elect a new pope.

Four of the churchmen chosen by the pope in October already have turned 80, so their nominations are seen as a papal plaudit for a life of extraordinary ministry: Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, 80, is a dual Italian-U.S. citizen long involved in ministry to migrants; Mexican Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, the 80-year-old retired bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, has long been recognized for his care of indigenous people; Italian Father Enrico Feroci, 80, is former director of Rome’s Caritas; and Italian Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, 86, has been preacher of the papal household for 40 years.

On the younger side, after the November consistory, there will be 128 cardinals eligible to enter a conclave, and they will come from 67 nations.

With 53 electors, Europeans will continue to have the largest number, but the situation is unlikely ever to be a repeat of the 1922 conclave when only 53 cardinals – all Europeans – entered the Sistine Chapel to choose the successor to Pope Benedict XV. The two eligible U.S. cardinals, one from Canada and one from Brazil did not arrive in time to participate. Since then, the amount of time between a papal death and the election of his successor has been expanded, but air travel also is a factor.

When the new cardinals are created, the geographical distribution of the electors will be: just over 41 percent from Europe; 14 percent from Africa; 10 percent from the United States and Canada; almost 19 percent from Latin America; 12.5 percent from Asia; and 3 percent from Oceania.
**Small wonders can have huge impact for grateful hearts**

During the month of November, our hearts and minds generally look forward to celebrating the beautiful occasion of Thanksgiving with family and friends. Our Thanksgiving meal, traditionally a joyful occasion when the entire extended family gets together, may look different this year. The gatherings may be downsized to comply with current precautions to safeguard the wellbeing of all our guests and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

How, then, are we to honor this national day of expressing gratitude for God’s providence?

We can become more aware of God’s action in our lives as we look at the ordinary persons and events as special gifts of God. A beautiful sunset, a serene panorama of land or water, a well-executed symphony concert, the smile of a loved one -- all these can touch our hearts and invoke gratitude of those who are aware of God’s action in our lives.

These occurrences are finite reflections of the infinite grandeur of the divine for which our lives are lived. Just think of the parents of a newly arrived baby; they are in a unique position to appreciate God’s creative power as partners. Seeing the tiny, perfectly formed fingers and toes; feeling the tiny hands grasp their fingers; watching the little child babble with joy; and seeing their eyes begin to focus on “Mommy” and follow her every action are special moments that speak mightily of the goodness of God.

Life is full of small events that can evoke reflection of God in the consciousness of the spiritually awake person. Watching a pair of birds build a perfectly engineered nest and waiting for the eggs under the protective care of the parent birds to bring forth new life can remind us of the care that God has for each of us. Following the metamorphosis of a butterfly can serve as a call to conversion or as a symbol of resurrection -- the resurrection of Jesus in which we all hope to share. Awesome images of God’s love!

Then, as we join our nation in publicly expressing gratitude for the blessings that God has bestowed upon us, let us be mindful that a habitual spirit of gratitude will propel us along the road of sanctity. We thank God that our culture realizes the need to observe this spirit, which is so much a part of our spiritual heritage.

Looking at everything through the lens of gratitude will improve our outlook on life as a whole. Some of us have to work a little harder than others to cultivate this vision. Sometimes we are so busy worrying about what’s wrong that we deprive ourselves of the pleasure of recognizing our blessings. Let us channel this “worry” energy into “count your blessings” energy. So, every time we find ourselves slipping into our “critical” mode of thinking and speaking, let us remember to reflect upon and give thanks for the blessings that God has given us. Let us, too, celebrate with gratitude all that we are and have.

Moreover, let us thank God for all of those who left their homes and loved ones behind to make our nation a beacon to so many who are still seeking the freedoms, the quality of life, and the hopes that we enjoy. Let us thank God for all of those who strive to protect our lives, our freedom, our health, and our hopes. Let us celebrate God’s goodness and inspiration in our lives. Then we’ll truly experience the spirit of the holiday.

Happy Thanksgiving!

**Sisterly Thoughts**

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS

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Religious life formation retreats are special time with ‘kindred souls’

BY SISTER MARIA DEL ROSARIO RESENDEZ, IWBS

Special to the Lighthouse

As the number of women and men in formation for religious life grew smaller, an idea was formed that communities with people in formation should gather a few times a year for special learning sessions. The intent is to help those in formation grow in their life of community, prayer and ministry.

What also has blossomed is a special friendship with kindred souls.

I have been in formation for many years. Since the beginning, Sister Megan Grewing and Sister Christina Chavez, both of the Congregation of Divine Providence, have been part of my life. We became friends before we became Sisters. We attended each other’s first professions, and we have been an anchor of support for each other as we grew within our religious communities. We call each other the OG’s since we have been there from the start of this group of friends that has grown significantly.

There have been years where we have had different religious communities involved, and there have been times when there have been few. Both men and women religious communities attend.

Three sessions in the spring and three in the fall are what we try to schedule. These sessions usually start Friday at noon and end Sunday after Mass. Presenters are brought in to teach about different topics such as the vows of religious life, prayer, Mary, the history of religious life, the future of religious life, psychological development and, most recently, racism.

After the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter on racism titled “Open Wide Our Hearts,” I asked Bishop Brendan Cahill if he would be the presenter of one of our sessions and present on that topic. To everyone’s delight, he immediately agreed.

This presentation was supposed to take place in May of this year, but, due to the pandemic, we had to be a bit more flexible about our timing and our location. We couldn’t bring people into a convent where retired sisters live, because we always have their safety and health in mind. So, for the first time, we met in the Moye Retreat Center in Castroville. I immediately fell in love with the place, which is just saturated with history. Those in attendance were Sister Megan, Sister Christina, and their formator, Sister Helen of the Congregation of Divine Providence, Sister Chon and her formator, Sister Chon of the Benedictines, and me with Sister Donna who is my formator of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters. We usually have Sister Melissa, a CDP who just made first vows also, but she wasn’t able to attend. We missed her, so we sent her some caldo de pollo (chicken soup).

The Basilians, the men’s group, at the last moment realized they were not going to make the trip because of their university classes, and that left Bishop Brendan blessed among women. It also left him alone in a smaller retreat house a short distance away from the large one where the sisters were staying, which I may or may not have told him was haunted.

We started off the presentation by watching the 2018 film “The Hate U Give.” This helped to bring us all into a spirit of understanding and community because we all experienced this together. Saturday, Bishop Brendan gave us the pastoral letter to read. We were asked to come up with questions that we would spend the rest of the session discussing. Though he couldn’t give us top-secret details on what it entails to write a pastoral letter with the USCCB, we were able to develop a better understanding of what the bishops were trying to share with us; what blind spots they were trying to get us to see; what love they were trying to have us feel.

We learned a little bit more about each other and, I think, became closer because of it. Since we had Bishop Brendan as our presenter, we were able to have Mass every day, which doesn’t always happen. So, not only did we have this deep topic to discuss, we had deep spiritual and prayer time to sit with our Lord and pray about how this topic was making us feel.

Our intercommunity sessions are also a time for us in formation to spend time together and have fun, catch up, and discuss our hardships and joys of religious life. We play jokes on each other, such as me ringing a 136-year-old bell and then adamantly blaming it on Sister Chon as I rushed away. Since I may have told Bishop Cahill that the retreat house he was staying in was haunted, we had planned some “ghostly” pranks to play on him, but I decided that wouldn’t be a good idea if I wanted to remain employed.

In this program, we build relationships that last a lifetime, and we are still in contact with many we have met through this program who have since discerned out of religious life. Two of my best friends are ones that have been in this program with me.

I really wanted Bishop Brendan to meet my “sister friends,” and I really wanted them to meet him as well. Our newest member, Sister Chon, was absolutely in awe that the bishop would take time out of his busy schedule to spend that much time with us. What was even more amazing is we found out that Bishop Brendan had actually taught her brother, now a priest, in the seminary. It’s a small world indeed.

As we who are in formation approach our final vows, we treasure this time together, the lessons we learned from our presenters, the friendships we have made, and the memories we will keep. Being among kindred souls — those who, like you, are so in love with the Lord — is a gift of unimaginable worth.

• Sister Maria Del Rosario Resendez, IWBS, is currently in her fourth year of temporary vows. She must complete five years before she can be finally professed. She has been employed as Bishop Brendan Cahill’s secretary in the Diocese of Victoria since August of 2016.

Spiritual Renewal Center

The Spiritual Renewal Center (SRC) is located on approximately 40 acres nestled along the banks of the San Antonio River and about a 25-minute drive from Victoria.

The SRC participates in the mission of the church of Victoria as well as the universal Catholic Church by providing a place apart from the demands of everyday life where individuals may go seeking God more deeply in their lives.

The SRS is open for small or large group which can be a one-day or over night with a kitchen staff to provide meals. There is also an open pavilion for outdoor activities.

Handicap accessible.

For more information or to reserve the SRC contact Matthew Boyle, director, by email mboyle@victoriadiocese.org or at 361-572-0836.
Star Council Awards given to Cuero KC Council No. 1682

Contributed Photo

Lukas Janak, Knights of Columbus District Deputy, recently presented the Star Council Award to the Cuero Knights of Columbus Council No. 1682. The awards are only given to councils that achieve the percentage goal of recruitment of new members and new insurance members. Also, all required charitable and community-oriented programs must be completed and documented in a timely manner. This award shows that the council is a full circle council, a Star Council. Pictured are, front, from left, Janak; Father Jacob Mendoza, St. Michael’s Catholic Church associate pastor; and Bill Morrow, Cuero KC Grand Knight. In the back row are members of Council No. 1682.

Life Chain

Contributed Photo

St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Daughters and Junior Catholic Daughters Court #2275 participated in the Pro-Life Prayer Chain on Oct. 4. The first Sunday of each October is National Life Chain Sunday. They joined other community members in a peaceful prayer chain along highways 59 and 71 praying to end abortion and protect the sanctity of life. For 33 years, pro-life Christians all across the United States and Canada have publicly, prayerfully and peacefully stood against abortion. Shown from left are, back row, Blanca, Juel, Esmeralda, Sofia Medina and Yazmin Franco, CDA Court #2275 Co-chaired; middle row, Brenda, Nevaeh, Marixa, Giselle, Angelica, Alma, Flor and Jaynee; and, front, Terri Beltran, CDA Court #2275 Regent, Jocelyn, Millie, Emily and Lupita, JCDA Court #2275 chairman.

The Annual Bishop’s Dinner

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Family prayer life often messy, but it’s worth it

As I type this column, nearly 300 homes are participating in a diocese-wide preparation for Marian Consecration, which will culminate on Nov. 21, the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is an opportunity for all in the Diocese of Victoria to present their homes and families to God, under the tender and loving care of Mary. It is also a time for families to build, or strengthen, a habit of prayer. This can be messy at times, but just like anything else important in life, the effort is worth it.

Growing up, my family didn’t pray together much, aside from giving thanks before some meals and going to Mass on some Sundays. When my personal faith grew near the end of my time in college, it became easy to build a prayer life. After all, I had all the time in the world and only myself to worry about.

After getting married, then having children, this all began to be turned upside down. I started asking, “How do I make time for my own prayer life, as well as time for prayer with my spouse? What does prayer as a couple even look like? What does prayer as a family look like? How do I keep my kids engaged and lead them in prayer in a way that makes sense for their age?”

What I’ve come to realize in trying to build a habit of prayer with my family, and speaking with other families, is that prayer looks different in every home. For some, a nightly rosary makes sense. For others, just a monthly rosary is asking a lot. And beyond the rosary, I’ve heard of many different ways families pray together. For example, I know of one family who reads the Gospel together every day over a meal and discusses it. For my family, one prayer ritual we really enjoy is having each of us in turn thank God for something that happened that day, as well as asking for His help in some area. It really lets me know what’s going on in the minds and hearts of my children. We also try to go to Mass together every day, but some days the schedules just don’t line up.

The most important thing I’ve learned about family prayer over the years is to just keep trying. Never give up on trying to build a habit of prayer. If one day gets crazy and you miss family prayer, don’t sweat it. Just try again the next day. If sitting together to pray a rosary is just too hard because of your children’s ages, or their temperament that day, do not worry. Try something else. Be creative. Let the Holy Spirit do His work.

Oftentimes, our prayer life can get hung up because we think it needs to look a certain way. What it needs to look like is how it looks when one of our children comes up to us asking for something. Sometimes they repeat themselves, other times they are sweet, and other times they scream. Prayer, in essence, needs to be an honest conversation between us and Our Heavenly Father. If we start there, and make a consistent effort, God will do the rest.

• Until next time, I hope you can discuss this topic with family and friends at your own table. If you’d ever like to discuss with me something I’ve written, please do not hesitate to reach out at 361-573-0828 x 2265 or jreyes@victoriadiocese.org. God bless!

All Souls’ Day 2020 is poignant reminder of COVID-19

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The feast of All Souls’ Day, when Catholics remember and pray for the dead, has weighted significance this year when so many have died of COVID-19 and the pandemic’s restrictions have prevented usual funeral services and final goodbyes in person.

As of Oct. 29, about 228,000 people in the United States alone have died of COVID-19. As that number continues to rise, it is no surprise that on All Souls’ Day, Nov. 2, many parishes and dioceses are remembering these deaths with Masses, prayers or special altars.

Conversely, because of pandemic restrictions, some dioceses also have had to cancel, or at least modify or livestream, their usual All Souls’ Day commemorations often held at Catholic cemeteries.

Paulist Father Larry Rice, who lives in Austin, Texas, and is currently between assignments, said the Day of the Dead celebrations in Texas have been curbed due to the pandemic, but even when they are simply done at home — the Catholic expression of the domestic church — these celebrations serve as reminders of connections between loved ones living and dead.

He said the church’s celebration of All Souls’ Day is a reminder that the “bonds of love and affection that we form in life do not dissolve in death,” quoting a prayer from the Mass of Christian Burial.
Día de los Muertos un momento para reír, llorar y celebrar

POR HERMANA MARIA DEL ROSARIO RESENDEZ, IWBS
Especial para The Lighthouse

El Día de los Difuntos y el Día de los Muertos caen el mismo día todos los años, el 2 de noviembre. Ese día se centra en recordar a aquellos que amamos y que se han ido a un lugar mejor.

El Día de los Muertos es una celebración tradicional mexicana que comienza el 31 de octubre y termina el 2 de noviembre. Las familias se reúnen en las tumbas de sus seres queridos para limpiar y decorar con diferentes artículos. Los más comunes son las caléndulas, la flor azteca de los muertos y las velas. Este no es Halloween mexicano; Es un momento de celebración de la vida con un triduo para recordar a nuestra querida familia y amigos que nos han precedido, para compartir recuerdos de ellos, y para recordar que cada día que pasamos sin verlos físicamente, es un día más cerca de estar con ellos, otra vez.

Creo que a veces nos sentimos un poco incómodos con la muerte, y cuando vemos que otra cultura la acepta tan plenamente, puede parecer un poco extraño. Miramos las calaveras de azúcar pintadas y otras imágenes de genes de la muerte y podemos preguntarnos qué está pasando exactamente. ¿Por qué parece que las personas están celebrando una fiesta cuando recuerdan a las personas que han muerto? ¿No se supone que deben estar tristes? La verdad es que están celebrando la vida de sus seres queridos y ven la muerte no como el final de un viaje, sino como el comienzo de uno nuevo en el Cielo con nuestro Señor Jesucristo.

Sin embargo, entre la celebración de la vida, no será inusual ver derramarse lágrimas. A veces sentimos que debemos ser fuertes y no llorar cuando perdemos a alguien que amamos; sin embargo, las lágrimas limpian el alma y las lágrimas que lloramos muestran el amor que teníamos por la persona que perdimos cuando no podemos encontrar las palabras para expresarlo.

Juan 11: 33-36 nos dice: “Cuando Jesús vió llorar, y los judíos que habían venido con ella también llorando, se conmovió y se turbó profunda y en espíritu. “¿Dónde lo has puesto?” preguntó, “Ven y mira, Señor”, respondieron. Jesús lloró. Entonces los judíos dijeron: “Miren cómo lo amaba!” Jesús lloró. Sintió pena por la muerte de su amigo y sintió empatía por el dolor que sentían Marta y María. No rehuyó ni trató de ocultar sus lágrimas, y nosotros tampoco deberíamos hacerlo.

Podemos pensar que no deberíamos hablar de nuestros seres queridos perdidos porque el dolor es demasiado severo o puede ser incómodo. Hacer cosas que a la persona le encantaba hacer, comer su comida favorita o simplemente compartir recuerdos nos hace ser conscientes de que esta persona ya no está con nosotros, pero también de que no está lejos de nosotros. Esa persona permanece en nuestros corazones.

La tradición del Día de los Muertos ahora se ha extendido por toda América Latina. De hecho, después del estreno de la película de 2017 de Disney / Pixar “Coco” se ha convertido en una costumbre que muchas culturas se están adaptando y eso es algo hermoso.

**Se instaló un altar de los difuntos en el vestíbulo del edificio de la cancillería de la Diócesis de Victoria para celebrar el Día de los Difuntos y el Día de los Muertos el 2 de noviembre. En el altar se incluyen fotos de cada parroquia de la diócesis para honrar a sus miembros que han muerto este año.**

Diócesis obteniendo 15 nuevos diáconos

El obispo Brendan Cahill ordenará a 15 hombres en la Diócesis de Victoria como diáconos permanentes el 21 de noviembre en la Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria en Victoria.

El diácono Dennis Kutach, director del Ministerio y Vida de los Diáconos, dijo que es el grupo más grande que se ha ordenado en la diócesis hasta ahora. También dijo que era “una verdadera bendición” tener tantos clérigos nuevos ministrando a la gente de la diócesis.

La ordenación se transmitirá en vivo en el sitio web de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria. Debido al número limitado de asientos, se requerirán invitaciones para asistir a la misa en persona.

El próximo grupo de candidatos a diáconos comenzará el proceso de discernimiento y formación en enero. El proceso de solicitud ya ha comenzado. Cualquier persona interesada debe comunicarse con el diácono Charles Glynn, director de Formación del Diaconado Permanente en cglynn@victoriadiocese.org. Los candidatos a la ordenación se muestran en la página 20.
“Toma, oh Señor, y recibe toda mi libertad, mi memoria, mi entendimiento y toda mi voluntad, todo lo que tengo y llamo mío. Me lo has dado todo. A ti, Señor, te lo devuelvo. Todo es tuyo; haz con él lo que quieras. Dame solo Tu amor y Tu gracia. Eso es suficiente para mí.” (Los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio, No. 234, traducido por David L. Fleming, S.J., Jesuit Conference, Inc., United States, 2016)

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

Durante los últimos años he estado considerando la posibilidad de hacer un retiro Ignaciano de 30 días. Recuerdo haber compartido la idea con mi grupo de oración de sacerdotes hace más de cinco años y estar convencido del valor de un tiempo prolongado en oración por mí y por mi ministerio sacerdotal.

En ese momento yo había cumplido 50 años y estaba a punto de celebrar mi 25 aniversario como sacerdote. Todos los años desde entonces he pensado en la posibilidad, pero nunca parecía ser capaz de encontrar el momento.

Este año, en medio de la pandemia mundial, resurgió la idea de hacer un retiro prolongado. Ahora tengo más de 55 años, he celebrado 30 como sacerdote y trato de hacer una ofrenda completa de mí mismo a Dios por el bien de la gente de la diócesis y la salvación de todas las almas de nuestra zona.

Durante estos últimos meses, he tenido algo de tiempo extra para orar y reflexionar en medio del tremendo estrés causado por la incertidumbre y el miedo de la pandemia. Algunas de las reflexiones me llevaron a darme cuenta de que este puede ser el momento adecuado para hacer un retiro Ignaciano de 30 días.

El día después de Navidad, iré a un centro de retiro en Boerne, Texas, y estaré allí en silencio hasta el 26 de enero. Durante ese tiempo, me reuniré con un director espiritual cada día durante unos 45 minutos y compartiré acerca de las percepciones espirituales de la oración.

En el silencio, he escuchado a diferentes voces que me han guiado. Al principio, escuché a la voz de mi cuerpo que necesitaba reposo y descanso. Luego, escuché a la voz de mi corazón que me decía que necesitaba un tiempo para reflexionar y orar.

Cuando llegué al retiro, me di cuenta de que había veces en mi vida en las que había estado muy ocupado y había dejado de lado mi tiempo para orar y reflexionar. Me di cuenta de que necesitaba un tiempo para descansar y recuperar mi energía.

Durante el retiro, me di cuenta de que había muchas cosas que quería hacer. Me di cuenta de que necesitaba un tiempo para reflexionar y orar acerca de estas cosas.

A lo largo del retiro, he reflexionado sobre las diferentes situaciones de cohabitación, impulsadas por la necesidad de regular los aspectos económicos de las personas, tales como el cuidado médico. Esto nos brinda la posibilidad de hacer una lista de las diferentes formas.

“Es necesario ver los diferentes casos y evaluarlos en su variedad”, dijo sugeriendo que algunas formas de uniones civiles serían aceptables.

Según “El Gran Reformador”, una biografía del papa Francisco realizada por Austen Ivereigh, el entonces arzobispo Jorge Mario Bergoglio se enfrentó al gobierno en 2010 cuando dio inicio a una campaña para legalizar el matrimonio homosexual.

“Le dijo a un activista homosexual católico, un ex profesor de teología llamado Marcelo Márquez, que favorecía los derechos de los homosexuales tanto como el reconocimiento legal de las uniones civiles”, escribió Ivereigh. “Pero se oponía absolutamente a cualquier intento de redefinir el matrimonio en la ley”.

El futuro papa --según continúa el libro-- “no había planteado fuertes objeciones a la ley de uniones civiles del 2002, que se aplicó solo en Buenos Aires y que otorgó derechos a cualquier pareja que había cohabitado por más de dos años, independientemente de su género u orientación sexual.

Él lo consideró como un arreglo legal puramente cívico, que no afectó el matrimonio”. En 2003, la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe emitió un documento instando a los católicos a que se opongan a dar “el reconocimiento legal a las uniones entre personas homosexuales”, particularmente cuando tal reconocimiento igualaría dichas uniones con el matrimonio y permitiría a las parejas adoptar niños.

Estoy un poco emocionado por esto. Nunca había hecho un retiro de más de ocho días antes. Durante ese mes, estaré orando especialmente por cada uno de ustedes. Y, como siempre pido, manténganme en sus oraciones.

Espero que el Congreso del Rosario y el Año de la Familia nos ayuden a cada uno de nosotros a enfocar nuestras oraciones y acciones por la esperanza y la curación en nuestro mundo. Ya sea que le estemos pidiendo a Dios que ponga fin al sufrimiento de la pandemia en todo el mundo o que mantenga a nuestras familias en Su paz, nuestras oraciones son efectivas y pueden ser las palabras más importantes que decimos cada día.

Que ustedes y sus familias tengan una acción de gracias feliz y gozosa, reconociendo la gracia y bendición de Dios en cada momento, y agradecidos por el don de la fe en la presencia de Jesucristo en nuestro mundo.

+Brendan
Thank you firefighters!

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students at St. Michael’s in Weimar line up to wait for the Weimar Fire Department to drive by. They made signs to show their appreciation for the firefighters.

Picture 2: Kindergarten students Kassie M., Jesse J., Beau A., Finley M., Grant J., Mason B., Lane A., Parker H. and Myla P. spell out their message to the firefighters.

Students learn about voting in America

Mrs. Ridgeway’s fourth graders at Sacred Heart School in Hallettsville enjoyed participating in the presidential election by getting to vote.

Feast of St. Francis of Assisi celebrated with blessing of animals

Students at St. Rose in Schulerburg play with pet ducks at the Blessing on the Animals at their school on Oct. 2. It is normally on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, Oct. 4, which fell on a Sunday this year. Contributed photo

Priest Appreciation

Our Lady of the Gulf School in Port Lavaca K-5 students dressed up as priests to show their appreciation for Father James Dvorak and presented him with thank you notes and prayer cards from the entire school.

Bishop Brendan Cahill, Father Dalton Ervin and Father Gary Janak officiate a drive-through Blessing of the Animals at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in Victoria on Oct. 5. Photo by Regina Janak
Spiritual directors help people explore God’s role in their lives

Continued from pg. 1

until I was in the seminary,” Father Kirby said. Later, he completed a three-year program through Creighton University to become a certified spiritual director. When the Emmaus Center opened, it opened a path for spiritual direction to more people.

Father Kirby explains that his role is to try to help people figure out how God is moving in their lives. Unlike counseling, which is a measured path toward mental health, spiritual direction does not have a clear beginning and end, he said. It is exploring the “art” of prayer and its many forms.

Kotzur said it has changed his prayer life. He once struggled with simply finding time for prayer in a busy workday as an accountant. But he has developed ways to allow prayer to flow into all parts of his day.

Other people seek spiritual direction while in mental health counseling, especially if they have a therapist who does not want to talk about God, according to Father Kirby. At the Emmaus Center, counselors are willing to discuss faith as a part of the counseling because it is a Catholic ministry, but other therapists are not comfortable addressing faith.

A crisis of faith brings many people to a spiritual director. “Usually there’s an issue – an event in a person’s life that makes them question God’s role in their lives,” said Father Kirby.

Patricia Hoelscher, also a spiritual director, said “God speaks to us in our relationships, our work, our prayer, our challenges and dilemmas – so that is the material for spiritual direction. Maybe you have a serious issue for discernment or are going through a transition. Possibly you are feeling dry in your prayer life and would like to explore that with someone.”

Hoelscher said the role of a spiritual director is to practice “the art of Christian listening … with an ear for the movement of the Holy Spirit.”

Hoelscher began her journey to this vocation when her husband was going through the formation of becoming a deacon. Once she started, she said, she knew spiritual direction is what God was calling her to do.

She said her discussions are just as confidential as any counseling and she also deals with some heavy subjects. At the end of the day, she lays the burdens of what she’s heard “at the foot of the Cross,” she said. “Because the true master healer is Jesus Christ.”

One of the biggest triggers to seeking spiritual direction is grief, according to Father Kirby. Others might be in a spiritual crisis regarding their children’s lives and their perceived failure as parents. Some have wandered into “deep sin” and are afraid they cannot be redeemed.

Once people move past the crisis, they may not meet with their spiritual director again.

Others, like Kotzur, have long-term relationships.

Toni Schaar is another long-time client of Father Kirby. She sought out a spiritual director several years ago after the loss of Father Celestino Say at Our Lady of Lourdes in Victoria, who was a source of guidance for her. A friend of hers pointed her toward Father Kirby. “I knew Father Kirby, but not well,” Schaar said. “But on the first meeting, it was like sitting down with a friend.”

Over the three years they’ve been meeting, Schaar has kept journals with helpful insights from her sessions with Father Kirby. When Father Kirby said something that impacts her she says, “That’s a keeper,” and writes it down.

She said several times she has needed an inspiration and searched her journals until she found the right words to move her along in her faith life.

Schaar said she is now focusing her prayer life on a joyful event – becoming a grandmother for the first time. She is trying to be very intentional about allowing the Holy Spirit to shape her as a grandmother.

Besides the Emmaus Center, spiritual direction is also offered in the Diocese of Victoria through Amor Meus Center. Sister Digna Vela, the center’s director has been a spiritual director for many years. These days she continues to keep up her meetings online and hopes to get back to in-person visits and also spiritual retreats at the center.

To learn more about Spiritual Direction, visit the Emmaus Center web site at https://emmauscounselingcenter.com or the Amor Meus Spirituality Center web site at https://amormeusspiritualitycenter.org

The Catholic Lighthouse November 2020
A Prayer in a Country Cemetery

From www.CatholicRuralLife.org

DEAR Lord, here lie in their last rest, the boys and girls, the men and women that worked on the land. They knew the meaning of hard work. They knew the joy and peace that is the product of labor. Now we trust they know the peace and happiness of everlasting life with You.

They watched the sun rise often, winter and summer, over these hills and fields. They worked hard by its light, and turned willingly to their rest at its setting. Now they walk in the light of a Sun that knows no setting. Lord, if they are still in the waiting room of heaven—in purgatory—bring them speedily to the light of Your peace and the happiness of Your presence.

These men and women all their lives long labored to supply the food and drink necessary to sustain human life. Now, or soon, they enjoy in all its fullness the life that You, Lord, came down to earth to give men, and to give more abundantly.

Dear Lord, bless us who labor now in the fields and hills where these dear dead have worked. Grant that we may remember them with charity and kindness, walking reverently in the ways that they have left behind them. Grant, too, that we may finally meet these men and women, these boys and girls, in the eternal mansions that You are even now preparing for us. Amen.

Praha KJZT sponsors public square rosary
Contributed Photo
St. Anne’s KJZT No. 4 Praha Society sponsored a 2020 Public Square Rosary Crusade to Our Lady of Fatima on Saturday, Oct. 10 in front of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Praha. In attendance were KJZT society members and officers, as well as members of the Praha, Flatonia and Cistern church parishes. Shown in front of the church holding a banner are six of the 20 people who joined together to pray the rosary (from left) Frances Kubenka; Loretta Kutac; KJZT Secretary Nancy Jasek; Josie Kubenka; KJZT Treasurer Patricia Masek; and KJZT President Georgia Cerny.
Even as COVID-19 has caused us to separate and distance ourselves from one another, the Holy Spirit provided a means for the people of the Diocese of Victoria to gather in smaller numbers at five locations for the 33rd Annual Catholic Conference. The theme, “Communio: Together with Christ” helped the faithful to recognize that Jesus is always with us.

Comments and conference evaluations indicate that the gathering for this annual event was needed, appreciated and beneficial in many ways.

Suzie Ryan, who attended the conference at the St. Joseph High School site, said that she hesitated before registering but was glad that she did. She noted that if this format is the “new normal” she was glad that she was a part of it, and would continue in the future.

In post-conference surveys, others also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to gather. They stated that they enjoyed the keynote presentation by Bishop Cahill, were inspired by the workshops and appreciated the vendor slideshow.

Christella Alvarez, coordinator of the annual conference said, “It was God’s will that we gather and provide the people a means to be inspired during these difficult days.” She was very grateful for all the prayers and support from the bishop, committee members and the pastors who agreed to offer their parishes as conference sites.

The English-language conference took place at Sacred Heart in Hallettsville, St. Joseph High School in Victoria and St. Philip the Apostle in El Campo. Spanish-language conference keynote and workshops were presented at St. Robert Bellarmine in El Campo and Our Lady of Sorrows in Victoria.

One benefit of having the conference at various sites is that many people could participate close to home.

According to Alvarez, people can still access the keynote presentations and workshops, which have been made available on the Diocese of Victoria web site. Those interested may contact her at 361-827-7171 or calvarez@victoriadiocese.org.
Vatican extends time to obtain full indulgences for souls in purgatory

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Plenary or full indulgences traditionally obtained during the first week of November for the souls of the faithful in purgatory can now be gained throughout the entire month of November, the Vatican said.

Also, those who are ill or home bound and would not be able to physically visit a church or cemetery in the prescribed time frame still will be able to receive a plenary indulgence when meeting certain conditions, the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience, said in a notice released Oct. 23.

The new provisions were made after a number of bishops asked for guidance as to how the faithful could perform the works required for receiving a plenary indulgence given the ongoing pandemic and restrictions in many parts of the world limiting the number of people who can gather in one place, Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, told Vatican News Oct. 23.

Traditionally, the faithful could receive a full indulgence each day from Nov. 1 to Nov. 8 when they visited a cemetery to pray for the departed and fulfilled other conditions, and, in particular, when they went to a church or an oratory to pray Nov. 2, All Souls’ Day.

The Vatican decided to extend the time one can receive a full indulgence to include the whole month of November, he said. Typically, only a partial indulgence is granted after the first week of November. The full indulgence traditionally offered Nov. 2 for those who visit a church or an oratory and recite the Our Father and the Creed can also be gained any day in November.

Those who cannot leave their homes for “serious reasons,” he said, also can receive a plenary indulgence after reciting specific prayers for the deceased or reflecting on a Gospel reading designated for Masses of the dead before an image of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin Mary, or by performing a work of mercy.

BY SISTER MARIA DEL ROSARIO RESENDEZ, IWBS
Special to the Lighthouse

Día de los Muertos a time to laugh, cry, celebrate

Día de los Muertos is a traditional Mexican celebration that begins Oct. 31 and ends Nov. 1. Families gather at their love ones’ gravesites to clean and decorate with different items. What are most common are marigolds, the Aztec flower of the dead, and candles. This is not Mexican Halloween; it’s All Souls Day and Día de los Muertos combined.

In Mexico today, Día de los Muertos is a time of celebration of life with a triduum of prayer and reflection. It is not a day of sadness because the dead are also remembered. The people are celebrating their loved ones’ lives, and they see death not as the end of a journey but as the beginning of a new one in Heaven with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

However, amongst the celebration of life, it will not be unusual to see tears shed. Sometimes we feel like we should be strong and not cry when we lose someone we love; however, tears cleanse the soul and the tears that we cry show the love that we had for the person we lost when we can’t find the words to express it.

John 11:33-36 tells us, ‘When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see. Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”’

Jesus wept. He felt sorrow at the death of his friend, and he had empathy for the pain Martha and Mary were feeling. He did not shy away or try to hide his tears, and we shouldn’t either.

We may think we shouldn’t talk about our lost loved ones because the pain is too severe or it may be awkward. Doing things that the person loved to do, eating his or her favorite food, or just sharing memories makes us aware that this person is no longer with us, but also that he or she is not far from us. That person remains in our hearts.

The Día de los Muertos tradition has now spread throughout all of Latin America. Actually, after the 2017 Disney/Pixar film “Coco” was released it has become a custom that many cultures are adapting and that is a beautiful thing.
Pope names first African American cardinal-designate for U.S.

BY RHINA GUIDOS
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — They came in tweets, news releases and Instagram posts from old friends, women religious and brother bishops in various languages congratulating Washington’s Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory.

The news of the country’s first African American prelate to be elevated to the rank of cardinal Nov. 28 sparked joy, as well as commentary that it was something that should have happened long ago.

“In elementary school, he asked his parents if he could become Catholic. Priests and Sisters in a Catholic school had inspired his heart. Today... look what the LORD has done ...,” tweeted Bishop David P. Talley of Memphis, Tenn., Oct. 25, the day the announcement was made public.

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Washington was one of 13 new cardinals named by Pope Francis Oct. 25. He is pictured processing with fellow prelates at the beginning of the opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life Jan. 23, 2020, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

The Archdiocese of Chicago, where the cardinal-designate chose to become Catholic as boy after attending a parochial school (even though neither of his parents was Catholic), said it was rejoicing over the announcement and touted the cardinal-designate’s experience and contributions during difficult times for the church.

“Cardinal Gregory, who came to the Catholic faith as a student in an archdiocese grammar school, went on to become a strong leader in addressing some of the most pressing issues facing the church and society,” the archdiocese said in an Oct. 25 news release.

“As his successor in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, I am particularly grateful for his leadership, mentoring and fraternity.”

Among his accomplishments, he said, the cardinal-designate is known for working closely with fellow bishops, clergy and women religious, promoting Catholic education, and fostering good relations with leaders of all faiths.

“Is it clear that the talents and accomplishments of Archbishop Gregory will be a part of his legacy as a leader not only in the United States, but also as a member of the College of Cardinals who attend to significant issues of dioceses throughout the world,” Archbishop Hartmayer added.

Father Bruce Wilkinson, a retired priest from Atlanta, tweeted that while he was celebrating the moment, the church had to take a long hard look because after Cardinal-designate Gregory, “there will be none (no Black prelates) to follow.”

“Did it have to take this appointment to send a message by Pope Francis to be a diverse and an inclusive church in America?” he asked on Twitter Oct. 25. “I’m not trying to rain on the parade, too much, but this is ... one man in one position.”

The news of Cardinal Gregory’s successor as head of the archdiocese, Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer, said: “Being chosen as the first African American cardinal from the United States indicates the pope’s awareness of the needs and gifts of the multicultural Catholic population throughout the United States.

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Families in formation:
Couples studying to become special missionaries

Continued from pg. 1

Half of them are members of St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Church, which serves the Hispanic population in that area of the diocese. In that parish, five couples discerned the calling and are now in the formation period to become such ministers.

The Rev. Philip Brune, pastor of St Robert, said more resources are needed to help pass the Catholic faith on through the family. One of the best examples for families is having couples trying to live holy lives walk with them through their faith formation.

Father Brune emphasized that the special office these couples are seeking is not simply a volunteer activity. “It’s almost like a office these couples are seeking is not simply a volunteer activity. “It’s almost like a leader in the Knights of Columbus.

and Frank Flores also are in the process of becoming missionaries to the family. Already they are involved in the church -- Brandy as the parish catechetical leader and Frank as the property’s custodian and a leader in the Knights of Columbus.

“I was really excited about this because this was an opportunity to do something together,” Brandy said.

Father Brune said, like the families they are going to reach out to, “Most of our couples have lived on both sides of the coin.”

The Floreses, for example, have been together for 17 years and have four children, but only married four years ago. The need to take their sacraments to heart hit home when their children were receiving Communion and they were not.

Frank said being a missionary would allow them to have some one-on-one fellowship with families who may need encouragement in making their homes a place where they live out their faith.

Francisco Rosas and his wife, Lupe, are another one of the couples in formation. They also have a story to tell and can be credible witnesses for the Church. “I can show people what God did for us. We can help a lot,” he said.

St. Robert’s, established to serve the Spanish-speaking population particularly, will have a special role in working with immigrant families. “People come from all over,” Father Brune said.

Francisco can identify with them because he was once where they are. “I swam across the river,” he said.

The Missionaries to the Family couples said they are excited about doing a retreat in January at Paradisus Dei in Houston and plan on being commissioned at the University of Notre Dame.

“The Missionaries to the Family are receiving a year of training in both Catholic theology and ministry implementation in order to devise new ways to reach families in their local communities,” said Justin Reyes, director of the Office of Family Evangelization for the Diocese of Victoria.

“They are needed because the Church, now more than ever, needs to conjure up new and creative ways to reach families this day and age. I am grateful for the five couples participating from St. Robert’s, as well as the five other couples participating from three other parishes in the diocese.”

The other churches are the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Our Lady of Sorrows and Holy Family, all in Victoria.

Pope has history of defending marriage, but being open to some civil unions

BY CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis often has expressed openness to the idea of laws recognizing civil unions, including for gay couples, to protect their rights.

The pope’s comments in a brief passage in the documentary film, “Francesco,” are similar to the position he took while archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and echo remarks he has made in several interviews during his pontificate: “Marriage” is only between a man and a woman, but civil union laws could provide legal protection for couples in long-term, committed relationships.

Speaking in Spanish in the film, Pope Francis says, “Homosexual people have a right to be in a family. They are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it. What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered.”

The film premiered in Rome Oct. 21.

Pope Francis repeatedly has said publicly that parents should not and must not disown a child who is gay, and, on several occasions, he has spoken about the rights all people have to have a family.

In a 2019 interview on Mexican television, he was asked about his opposition to gay marriage in Argentina and his openness to LGBT people as pope.

“I have always defended doctrine,” he said. “It is a contradiction to speak of homosexual marriage.”

But he also told the interviewer, “Homosexual persons have a right to be in the family; persons with a homosexual orientation have a right to be in the family and parents have the right to recognize a son or daughter as homosexual; you cannot throw anyone out of the family, nor make life impossible for them.”

In “A Future of Faith: The Path of Change in Politics and Society,” a book-length series of conversations with the French sociologist Dominique Wolton, the two spoke about gay marriage and civil unions in the context of a discussion about tradition, modernity and truth.

“‘Marriage’ is a historical word,” the pope said, in the book published in French in 2017. “Forever, throughout humanity and not only in the church, it’s been between a man and a woman. You can’t change it just like that. It’s the nature of things. That’s how they are. So, let’s call them ‘civil unions.’”

In a 2014 interview published in the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, Pope Francis was asked about moves across Europe to legalize gay marriage or adopt civil union laws.

“Marriage is between a man and a woman,” he said. “Secular states want to validate civil unions to regulate different situations of cohabitation, driven by the need to regulate economic aspects between people, such as ensuring health care. These are cohabitation pacts of various kinds, of which I could not list the different forms.”

“It is necessary to see the different cases and evaluate them in their variety,” he said, implying that some forms of civil unions would be acceptable.

According to “The Great Reformer,” a biography of Pope Francis by Austen Ivereigh, then-Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio went head-to-head with the government in 2010 when it began a drive to legalize gay marriage.

“He told a Catholic gay activist, a former theology professor named Marcelo Marquez, that he favored gay rights as well as legal recognition for civil unions,” Ivereigh wrote. “But he was utterly opposed to any attempt to redefine marriage in law.”

The future pope, the book continued, “had not raised strong objections to a 2002 civil unions law that applied only to Buenos Aires and that granted rights to any two people cohabitating for more than two years, independent of their gender or sexual orientation. He regarded it as a purely civic, legal arrangement that left marriage unaffected.”
All Ministries and Ongoing Activities at this time are scheduled to change with the pandemic. Before attending a meeting please call ahead to verify that the meeting is being held.

ACTS Retreats—Anyone needing any information regarding ACTS Retreats in the diocese should email dovactschapter@victoriadiocese.org.

Catholic Family Services —To find Catholic organizations that focus on family, visit the Catholic Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers at http://www.nacflm.org.

Courage — Ministers to persons with same-sex attractions and their loved ones. The ministry also has an outreach, EnCourage, which ministers to relatives, spouses, and friends of persons with same-sex attractions. It is a Roman Catholic Apostolate endorsed by the Pontifical Council for the Family. For information, visit http://www.couragerc.net.

Crisis Pregnancy Center of Victoria — A sister organization to the Gabriel Project staffed by volunteers that offers help to girls and women who find themselves in a difficult situation due to an unplanned pregnancy. Office located at 1501 E. Red River, is open 1-4 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Free pregnancy tests offered and medical referrals are made for prenatal care. New volunteers are welcome. For information call 361-575-6171.

Emmaus Center—Offers individual, couple, family, adolescent and children’s counseling, as well as specialized support groups. Spiritual direction is also available if requested. To make an appointment, call 361-212-0830.

Engaged Encounter 2020 Dates – Nov. 13-15. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Fee must accompany registration form. For information, call 361-573-0828 or visit www.victoriadiocese.org.

Gabriel Project of the Crossroads — Helps women experiencing a crisis pregnancy as an alternative to abortion. Victoria: Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 101 W. Convent. Light supper included. For angel workshop/training dates, contact Lisa Kainer 361-676-3264 or lisa_heysquierdo@yahoo.com; DeWitt County: Meetings are the third Monday of each month during the school year at 5:30 p.m. at the Yorktown Public Library, 103 W. Main St. Coordinators for DeWitt Chapter are Wayne and Margie Smith 361-491-0067; Lavaca County: Meets 6 p.m. (during the school year), contact Julie Kubena Lavaca County Coordinator at 361-798-3579 for dates and location.

Grief Ministry — An ongoing Grief Group meets at the Holy Family Church conference room in Victoria at 7 p.m., on the first and third Thursdays each month. Adults who have experienced the death of a loved one may attend (after three months have passed). Call Sharon at 361-578-7572 before attending.

Ld.9:16 Ministry – For adults in their 20s and 30s, single or married. Held at Holy Family in Victoria every first Thursday of the month. Starts with 6 p.m. Mass followed by dinner and a talk live streamed from the headquarters in Michigan and fellowship. Childcare available to those who RSVP. It is open to all young adults of the diocese. For information, or to RSVP for events, e-mail ld916victoria@gmail.com.

Incarnate Word Prayer Group — Praise and worship 7:30-9 p.m. Mondays in the auditorium at Incarnate Word Convent, 1101 N.E. Water St. For information, contact Sr. Louise Marie Jones at 361-575-7111 or amorumeus@yahoo.com.

Mothers of Grace — A new mothers’ group at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. For information, contact Leslie Book at book.leslie@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MothersofGraceOL.

Natural Family Planning — NFP is the only church-approved form of family planning. For the CREIGHTON MODEL Fertility Care System (CMS) featuring NaPro TECHNOLOGY™ contact Susanne Koch in Wharton at 505-710-0903 or susannekoch614@gmail.com. Also in the Cuero area contact, Ashley Rodriguez at 361-293-0700 or ashleyfay09@gmail.com.

Raphael’s Refuge – To build and maintain a memorial in honor of babies, born and unborn. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Flatonia. Peer counseling and spiritual direction are available for those suffering a loss of a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death or abortion. For information, contact Midge Elam at 361-865-3021, 361-258-1514, or visit www.raphaelsrefuge.org.

Retrouvaille – Retrouvaille, meaning “rediscovery,” is a marriage-healing ministry offered in the diocese to couples in difficult marriages. Contact John and Jennifer Vincent at jbvjo@sbcglobal.net or 361-580-2770; or call 800-470-2230; or visit www.helpourmarriage.org or www.retrouvaille.org.
PRAY FOR OUR PERMANENT DIACONATE CANDIDATES

Adrian Canales
St. Robert Bellarmine
El Campo

Jerome Kötzar
The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory
Victoria

Kevin Petrash
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Ganado

Richard Evans
St. Mary
Victoria

Tim Kozelsky
Sacred Heart
Flatonia

Matthew Schaefer
The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory
Victoria

John Gueck
St. Anthony
Columbus

Dusty Leopold
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Nada

Rusty Theut
St. Anthony
Columbus

Nazario Hernandez
Our Lady of the Gulf
Port Lavaca

Michael Morkovsky
Ss. Cyril & Methodius
Shiner

Frank Tilley
Our Lady of Sorrows
Victoria

Kevin Knox
Holy Cross
Bay City

Andrew Nunemaker
St. Roch
Mentz

Bruce Turner
Holy Family
Wharton