U.S. bishops focus on virus, racism, McCarrick

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The two days of the virtual assembly of the U.S. Catholic bishops, Nov. 16-17, initially included discussion of the Vatican report on former cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick. But the bulk of the bishops’ conversation focused on the ongoing pandemic and the church’s response to racism.

The main topic Nov. 16, added late to the bishops’ agenda, was discussion on the Vatican report on McCarrick, released less than a week before, on Nov. 10. Bishop Joseph E. Strickland of Tyler, Texas, said the report, which described McCarrick’s ascent to highest rungs of the church, even amid rumors of abuse, read like a list of the seven deadly sins.

“It’s very clear that there’s still very much a tendency in the world and in the church to turn a blind eye to many of these sins,” he added during the 45 minutes of discussion about the long-awaited 460-page report.

“Chicago’s Cardinal Blase J. Cupich said Pope Francis had taken historic action in issuing the document as well as other unprecedented measures.

“Washing it very clear that there’s still very much a tendency in the world and in the church to turn a blind eye to many of these sins, he added during the 45 minutes of discussion about the long-awaited 460-page report.

On Nov. 21, those 15 were ordained by the Most Rev. Brendan Cahill, setting a record for the diocese, according to Deacon Charles Glynn, who is the diocese’s director of formation for permanent deacons. And he said the brotherhood of the class is strong, just as it was for him and his brother deacons who were ordained together.

Deacon Frank Tilley recalls that the Holy Spirit began moving him closer to the ministry after getting involved in the ACTS retreats years ago. “It really affected me personally and spiritually as a father, husband and Christian,” he said. “The retreat helped put me in touch with the Holy Spirit, which I had kind of fallen out with.”

He became a lector at his parish, See Filled with the Spirit, pg. 2
Mary shows us great hope of entrusting our prayers to her

‘Oh Mary Conceived without Sin, Pray for Us Who Have Recourse to Thee’

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year I read the book True Devotion to Mary of St. Louis de Monfort in preparation for a renewal of my Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary on Nov. 21.

One of the spiritual reflections of St. Louis follows the teaching that God chose to become fully human in the womb of Mary. In this, the whole plan of our salvation was dependent on the cooperation of Mary. God depended on Mary to fulfill the healing plan He held in His heart from the moment after the original sin of Adam and Eve.

We, too, can depend on the love of Mary to intercede for us as individuals and for the whole world.

Another great French saint, St. Catherine Laboure, wrote about the second appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her in the convent in Paris in 1830. Her writing proclaimed the hope that comes from entrusting one’s prayers to Mary:

“As I was busy contemplating her, the Blessed Virgin fixed her eyes upon me, and a voice said in the depths of my heart: ‘This globe which you see represents the whole world, especially France, and each person in particular.’

“There now formed around the Blessed Virgin a frame rather oval in shape on which were written in letters of gold these words: ‘O MARY CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN, PRAY FOR US WHO HAVE RECOURSE TO THEE.’ Then a voice said to me: ‘Have a medal struck upon this model. All those who wear it, when it is blessed, will receive great graces especially if they wear it round the neck. Those who repeat this prayer with devotion will be in a special manner under the protection of the Mother of God. Graces will be abundantly bestowed upon those who have confidence.’”

The simple prayer of entrustment of the world to the intercessory prayer of Mary spread quickly from Paris to other parts of the world.

Sixteen years later, the bishops of the United States declared Mary the Patroness of the Nation under the title of the Immaculate Conception. The medal about which she wrote we now call the “Miraculous Medal” and it continues to be a strong devotion throughout the world. As we celebrate the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, this is an opportunity to pray for our nation and our leaders.

Mary this month of December be a blessed time for you and your families to grow in appreciation of the plan of God for the salvation of the world—the birth of a child in humility in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, which continues to bring hope, healing and joy to all people of good will.

God bless you. Let’s keep each other in prayer.

+Brendan

Filled with the Spirit and ready for the task

Continued from pg. 1

Our Lady of Sorrows in Victoria and said he found himself completely absorbed in the readings and being pulled closer to the altar. He said he was “like a sponge soaking up” all of the new learning during his formation that lead to his new vocation.

Deacon Matthew Schaefer of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria spent many of his younger years serving in the National Evangelization Team (NET) doing mission work and retreats. That’s how he met his wife, Lupe, who also was a missionary with NET. Lupe said for them, Matthew’s becoming a deacon was “just an extension of what God was already asking of us.”

Most deacons are married when they discern the ministry and their wives are an important part of what they are being called to do. The wives are strongly encouraged to take the journey with their husbands. “We just knew that this was going to be the next phase,” Lupe said. “I have gone to every single class with him. I have loved the journey.”

She said that wherever God calls either of them, it’s a calling they will answer together.

In fact, it’s been a big year for vocations in the Schaefer family. Their oldest son, Dominick, is now Brother Christopher after taking his first vows with the Benedictine community in Louisiana. He also did missionary work, as well as two other of her children. “It doesn’t surprise me at all that Dominick has chosen this life. It’s such a blessing and humbling to see he is on fire for God. No matter what God asks of him, he does it.”

Deacon Schaefer’s ordination was made more special by the fact that his son, Brother Christopher, was asked to serve during the Mass. He was surprised with that fact during the ordination rehearsal the night before.

Deacon Kevin Knox, with the parish of Holy Cross in Bay City, said it’s been a nine-year journey for him. He started the process in 2011, but ended up being put on hold for a couple of years and started over. “You can’t run away from God,” he said.

There were several experiences with ministries that made him feel pulled toward the ministry and he asked God what he was supposed to do many times.

His feelings were confirmed on a car ride home from some event in El Campo. He told his wife, Janet, he had something to tell her. “She said, ‘I know what you’re going to tell me,’” he said. “So I said, ‘OK, Smarty Pants, what am I going to tell you?’ And she said, ‘You want to be a deacon.’”

He said he was kind of floored that she knew. According to Janet, she doesn’t know how she knew that; she just did. She also said they realized it was “meant to be” when he had to produce Kevin’s baptismal certificate for the program. He was baptized on Nov. 21, the same date as his ordination. And Janet, a convert, joined the church on the weekend of the Feast of Christ the King.

Deacons in the Catholic Church are the third in the hierarchy of ordained clergy, subordinate to priests and bishops. The creation of the office of deacon is chronicled in the Book of Acts, Chapter 6, when the apostles found worthy men who could help with the distribution of alms to the widows and orphans of the people they served.

Bishop Cahill said these men will be a blessing to the poor and the marginalized in the diocese. He said he envisions them being worthy men who could help with the distribution of alms to the widows and orphans of the people they served.

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Bishop Cahill’s Schedule

December

4-6  Knights of Columbus Texas State Council mid-year meeting, Denton
7    7 p.m. Spanish Mass for prayer group at St. Rose of Lima, Schulenburg
8    • Chancery closed – Holy Day of Obligation – Immaculate Conception
12:05 p.m. Mass for Immaculate Conception at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria
6 p.m. Mass, installation of Richard Barfield as acolyte at Our Lady of the Gulf, Port Lavaca
9    2:30 p.m. Finance Board meeting, chancery
4 p.m. Building Board meeting, chancery
11   8:05 a.m. school Mass and visit with St. Michael, Cuero
5 p.m. Mass with Missionary Catechists for Our Lady of Guadalupe
12   Mass with the Carmelites, Meyersville
14   2:30 p.m. Communities of Faith meeting
15   6:30 a.m. call in to Relevant Radio
17   Deacon’s Council Meeting, Hallettsville
19   Mass with the Carmelites, Meyersville
22   • Chancery closed for Christmas and New Year’s holidays
24   4 p.m. Mass with Healthcare Sisters at Incarnate Word Convent, Victoria
25   Christmas Midnight Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria
Dec. 26-Jan. 6 30-day retreat (Pray for Bishop Brendan, and know he will be praying for you.)

Office of Safe Environment welcomes new employee

The Diocese of Victoria on Nov. 16 welcomed Alicia Olive to the Chancery Stuff as the Office of Safe Environment Executive Program.

Alicia Olive

Olive will report directly to Melissa Perales and is responsible for the supplemental oversight, operation, and maintenance of the Diocesan Safe Environment and Transportation Programs while monitoring compliance to ensure the protection of minors and vulnerable adults.

Olive was born in Louisiana, grew up in Texas and lived in California most of her adult years where she graduated from Heal Business College and Empire Business Col-

In Memoriam

Deacon Warzecha’s son Christopher passes away

Christopher Matthew Warzecha, 56, of Texas City passed away Thursday, November 5, 2020. He was born on August 4, 1964, in Austin. He married Blanca Garcia on November 15, 1989. Christopher proudly served in the United States Army. He enjoyed working on American made engines and motorcycles. Chris never turned away from anyone in need of help or support. Christopher was a Safety Supervisor at Exxon in Baytown. He was a firm believer in “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is the good men to do nothing.”

He is survived by his parents Deacon Tony and Dawn Warzecha; wife of 31 years, Blanca; son, Christopher Anthony Warzecha of Texas City and brother, Michael Warzecha of Longmont, Colorado.

Funeral Mass took place at St. Michael Church, Cuero with Father Jacob Mendoza officiating. Interment to follow at Hillside Cemetery.

Vocation Posters Available

The Diocese of Victoria Vocation Posters are now available. Call the Chancery Office at (361) 573-0828 to place an order for your school, parish, organization or any individual that would like to have a poster.

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JoAnn Jalufka
John Hennessey
in Memory of Carol Lenhert

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Dorothy Viktornin
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Queen of The Clergy Ct. 1990
in Memory of Jane Villasana

Acolyte
Knights of Columbus
Victoria Council 1329
in Memory of Armando “Andy” Luna

Candidate
~

Transitional Deacon
~

Priest
~

To contribute to the Education of Seminarian Fund, send contributions to:
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Education of Seminarian Fund
P. O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

Seminary Endowment Fund

Seminary Endowment Fund (formerly known as Seminary Burses) is a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each burse is $15,000. The interest from this amount is applied yearly to the education of seminarians. The burses are in memory of an individual priest or layperson, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically 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 >.

November 18, 2020

• Rev. Msgr. John C. Bily Seminary Burse #2
Lector
In memory of Frankie Neiser by:
Leona Hrcek
Donald and Karen Kutac

• Josephat R. Janak Seminary Burse #2
Lector
In memory of Joseph R. Janak on the 22nd anniversary of his death (11/30/1998) by
Rose Marie Janak & Family

• Rev. Joseph Koebel Seminary Burse
Acolyte
Donation in memory of Rev. Joseph Koebel by CDA Court of Our Lady of the Rosary #1595, Nada

• Rev. Msgr. John C. Peters Seminary Burse #8
Lector
In honor of their 55th Wedding Anniversary
by Robert and Florence Sciba

• Rev. Msgr. John C. Peters Seminary Burse #1595, Nada
Acolyte
In memory of James Stock by
Rev. Msgr. John Peters

To contribute to an existing Seminary Endowment Fund, send contributions with the appropriate fund designation to:
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Victoria, TX 77903

It’s easier than ever to attend Pastoral Institute

BY CHRISTELLA ALVAREZ
Director of Catechetical Ministry

The COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to many things; however, the pandemic has not stifled the desire to learn for many adults who have continued attending classes offered through the Pastoral Institute.

Because of this interest, we have expanded the methods of how one can attend the next series of weekly courses.

Beginning in January, any adult in the Diocese of Victoria who would like to join us for a six-week course on the liturgy will be able to do so in one of three ways. First, for those who enjoy logging on when it is most convenient for them, the courses will be available asynchronously (on demand). Second, others who want to join from home synchronously (during live sessions) will be able to do so. Last, but not least, the third method will be to meet at the chancery each week for the live virtual sessions, while following COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.

Instructor is Linda Krehmeier. The classes begin Jan. 5 and run through Feb. 9 on Tuesdays from 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Those in catechetical and/or liturgical ministry are highly encouraged to register for this course. So, mark your calendar and make an early commitment to do this for yourself. Invite friends, family members, and co-workers to join us virtually in 2021.

A full description of the liturgy course is available on the diocesan website, www.victoriadiocese.org. For more information, contact Christella Alvarez at 361-827-7171 or calvarez@victoriadiocese.org or Brunilda Ortiz at 361-573-0828 or pisecretary@victoriadiocese.org.

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K of C members get special recognition
(Contributed Photo)
The Victoria Knights of Columbus Council No. 1329 of Victoria held its annual recognition of members during its Nov. 3 meeting. The Knights of the Quarter were Richard Lerma, Daniel Perez, Chris Krejci and Stan Stryk. The Knight of the Year was awarded to Stan Stryk. The Families of the Quarter were the Dennis and Dorothy Boehm family, the Harvin and Lynn Suggs family, the Adolf and Nelda Hernandez family and the Chris and Beverly Krejci family. The Family of the Year was awarded to the Chris and Beverly Krejci family. Pictured, from left, are Daniel Perez, Knight of the Quarter recipient; Michael Nevlud, Grand Knight; and Chris Krejci, Knight of the Quarter and Family of the Year recipient.
To follow Christ, repentance is a necessary step

 Editor's Note: Father Charles Kram wrote this sermon for the second Sunday of Advent, Cycle A. He titled it “Christ’s Leadership.”

 Everyone needs a leader. Wherever a number of individuals work together to accomplish something, they need someone to pull them together, to motivate them, and perhaps, at times, to discipline them.

 There are leaders everywhere — parents and teachers lead the children; civil officials lead the citizens; the clergy lead the faithful; and the business and professional world are full of executives and administrators.

 Obviously, there are good leaders and there are bad leaders. Hitler led millions to their deaths in his ambition to establish his thousand-year Reich; Churchill rallied his distressed nation by offering them blood, sweat and tears. Talented preachers have reformed whole nations.

 Respect for the authority of legitimate leaders can be very important. Jesus sternly criticized the Jewish leaders of his time. He called them frauds and hypocrites, white-washed sepulchers, broods of vipers. But he told the people to do as they said, because they had sat in the chair of Moses.

 At the time John preached and baptized, his message was repentance, just as it is also central to the Christian faith. In fact, some Jewish teachers taught that repentance was so important that, if Israel were to repent perfectly for just one day, the Messiah would come.

 So John warned the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees that being children of Abraham was not enough. They, too, must repent.

 He taught that the Messiah would baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire. To the Jews, the Spirit meant the breath of life, and power and renewal. The Spirit also meant the bringer of truth and the enlightener, enabling one to see.

 Fire meant light in the darkness, the warmth of love in the heart; it meant purification from falsehood and evil.

 The coming of the Messiah would bring choice and separation, like loose grain being tossed into the air by a large wooden winnowing shovel, collecting on the threshing floor, while the wind blows the chaff away.

 Now that Jesus the Messiah has come, and we profess to be his followers, and we are baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire, it is appropriate that we each make his leadership over us effective — by a spirit of true repentance.

 An appropriate step to take during this season of preparation for Christ’s coming is to go to confession. Make it a true repentance. Take an inventory of your life. Concentrate on faults or sins that are responsible for other sins.

 Does a high temper make you guilty of bickering, name-calling and profane language? Does procrastination make you slow, late and undependable? Does vanity prompt you to excesses in clothes and beauty aids and diet delicacies?

 Lay the axe to the root. Repent. Express your sorrow for having offended God. Make firm and define resolutions about the changes you will make.

 Confess your sins sincerely and fulfill the penance given you. If it has been a long time and you don’t know where to begin, any priest will help you.

 If we could overcome just one fault each year, we would all soon be living saints, and Christ’s leadership in our lives would be assured.

 Lord Jesus, thank you for our baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Help us to overcome every obstacle to your leadership over us. Grant that we too might be heralds, helping better to prepare the world for your coming. Amen.

 Appeal helps elderly religious

 The Diocese of Victoria will hold the Retirement Fund for Religious collection Dec. 12-13. The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) coordinates this annual appeal and distributes the proceeds to assist eligible U.S. religious communities with their retirement needs. Nearly 30,000 senior sisters, brothers and religious order priests benefit.

 Last year, the Diocese of Victoria donated $52,919.04 to the collection. In 2020, the Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary received financial support made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious.

 “The generosity of U.S. Catholics enables us to continue our ministry for aging women and men religious,” said Presentation Sister Stephanie Still, the NRRO’s executive director. “We are overwhelmed with gratitude.”

 In 1988, Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious collection to help address the deficit in retirement funding among U.S. religious congregations. Each congregation is responsible for the care and support of its members.

 Financial distributions from the collection are sent to a congregation’s central house and may be applied toward immediate expenses — such as medications or nursing care — or invested for future eldercare needs.

 Historically, Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests served for little or no pay.

 Today, many religious communities lack sufficient retirement savings. Of 531 communities providing data to the NRRO, only 29 are adequately funded for retirement. Rising health-care costs and a growing number of senior members compound the challenge to meet retirement expenses.

 “During these trying times, we know the best way to support senior religious is to continue helping their communities address retirement and eldercare challenges,” said Sister Still. “Our grateful prayer is with all whose love and generosity sustain this mission.”

 Visit retireredigious.org to learn more.

 • Story submitted by Beth Kennedy of the Retirement Fund for Religious organization.
Advent is about patience, preparation and devotion

At the beginning of the year, one of our Sisters had given me a calendar featuring guide dogs for the blind, since she knew that I liked animals. Although I like dogs, my favorite pets are cats, so I just put the calendar aside and posted a religious calendar that we had received from one of the area churches. In time, I moved to another bedroom. Needing a wall calendar, I put up the one with the guide dogs. Then I realized that the pictures had strong spiritual messages for me. On one month there was a dog looking up toward its owner with longing eyes that almost haunted me. Was that an image of me looking at my God with devoted longing and waiting for direction? A powerful message indeed!

The next month’s page portrayed a young puppy in training to become the companion of some future blind owner – a symbol of devotion. This little animal would become prepared for a life of whole-hearted service, a model for all of us.

Then this month’s calendar illustration is comprised of four fully trained dogs in their harnesses, sitting in a row, apparently waiting eagerly to be paired with their soon-to-be owners. Their patience, their expressions of eagerness remind me of the season of Advent – a time when all Christendom prepares for the coming of its Savior.

So let’s look at some practical ways that we, ourselves, can prepare for Christmas.

We can participate in religious Advent services online and repeatedly remind ourselves of God’s great love for us.

We can pray together in anticipation of Christmas and sing Advent songs. If we have children, we can repeatedly tell them the Christmas story and have them help prepare for Jesus’s birthday.

Many families put a little Nativity set under the tree or in some dominant place in the house. Some put out a little empty manger at the beginning of Advent in which the children place a piece of straw in it each time they perform a good deed. Others take the kings or shepherds, or even Mary and Joseph, and place the figure(s) far away from the empty manger and then move them a bit closer each day.

Some families use a religious Advent calendar to count the days until Jesus’ birthday.

Making a birthday cake for Jesus will really bring the message home for children. Drawing names for “Advent Angels” can get families into the Christmas spirit as the “angels” secretly perform kind deeds and surprises.

Packing and delivering Christmas dinner to someone’s doorstep will add a generous Christ-like aspect to the Christmas celebration. Also saving our allowances and donating to agencies that serve children in need, the lonely, and the homeless will help those whom we may not be able to touch individually.

Practices such as these will prepare us for the celebration of Jesus’ birthday this Christmas in a very special way.

A blessed Christmas season to all!

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U.S. bishops focus on virus, racism, McCarrick

Continued from pg. 1

Father does on a regular basis, the word will get out there that we are on the side of victims. And we have to continue to do that.”

The McCarrick report also overlapped into other parts of the meeting. In his opening address, Archbishop Gomez paused at the start to remember the children and adults within the church who are victim-survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Acknowledging the McCarrick report, he also expressed “deep sorrow” and offered prayers the victim-survivors “might find healing and hope.”

The archbishop also pointed to the ongoing suffering caused by the coronavirus pandemic, noting that people’s faith in God “has been shaken” by the pandemic and related economic turmoil, and he urged the church leaders to help people navigate this enormous challenge.

The current times, with social unrest and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, “call for heroic Christianity,” he explained. In response, he said: “We need to continue to form and empower missionary disciples, as Pope Francis calls us to do.”

In a practical response to the pandemic, the bishops approved a budget for the year 2021 that took into consideration the economic impact of the coronavirus.

Bishop Gregory L. Parkes of St. Petersburg, Florida, USCCB treasurer and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Budget and Finance, said the USCCB had started trimming budget outlays in 2020 when it appeared the coronavirus pandemic was going to stay far longer than expected. One such measure was a pay freeze and travel restrictions for all USCCB employees.

In another action related to the pandemic and to the ongoing discussion nationwide on racial inequality, the bishops approved addendums to their four-year strategic plan addressing the impact of these issues. The plan, adopted a year ago, will go into effect in January 2021.

Continuing their look at the sin of racism, the bishops approved the renewal of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism for three more years.

They also discussed, Nov. 17, their efforts to address racism in their dioceses.

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana, and chair of the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, reminded the bishops that when they approved their pastoral on racism two years ago, they had no idea how the nation would have such a reckoning with racial inequality as it has experienced this past summer.

He said the document, among other things, “unequivocally declares that racism is a life issue.”

Msgr. Jeffrey D. Burrill, a priest of the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, was elected the new general secretary of the USCCB, succeeding Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield.

In another vote, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York was elected chairman of the bishops’ Committee for Religious Liberty.

The bishops also voted on chairmen-elect for seven committees and seven seats on the board of directors of Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Bishop Brendan Cahill of Victoria, Texas, was one of the seven who was appointed to the CRS board.

“I am glad to be on the board,” Bishop Cahill said, “because of the accountability, and to promote the mission.” He said the organization does a lot of good around the world and he wants to ensure the organization continues to do good works and maintain its Catholic identity.

The votes for chairmen-elect included: Committee on Priorities and Plans: Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services; Committee on Catholic Education, Bishop Thomas A. Daly of Spokane, Washington; Committee on Communications, Auxiliary Bishop Robert P. Reed of Boston; Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, Auxiliary Bishop Arturo Cepeda of Detroit; Committee on Doctrine, Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas; Committee on National Collections, Bishop James S. Wall of Gallup, New Mexico; and the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore.

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 SRC 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.

KJZT Family Life provides local funds
(Contributed Photo)

KJZT Family Life adopted a statewide Fraternal 100 Project recognizing each of the 65 status societies of 2020. The Fraternal 100 Project will provide $100 from the state office to each status society to be given to the charity of their choice. St. Agnes Catholic Church Society III gave their funds to the United Way. Georgia Orsak with the St. Agnes society, right, presents the check to Kay Koop, executive director of Helping Hands, one of the United Way agencies. For more than 125 years the societies of KJZT Family Life have focused on participating in the parish and community work projects and fundraiser throughout the state of Texas.
Christmas Mass in Bethlehem a wish come true

BY PAUL BARRETT

Special to the Lighthouse

In November of 2016, my wife and I learned of a Holy Land Pilgrimage to be led by our Bishop, Brendan Cahill, and scheduled for the last week of January 2017. Work and family circumstances prevented my wife from participating, but I joined the group of 63 pilgrims in what would become an amazing faith journey of spiritual revelation and reflection.

We arrived in Tel Aviv in the early darkness of a winter evening, tired but excited to be in the ancient land of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. Our buses took us on a two-hour journey to the ancient city of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

The first days of our tour were spent visiting the ancient biblical sites of Jesus’s early life, teaching ministry and apostolic formation in western Galilee and Nazareth. Day 4 of our tour led us away from Galilee, south through the old biblical city of Jericho and west through the Judean mountains into Jerusalem. This was an ancient route traveled by generations of pilgrims before us, including the Holy Family. It was early evening when we arrived in Jerusalem, one of the oldest cities in the world and the spiritual center for three of the world’s major religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The first day of our Jerusalem-area itinerary led us to Bethlehem, Manger Square, the Church of the Nativity and a Christmas Mass celebration. On the busy road into Bethlehem, a roadside sign for the site of Rachel’s Tomb reminded me of her historic relevance to Israel and, indirectly, to the birth of Jesus.

An avid interest in Hebrew Old Testament studies first brought Rachel and her family to my attention many years ago. Rachel’s story begins in Genesis 29 and ends with her tragic death giving birth to Benjamin at this site just outside of Bethlehem. (Genesis 35:16-20)

Mother Rachel’s tomb was a silent witness to all who had traveled this road, including the prophet Samuel, on his way into Bethlehem to anoint the shepherd boy, David, King of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Centuries later, she was a witness to the “Three Kings,” the Magi, as they passed by on their way into Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn king of Israel, Jesus, the Messiah. (Matthew 2:1-12)

A sense of spiritual excitement and anticipation was growing within our group as we made our way across Manger Square to the Church of the Nativity. The 3-foot-high Door of Humility required us to bow down as we entered into the spacious interior of the church with its high vaulted ceilings and massive columns. We were guided around renovation construction scaffolding within the main assembly hall to the choir area where a steep semi-circular stair-pit led us 20 feet under the main floor into the Grotto of the Nativity.

Nearby was the altar of the Holy Grotto of the Manger, marking the site where Mother Mary laid baby Jesus in a stone, animal feed trough, which served as his crib. For a moment, I shut out the noise of the many visitors and in my mind imagined the newborn baby Jesus lying in that trough with Mother Mary and Joseph in loving attendance. I imagined the shepherds coming in out of the darkness of the night and kneeling in this place along with others, including the Magi whose commemoration altar was nearby. For me, the journey of the shepherds, the Magi and others to visit the Christ child was a spiritual invitation for all to come to Christ.

John 14:6: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Our tour group left the Grotto of the Nativity and reassembled in the sanctuary of St. Catherine’s Church to celebrate a Christmas Mass. St. Catherine’s is the local parish for all Catholics in Bethlehem.

I was searching for a seat near the altar when the tour director approached and asked if I would serve as lector for the first reading of our group’s Christmas Mass, which was to be celebrated by Bishop Cahill and Father Francis Nguyen. It was here, within this sacred sanctuary of St. Catherine’s Basilica, and upon this holy ground, that the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem celebrates Christmas Eve Midnight Mass each year for a worldwide television audience. This beautiful Christmas Mass with its message of great joy and blessings to the world was a part of my family’s Christmas Eve traditions. A Christmas Mass in Bethlehem that had been wishfully reflected upon for many years had become a reality, which included the added blessing to serve as a lector for this very special Celebration.

This Christmas, as we make our individual pilgrimages to celebrate the birth of Christ at our parishes, let us do so filled with great joy, reverence, prayer and profound thanksgiving.

• Paul Barrett is the RCIA director for St. Philip the Apostle Church in El Campo and a member of the Catholic Writers Guild.

The Emmaus Center

The Emmaus Center provides individual, couple, family, adolescent and children’s counseling as well as specialized support groups from a Catholic perspective.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (361) 212-0830.
How families can ‘keep Christ in Christmas’

The holidays are certainly one of the best times of the year, filled with family, friends, laughter and celebrations of all kinds. I think we all know the temptation during this time, however, is to get too busy and forget what it’s all about: Jesus. We may be familiar with the “Keep Christ in Christmas” bumper stickers, and with this article I’d like to propose some practical ways to bring this bumper sticker to life in our homes.

These are traditions inspired by other families, and some that my own family practices, to help us stay focused on Christ during the Advent and Christmas seasons. These are, of course, only supplemental to the age-old, proven traditions of an Advent wreath/calendar and/or Jesse Tree, among others.

No. 1: Sing “Happy Birthday” to Jesus on Christmas Day. This is something my family does, and my kids really look forward to it. Ever since our oldest was 2 years old, our family established that Christmas is the one day of the year we have cake for breakfast. We wake up, light the candles on the cake, sing to Jesus, then enjoy this delicious treat. I think this tradition helps our kids remember what this day is all about in an age-appropriate way.

No. 2: Limit gifts to just three total. I know this may be tough with family members. My own kids have a grandma who surely does love to spoil them around the holidays. But when it comes to gifts from family does, and my kids really look forward to it. Ever since our oldest was 2 years old, our family established that Christmas is the one day of the year we have cake for breakfast. We wake up, light the candles on the cake, sing to Jesus, then enjoy this delicious treat. I think this tradition helps our kids remember what this day is all about in an age-appropriate way.

No. 3: Decorate your home in a Christ-centered way. Yes, the Santa and Frosty inflatables can be fun, but is Christ at the center of your display? If not, how can you re-arrange things so that all things point to Him? One idea I’ve had for many years is to decorate our exterior with Advent colors, lighting up a portion of purple candles each week, and even having pink lights for Gaudete Sunday. Maybe this will be the year I finally take the time to do it.

Above all, the most important way we can keep Christ in Christmas is by attending Mass. This is how we truly bring Christ into our hearts and homes – by receiving Him in Holy Communion. So, whether you attend the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve, Midnight Mass, or Christmas Day itself, make sure to plan ahead and not let anything distract you from this most important celebration.

As Catholics, we get to celebrate in the coming of Christ in a special way. He did not only come as a baby over 2,000 years ago – He comes to us in each and every celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist.

Until next time, I hope these words help you create some new Christmas traditions in your home. If you come up with one you really like, please share it with me at 361-573-0828, Ext. 2265.

God bless!

Justin Reyes is the Director of Family Evangelization for the Diocese of Victoria in Texas. E-mail Justin at jreyes@victoriadiocese.org.

Advent tradition
(Contributed Photo)

VICTORIA — Our Lady of Victory School first-graders decorated their own Advent wreaths. OLV students have been participating in this tradition over 30 years. Each student brings materials and assembles them and the wreaths were then blessed. Pictured are Erica and her daughter Emma.

On the Table

By Justin Reyes

Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation Readings from Dec. 8 through Jan. 10

Christmas Eve Mass During the Night

I. Psalm 96:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
   II. Luke 1:26-38

December 6 ~ Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
Psalms 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

December 8 ~ Holy Day of Obligation
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Isaiah 37:14-17
Psalms 73:20, 28-29, 30-31
Ephesians 5:1-2, 3-4
Luke 1:26-38

December 13 ~ Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-2A, 10-11
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 20 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16
Psalms 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

December 25 ~ Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Mass During the Night

Isaiah 9:1-6
Psalms 96:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Are you a faithful steward of your finances?

Years ago, Christians could truthfully say they were unaware of where their investment dollars were going. But today, through biblically responsible investing (BRI) principles and screening tools, investors can avoid funding unbiblical practices. At RPG, we’re guiding Christian investors to honor God and to create a meaningful legacy with their hard-earned money. Call me today to get started.

Michele Rohde
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Hay una gran esperanza en confiar nuestras oraciones a María

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

Este año leí el libro Verdadera Devoción a María de San Luis de Montfort, en preparación para la renovación de mi consagración a la Santísima Virgen María. La escritura de ella procede de la Santísima Virgen María en el convento de Laboure, escribió sobre la segunda aparición como individuos y por todo el mundo. Dios dependió de María para cumplir el plan de sanación que tenía en Su corazón desde el momento después del pecado original de Adán y Eva.

Nosotros también podemos depender del amor de María para interceder por nosotros como individuos y por todo el mundo.

Otra gran santa francesa, Santa Catherine Laboure, escribió sobre la segunda aparición de la Santísima Virgen María en el convento de París en 1830. La escritura de ella proclamó la esperanza que proviene de confiar las oraciones a María:

“Mientras estaba ocupada contemplándola, la Santísima Virgen me miro directamente, y una voz dijo en lo más profundo de mi corazón: ‘Este globo que ves representa al mundo entero, especialmente a Francia, y a cada persona en particular’.

“Luego se formó alrededor de la Santísima Virgen un marco de forma bastante ovalada en el que estaban escritas en letras de oro estas palabras: ‘Oh María concebida sin pecado, ora por nosotros que recurren a ti’. Entonces una voz me dijo: ‘Haz un medallón con esta imagen. Todos los que lo lleven, cuando sea bendecido, recibirán grandes bendiciones, especialmente si lo llevan alrededor del cuello. Aquellos que repitan esta oración con devoción estarán de una manera especial bajo la protección de la Madre de Dios. Las gracias se darán abundantemente a aquellos que tengan confianza.’

La simple oración de encomendar al mundo a la oración intercesora de María se extendió rápidamente de París a otras partes del mundo.

Dieciséis años más tarde, los obispos de los Estados Unidos declararon a María la Patrona de la Nación bajo el título de la Inmaculada Concepción. La medalla sobre la que escribió Santa Catherine Laboure ahora llamamos la “Medalla Milagrosa” y sigue siendo una fuerte devoción en todo el mundo. Al celebrar el Día de la Inmaculada Concepción el 8 de diciembre, será una oportunidad para orar por nuestra nación y nuestros líderes. Que este mes de diciembre sea un tiempo bendito para que ustedes y sus familias crezcan en aprecio por el plan de Dios para la salvación del mundo: el nacimiento de un niño con humildad en Belén hace 2.000 años, que sigue llevando esperanza, sanación y alegría a todas las personas de buena voluntad.

Que dios te bendiga. Mantengámonos en oración,

+Brendan

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Ideas para celebrar este mes

REZAR: Celebre la Inmaculada Concepción asistiendo a misa el 8 de diciembre. ¿Es un día sagrado de obligación?

Haga una oración de “Gloria al Señor” cada vez que algo no salga bien como lo desea.

Reza una oración de bendición sobre tu árbol de Navidad. La oración se puede encontrar en el sitio web de la USCCB (usccb.org)

COMER: Disfrute de un picnic al aire libre (a adentro) este mes.

Dónde alimentos o dinero a su banco de alimentos local.

Pruebe una nueva receta para una comida de fin de semana.

Mientras estén en la mesa, platicen cómo pudo haber sido la noche en que nació Jesus … ¿Podría haber hecho frío? ¿Estaba oscuro? ¿

Quién pudo haber estado con María y José?

JUGAR: Considere hacer un árbol de Jesse o agregar adornos a su propio árbol que reflejen la fidelidad de Dios que se encuentra en toda la Biblia.

Celebre estas fechas de diciembre: San Nicolás, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y La Fiesta de la Sagrada Familia.

Instale una corona de Adviento en su hogar. Se pueden encontrar más detalles sobre esto en nuestro sitio web.

Haga sus decoraciones navideñas centradas en Jesús.

Para más actividades, juegos e ideas de Adviento, visite nuestro sitio web! www.victoriadiocese.org/year-of-the-family

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Surviving Divorce was created to bring hope and healing to those who have experienced the pain and loneliness of a broken marriage. It is for the newly separated and divorced and those still struggling with issues many years later. It will help them find answers to their questions, restore hope, and begin authentic healing. Developed and hosted by Rose Sweet, Surviving Divorce features experts Dr. Ray Guarendi, Ph.D., Fr. Donald Calloway, M.I.C., Fr. Steve Porter, S.T.L., Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., and Christopher West. It also includes personal testimonies of Catholic men and women who have experienced the breakdown of their families. They courageously share their stories with heart, humor, and wisdom. As they witness to their pain and the healing power of Christ in their lives, participants will laugh, cry, and identify with their journeys from heartache to healing.

Surviving Divorce will help you:
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For More Information
Contact the Office of Family Evangelization at 361-573-0838 or jreyes@victoriadiocese.org

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website: www.victoriadiocese.org/office-of-family-evangelization

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Presidio La Bahía
Open daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is $5 for adults, $4.50 for seniors, $3.50 for military personnel, $2 for children 6-11, and under 6 are free. Group rates available when reservations are made in advance. Guided tours available to large groups and schools. Please confirm in advance. The fort is handicapped accessible. For more information, call 361-645-3752.
BY SISTER ANNA MARIE ESPINOSA, IWBS
Special to the Lighthouse
Region XII of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious congratulates Sister Norma Pimentel, Missionary Sister of Jesus, who was named by Time Magazine as one of its “100 Most Influential People for 2020.” She has received many awards and recognitions on multiple levels for the crucial ministry she has rendered to immigrants — primarily from Central America — fleeing their homes due to violence and/or dire poverty.

What we women religious know of Sister Norma is that she willingly shares the limelight. She understands the impact of collaboration, for she consistently credits the generosity of the people of the Rio Grande Valley and others who have responded to the cry for help from the waves of immigrants flowing across the Texas border since 2014.

Since 2014 well over 100,000 people have been served and housed by the welcoming centers created by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley and in El Paso at Annunciation House. Numerous other non-profit organizations and advocacy groups such as the Salvation Army have joined her efforts to offer support. Large numbers of volunteers traveled to the Valley from throughout the U.S. to help with the great number of people needing temporary assistance at the Texas border. Most are young families, parents with their children, who could no longer tolerate the grave violence and persecution.

In her words, “We are a people of God, people driven by the presence of God in ourselves and in others. When we see human suffering, we cannot turn our backs, we must respond. It is my hope that this recognition (by Time Magazine) will bring more understanding and help people see more clearly what we can each do to respect all human life.”

Yes, LCWR Region XII salutes Sister Norma Pimentel who voices the plight of immigrants and encourages all who continue this work of mercy day after day that must now be pursued on the other side of the border.

To contribute to Project Restoring Human Dignity please contact Tracey Perez, Catholic Charities Rio Grande Valley, at 956-702-4088 or Sister Colette Brehony, IWBS, in Corpus Christi, at 361-455-1802.

“Our congregation belongs to LCWR of which we are very active members. I actually serve on the Border Project for our region. We support monetarily projects that are instrumental in helping the poor and the immigrants seeking asylum in this country. The National LCWR in 2019 at their annual conference honored Sister Norma Pimentel for her dedication in working with the immigrants.”

~ Sister Kathleen Goike, General Superior, IWBS, Victoria
DIOCESE

Stir Up Sunday’ recipe is a unique family project

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is from the Catholic Rural Life blog, posted on www.catholicrurallife.org. It fits in nicely with the “Year of the Family” motto: Pray, Eat, Play.

Florence Berger shares in depth in the Cooking for Christ cookbook about her family’s traditions surrounding the Sunday before Advent, referred to as “Stir Up Sunday,” and the history of the holiday celebration throughout the centuries.

She writes:

“At the very first Sunday before Advent, we women hear the warning to get busy: ‘Stir up Thy power we beseech Thee, Oh Lord, and come’ (from the Anglican’s Book of Common Prayer). It is the time to hurry home and stir your plum puddings. In England, even today, this is known as ‘Stir-up Sunday.’ (In the liturgical year for the Roman Latin Church, it is the Sunday that celebrates the Solemnity of Christ the King.) The more you can stir a pudding the better. Each member of the family should come and give a good stir. Plum Puddings are deliberate affairs. It takes a bit of gathering and garnering before we begin.

Each year, as we assemble all the good things that go into the plum pudding, the children want to hear the plum pudding story. It is a tale which goes far back into the pagan times when the Celtic god, the Dagda, lived in the hills of Britain. The Dagda was the god of plenty. When he saw the sun turn in the course to come closer to the earth with each lengthening day, he decided to hold a festival. So he built a great fire under an enormous black cauldron called Undry. In the cauldron he placed the most delicious fruits of the earth and all other good things. There was meal and meat and fruit. Slowly he cooked it and spiced it and tasted it. Dagda was pleased with his plum porridge and he was ready to rejoice at the Yuletide.

The recipe was passed down through the years. When Christianity came, the recipe was not changed. The dish of honor though, was dedicated, not to the sun, but to Christ, ‘the true light who comes to enlighten the world plunged into darkness.’ When the 19th century came, the meat was cut to suet (the hard white fat from around the beef kidneys) and the plums fell by the wayside. Even today the pudding stands resplendent, topped with its sprig of holly and blazing with burning brandy. In it the fruits of the earth bring all their luscious goodness to the birth feast of their King.”

Plum Pudding

Ingredients

1 pound suet or 2 cups vegetable shortening
2 cups stale bread crumbs
3 cups brown sugar
6 large eggs, beaten
4 cups orange juice
4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp salt
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground nutmeg
2 medium-sized potatoes, peeled
2 medium-sized apples, peeled
1 fresh lemon peel
2 cups diced candied orange peel
2 cups diced candied grapefruit peel
3 cups raisins
2 cups dried currants
1 cup diced candied citron
1 cup blanched almonds
Wine or fruit juice, as needed

Directions

Grind the suet (or shortening) and bread together, and add the sugar. Moisten with beaten eggs and orange juice. Add the flour and spices. Grind the raw vegetables with the fresh and candied peels. Stir these into the batter. Stir in raisins, currants, citron and almonds. If the pudding is dry or lumpy, add wine or fruit juice.

Pack in buttered molds, cover tightly, and stand on a trivet in a large pot. Add enough boiling water to immerse the molds halfway. Cover the pot. Steam over low heat for 8 hours, replenishing the water as needed.

Our grandparents would steam their plum puddings for eight or 10 hours, but I put mine in the pressure cooker at 15 pounds pressure for 80 minutes. Cool the puddings before unmolding them. Wrap the puddings in plastic wrap and then foil; store in a cool, dry place for up to one year.

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Calhoun County farmer directs donation to Our Lady of the Gulf

Contributed Story and Photo
PORT LAVACA – Local farmer Candace Brett recently directed a $2,500 America’s Farmers Grow Communities donation, sponsored by Bayer Fund, to Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic School in Port Lavaca. The Bretts are also Calhoun County farmers Clay and Candace Brett make a donation presentation to Theresa Dent, principal of Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic School in Port Lavaca. The Bretts are also OLG Mariner parents. (Contributed Photo and Story)
Biblical lessons can help guide financial resolutions

BY MICHELE ROHDE
Special to the Lighthouse

New Year’s Resolutions receive quite a bit of attention, both positive and negative, starting this time of year. In the next few weeks, hopeful individuals using the Gregorian calendar across the globe will set a goal that cause their eyes to twinkle and their hearts flutter.

Research shows us that the top resolutions generally pertain to weight loss, reducing debt/saving more, giving up a bad habit like smoking or drinking and spending more quality time with friends, family and traveling. The data also conveys that, by February, more than 80 percent of those individuals will abandon their efforts toward their brand-new, shiny resolution.

This happens for multiple reasons. However, most will fail because they don’t work on creating the space for a new plan, new habits and positive growth in their mindset.

A goal also needs to be tied to deep, meaningful values and awareness that outweighs temporary conveniences and comforts. Otherwise, the glittery dream fades when its time to put in the hard work necessary to make the change.

So, with that knowledge in mind, I’d like to offer you a potentially worthy pursuit in the area of finances, in case that happens to be a topic that peaks your interest. Maybe you’ve heard mention of being a good steward of your resources. I love the “Bags of Gold” parable (Matthew 25:14-30) because there are several financial life lessons sewn into that one rich parable.

With that story in mind, here are four ways to become a more faithful steward of your finances:
1. Surrender Your Ownership. In today’s society, I think surrendering ownership may sound like a risky idea to most. When we remember God is truly the owner and creator of all things, though, it can greatly impact every thought and action we consequently take once we accomplish that shift in perspective. So, you can start by acknowledging everything you temporarily have here on Earth belongs to God to ensure you’re on the correct path.
2. Take responsibility. As custodians of God’s resources, we have a responsibility. Rather than squander or hide from it, we can educate ourselves to improve upon what we are given to further God’s kingdom. One way to accomplish that task is through Biblically Responsible Investing (BRI). Today, with the help of certified Christian financial advisors and software tools, investors can ensure they are honoring God and doing greater good with their dollars instead of unknowingly funding unchristian practices like abortion and pornography with our IRAs, 401(k)s, annuities and other financial assets.
3. Work hard. Proverbs makes much mention of hard work paying off. God blesses diligence, and it’s something anyone can improve upon by creating a plan to systematically tithe and save for good intentions.
4. Give generously. I can give you no better eternally significant reason to give generously than this: “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

Setting our hearts and minds on becoming faithful stewards of our finances helps us to appropriately honor God with all of the resources given to us.
• Michele Rohde is a financial advisor and president of the Rohde Financial Group in Victoria.

Will new administration continue support?

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- One of the most frequently expressed questions during an international religious freedom symposium Nov. 19 was whether the attention granted to religious freedom during the past four years would continue with the next administration.

“As the church, we are nonpartisan and do our best, always, to stay free of politics,” said Chaldean Archbishop Basha Warda of Irbil, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

He noted that “the present administration has stayed focused. Will this continue? We pray that it will be so.”

With fewer than 250,000 professed Christians in Iraq, “it is likely we will disappear by the time the world chooses to look at us again.”

“This (Trump) administration has been clear in support of us,” Archbishop Warda said. “We hope and pray that this solidarity may continue.”

The afternoon symposium, “Act in Time: Protecting Imperiled Christians in Ancient and Other Lands,” was held by the Anglophone Society in collaboration with the Hudson Institute, the Knights of Columbus, the Institute For Ancient and Threatened Christianity and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association.

Advent vespers are going virtual

Despite the pandemic, Amor Meus Spirituality Center is still here for you during Advent, with virtual solemn vespers at the Incarnate Word Convent on the four Sundays of Advent -- Nov. 29 and Dec. 6, 13 and 20 -- from 5 to 5:45 p.m.

You can participate by “liking” the Facebook page at: http://www.facebook.com/iwbs.victoria

Solemn vespers consists of chanting the psalms and singing hymns and canticles with brief talks each week based on the Advent Sunday Scripture readings.

Advent is a liturgical season of expectation, blending together a penitential spirit, preparation for the second and final coming of the Lord while joyfully getting ready to celebrate the birth of Christ.

12-week Ignatian retreat planned

Amor Meus Spirituality Center is offering a 12-week virtual Ignatian Retreat, “Finding Christ in the World,” Jan. 6 through March 24, 2021. Participants will meet virtually either on Wednesday mornings 9:30-10:30 a.m. or Wednesday evenings 6:30-7:30 p.m.

The retreat moves through 12 themes for prayer. The persons making the retreat pray at home each day with a given scripture passage and meet for one hour each week to share. Brief notes help move the retreatants into prayer.

To register or to inquire about the retreat call Sister Digna Vela at 361-485-0866. The retreat is limited to no more than 10 persons, so anyone interested should call early to secure a space.
SCHOOL

Sacred Heart presents a procession of saints

By Sister Emiliana Grafe, IWBS

HALLETTSVILLE—Why did the Church designate a day to celebrate all saints? In the early days of the Church each saint was honored on a special day. Due to the great numbers being martyred in the first three centuries, there weren’t enough days for each to have their own special day. The Church also wanted to honor all the saints rather than just the martyrs. In the early 9th century, Pope Gregory IV designated Nov. 1 as All Saints Day.

In the traditional celebration of All Saints Day, 32 Sacred Heart School elementary students formed a procession of saints at Sacred Heart Catholic Church on Nov. 4 before their school Mass.

Those in attendance enjoyed seeing the variety of saints, including all-time favorites like St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Francis of Assisi, new saints like Pope St. John Paul II and little-known saints like Emma of Lesum. This annual tradition reminds us all how these ordinary people who traveled this way before us, living the Beatitudes, left a model for us to follow on our journey, and are now in heaven interceding for us.

These saints were portrayed by the following students: Blessed Virgin Mary by Baye Shimek and Kristina Rybak; Pope St. John Paul II by Ethan Tumamao; St. Anne by Max Collins; Pope St. Pius X by Konnor Chance; St. Bernadette of Lourdes by Lily Janak; St. Audrey by Audrina Watson; St. Patrick by Grayson Whited; St. Kateri Tekakwitha by Khloe Olsovsky; St. Francis Assisi by Ty Rother and Everett Kubenka; St. Peregrine by Bransen Pastucha; St. Philomena by Kallie Loudon; St. Isabel of France by Emi Pohl, St. Veronica by Adley Zappe; St. Michael Archangel by Lane Henke, Greyson Miranda, William Halata, Tyler Tumis and Edward Lee Kubenka; St. Therese of Lisieux by Heidi Rother; St. Peter by Levi Murphy; St. Andrew by Brantley Stefflek, St. Clare of Assisi by Lana Opela; St. Jude Thaddeaeus by Preslie Haas; St. Isidore the Farmer by Landon Chovanetz; St. Emily de Vialar by Emily Bhdadu; St. Emma of Lesum by Emma Beach; St. Kateri Tekakwitha by Chloe Grahmann; St. Sebastian by Bryce Chovanetz; Venerable Jeanne de Matel by Ainsley Grahmann; and St. Paul of the Cross by Gatlin Matura.

Thank you to Monsignor John Peters, teachers, parents, and all who made this beautiful ceremony possible, especially those who made the unique costumes.

St. Rose of Lima students salute veterans

(Contributed Photo)

On Nov. 12, St. Rose of Lima Catholic School students and families celebrated our veterans. Students prepared the liturgy, dedicated to all veterans, sang, and took part in a special Patriotic Prayer Service. Following Mass, veterans were invited to the prayer garden plaza for refreshments and more class presentations. A news release from the school to The Catholic Lighthouse stated: “We appreciate their selfless sacrifices for the United States. Thank you to all of the men and women who have served and continue to serve our country.”

Catholic schools raise funds

Catholic Life Insurance Catholic Schools Sweepstakes program has helped Texas Catholic schools raise more than $10 million for Catholic education over the past decade, with 100 percent of the proceeds going directly to the schools. Each year, they help participating Texas Catholic schools raise much-needed funds through their “Catholic Schools Sweepstakes” program. The students are selling the tickets for $5 each. Check with your school to see if they are participating this year.

Holy Cross honors veterans

(Contributed Photo)

Holy Cross Catholic School in Bay City hosted a drive-through rally to honor veterans in their community on Veterans Day. The students held flags and made signs to show their appreciation for our veterans.

“Our veterans accepted the responsibility to defend America and uphold our values when duty called.” —Bill Shuster
December

Victoria—Annual Bishop’s Dinner benefitting the Spiritual Renewal Center will be cancelled. Donations being accepted. For more information, visit the Diocese of Victoria Facebook or call the Spiritual Renewal Center at 361-572-0836.

January

Catholic Schools—Considering sending your child to a Catholic School? Visit their websites for the 2021 open houses.

The Chancery will be closed for the Christmas and New Year Holidays from 11:30 a.m., December 22 through January 3, and will reopen January 4, at 8:30 a.m.

Merry Christmas and A Blessed New Year

Feliz Navidad y Un Bendito Año Nuevo

Veselé Vánoce a Požehnaný Nový Rok

Giáng sinh vui vẻ và Mời năm mới may mắn

Frohe Weihnachten und Ein gesegnetes neues Jahr

EVENTS

Ministries • Ongoing Activities

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.couragec.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 2021 Dates: January 15-17, April 16-18, June 4-6, September 17-19, November 12-14. 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.

i.d.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 id916victoria@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 amormeus@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/MothersofGraceolv/.

Natural Family Planning—NFP is the only church-approved form of family planning. For the CREIGHTON MODEL Fertility Care System (CrMS) 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 361-676-3264 or 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 jbjvjoy@sbcglobal.net or 361-580-2770; or call 800-470-2230; or visit www.helpourmarriage.org or www.retrouvaille.org.

School Fundraisers

Hallettsville—Sacred Heart Home & School Association is having a “Cattle or Cash” raffle! Tickets are $100 and the drawing date is 12/18. This was created to make up for the famous strudel bake. Call 361-798-4251 for more details. We also have the option of purchasing online via Venmo. Here is the Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=indianshsha&set=a.1835478429936232

What’s on the web?

Weekly Wednesday Webchats

Each week Justin Reyes, director of Family Services, posts an interview with someone in our diocese. Sometimes he will interview a member of the clergy, and sometimes it is the personal story of one of the faithful. One Wednesday a month he will post “Cinco Preguntas!” a Spanish-language interview featuring a local minister.

Bite-Sized Catholic

Check out this new Facebook page that helps explain Catholicism a bite at a time. This was created to help Catholics share their faith with others who may be seeking answers. It is a good way to engage in conversations about what we, as Catholics, believe. Visit www.facebook.com/bitesizedcatholic.

Year of the Family Prayer Jar

Did you know we have a prayer jar for special intentions during this Year of the Family? Place your intentions in the prayer jar by going to https://forms.gle/UGR46RC739AntJbp8. Visit www.victoriadiocese.org to learn more about the Year of the Family resources.
Merry Christmas
from the Diocese of Victoria Chancery Offices

29  Bishop Cahill
30  Father Gary Janak
1  Msgr. John Peters
2  Father Matthew Haelehfeld
3  Father Tommy Chen

4  Bishop Emeritus Fellhauer
5  Angela Martinez
6  Janet Jones
7  Jerri Joseph
8  Zoila Shoemake

9  Ashley Razo
10  Tony Martinez
11  Ashley Novasod
12  Sr. Rosaria Resendez

13  Dr. John Quary
14  Chris Alvarez
15  Regina Janak
16  Wendy Eggert
17  Shannon Thomas
18  Alice Capelo

19  Emmaus Center
    Presidio La Bahia
    Spiritual Renewal Center
20  Vicki Pyatt

21  Rene Garcia
22  Gary Rangnow
23  Alicia Olive

24  Justin Reyes
25  Sherry Kainer

26  Melissa Perales
27  Melissa Salinas
28  Brunilda Ortiz

23  Birthday
20  Birthday