Choosing life: 35th Candlelight March set for Jan. 27

BY BERNIE SEALE
Special to the Lighthouse

I am a woman; I have a right to make my own choices. I also have a responsibility to make good ones, because there are consequences to every choice I make.

I am also pro-life and believe that life begins at conception. Women can choose whether to enter into a sexual relationship or not, and to realize the choice she is making may create a life. We have been given a free will to make responsible choices, and this is a BIG one.

I don’t believe a woman can just decide to have an abortion whenever she wants. This is more than a woman’s personal choice; this is the termination of a human life.

I believe that all life is valuable and we as women are given the gift to unite with God to bring this beautiful child into a world where he or she is safe and loved.

I also believe that if more women made the decision to wait until marriage – where there is a father who is also wanting to have a family – we would have a more loving, family oriented world instead of one in which there is so much suffering and pain of raising a child alone.

Pro-life is our choice. Come with us on our 35th an-

See Choosing life, pg. 2

Synodality requires trust in the Holy Spirit

BY JANET JONES
The Catholic Lighthouse

In mid-December those given the leadership role in the Synod on Synodality met to with Bishop Brendan Cahill to discuss where the process might go.

Jenny Vincent, pastoral associate at Our Lady of Victory, Dr. Glenn Hunter, director of music for OLV, and Aldo Camacho, coordinator of Hispanic Ministry for the diocese are the three persons

See Synodality requires trust, pg. 16

Ordination

Deacons Richard Barfield and Tran Dinh will be ordained as priests on Jan. 8 at 10 a.m. at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. (Photo by Regina Janak/The Catholic Lighthouse)
‘Think of grace which is invisible’ as we focus on Eucharistic Revival

A Shepherd’s Message

By Bishop Brendan Cahill

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A few years ago (in the May 2016 Light-house) I referred to the second volume of the book I Believe in the Holy Spirit by the Dominican theologian Yves Congar. In the first pages of that volume, he quoted the first homily that St. John Chrysostom gave on the Feast of Pentecost. I shared this as a reflection on the transforming gift of the Holy Spirit that each person receives through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

Now I want to share it as we begin the 40th anniversary of the establishment of our diocese of Victoria, the Synod on Synodality with the universal Church and the Eucharistic Revival with the Church throughout the United States.

‘...you as initiated ones know that the priest does not touch the offerings before he has implored you for the grace of the Lord or before you have replied: ‘And with your spirit.’ This response reminds you that the one who is there does nothing by himself and that the gifts that are expected are in no ways the works of man, but it is the grace of the Spirit that has descended on all of you and that the gifts that are expected are in no ways the works of man, but it is the grace of the Spirit that has descended on all of you and that presents this as a mystical sacrifice...

Do not therefore cling to what strikes your eyes, but think of grace which is invisible.”

In the past two years, we have lived through a truly unprecedented time. The stress of daily decisions and the flood of information each day has been overwhelming. In the middle of all of these things that “strike our eyes” it can be an easy temptation to lose sight of the “grace which is invisible.”

What is a synod? The easy definition could be showing a map with a territory and teaching that a bishop has been assigned for the pastoral care of the territory in union with the Pope and the communion of bishops around the world. This is a way that we as Catholics trust we are following the true faith that Jesus handed on to the Apostles.

A more profound understanding of a diocese comes from the perspective of the people who make up the territory. This is what the great St. John Chrysostom referred to in his Pentecost homily all those years ago. A diocese is a people tied together in unity by the gift of the Holy Spirit, whose unity is most fully realized in the celebration of the Eucharist, the “mystical sacrifice” instituted by Jesus Christ and handed on to the Apostles.

What is a synod? I read in a commentary on canon 460 of our Catholic Code of Canon Law that one of the first experiences of a “synod” goes back to the year 387 when Pope Siricius called a gathering of his clergy for a consultation. That’s just a few years before St. John Chrysostom was delivering his sermons. This helps me to understand a process that we will be experiencing as a diocese over the next few months.

Pope Francis has initiated a “Synod on Synodality” for the universal Church. Every portion of the earth where people are living will participate. As I have started to pray to see the “grace which is invisible,” it is becoming apparent to me that as we take time to listen to one another and share our experiences of faith our faith grows. The conversations don’t necessarily have to be about making goals or plans, the grace comes from the spiritual and human connection with someone with a different experience.

What is the Eucharistic Revival? I can share with you that, at one of our bishops’ meetings, we were going through our usual reports and presentations, and then one of the brothers got up and started sharing about a possible idea. How about taking a three-year period where we can focus our teaching, preaching and Church life on the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist? I could feel the energy increase as he presented, and, by the end, I was hoping we would be able to do it.

Well, now you will be hearing about a Eucharistic Revival for the United States for the next three years, with a bold plan to host a Eucharistic Congress with 80,000 to 100,000 people in Indianapolis in July 2024.

There already has been “grace which is invisible” flowing from the talks and sharing about this project, and I ask your special prayers to guide us through the revival.

May the coming year be filled with grace and blessing for you and your families, may we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and may we all be guided by the Holy Spirit, who never ceases to bring hope and healing to our world.

+Brendan

Choosing life

35th Candlelight March set for Jan. 27

About the speaker

Jason Jones is a film producer, author, activist, popular podcast host and human rights worker. He is president of the Human Rights Education Organization (H.E.R.O.) and the director of The Vulnerable People Project.

In 2006, Jones was an executive producer of “Bella,” which won several film industry awards, most notably the People’s Choice Award at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival. He was the associate producer of the 2008 film, “The Stoning of Soraya M.,” which won the Los Angeles Film Festival Audience Award in 2009 and the NAACP Image Award in 2010.

In 2009, Jason was part of a coalition that delivered medicine and drilled wells in the most remote corners of Sudan. In 2012, he was the producer of the TV movie “Mother Marianne: Portrait of a Saint” and an executive producer of the new film “Voiceless.”

His short films include “Eyes to See” (2010) and “Crescendo” (2011).

In 2015, Jason went to the front lines in Iraq in the war against ISIS and directed a documentary for policy makers on the plight of religious minorities. Jason is a leading voice in the world for the Uyghur as they face ongoing persecution and internment in China. Jason works directly to aid the homeless, people facing genocide and women with crisis pregnancies.

A regular contributor to news sites, he is also the author of two books, The Race to Save Our Century and his most recent, The World is on Fire, released October 2017. Jason’s latest film “Divided Hearts of America,” will be premiering on FOX Nation this fall.

Continued from pg. 1

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Retiring cemeteries director, Gary Rangnow, most pleased with database for public use

BY JANET JONES
The Catholic Lighthouse

Gary Rangnow, Director of Catholic Cemeteries for the Diocese of Victoria for more than 18 years, is retiring Jan. 31 at age 73.

"The first thing I did when he took the job, and what he is most proud of, is building the current database for the Catholic cemeteries – a far cry from the "roll of drawings and two tape measures" he said he was handed at the beginning of his tenure.

He had the idea based on the website he and his son, Kyle, made for the Port Lavaca Board of Realtors – a multi-layered website that allowed agents to edit their own sections so some information was public and some was not.

"I thought, 'It is exactly what we need here.' We (he and Kyle) worked on it around the clock.'"

He said he brought up the idea at the National Catholic Cemetery Conference and found out that no other office had a website with public information. Some even told him, "You can't do that," he said. But he knew that it would be important to families as genealogy became increasingly popular. "As far as I know, we were the first ones in the U.S. that had an online database available to the public for information.

It took a lot of hours, but he said people are grateful to have the information: "There's a lot of people looking at that database all over the world," he said.

Rangnow has a background in electrical engineering (having worked at two local chemical plants), and he was in the business of building websites with his son, Kyle, for about five years before taking the job.

When asked why he made the decision to apply for the job at the cemeteries office, he said, "Because I'm married." He explained that his wife, Sharon, was helping then-director Deacon James Koenig in the cemeteries office at the time when Koenig was the director.

See Cemeteries director, pg. 5

DOV transportation coordinator keeping the road hot – and safe

Carl Kirst, took over the transportation duties of the Diocese of Victoria this fall after several personnel changes in the Office of Safe Environment, which supervised the responsibilities.

A native of San Antonio, Kirst lives in the Lockhart area, and commutes to Victoria every Wednesday to take care of his office duties. He also works remotely when necessary.

Kirst is no stranger to the job. He was coordinator for bus drivers several years ago and was asked to consider returning after the job opening came up in the middle of 2021. He returned this past fall.

Though he lives about an hour and a half away, the commute probably doesn't faze the seasoned traveller. He has been transportation director for Eanes (Austin) and Victoria ISDs, has driven a school bus as well as a charter bus. Kirst has driven to 46 of the 48 contiguous states in the nation and goes on many weekend or weeklong road trips throughout the year.

He also has taken nine music-related trips to Europe and the Holy Land. Music is one of the things that keeps him connected to the area. He is choir director and organ/piano accompanist at Holy Family parish in Victoria as well as organist/pianist at St. Mary’s in Lockhart. And he’s played tuba in The Rusty Steins since 1998. He also gives private piano lessons with Unity Performing Arts Project in Lockhart.

Kirst and his wife, Melinda, have two daughters, Stephanie and Andrea, and two grandsons.

He can be reached by email at ckirst@victoriadiocese.org, or call him at the chancery, 361-573-0828.
Bishop Cahill to celebrate consecrated life at Feb. 6 Mass

VICTORIA — Bishop Brendan Cahill will commemorate the annual World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life as he celebrates the 9 a.m. televised Mass at Our Lady of Victory Cathedral on Feb. 6.

Sisters from the various religious communities in the Diocese of Victoria will be in attendance.

In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life. This celebration is attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on Feb. 2. This feast is also known as Candlemas Day, the day on which candles are blessed, symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. So too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples. The celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life is transferred to the following Sunday in order to highlight the gift of consecrated persons for the whole Church.

Some people are masters of complaining; doctors of complaining; they are very good at complaining! No, complaining imprisons us: “the world no longer listens to us” – how often do we hear that – or “we have no more vocations, so we have to close the house,” or “these are not easy times” – “ah, don’t tell me!” And so the duet of complaints begins. It can happen that even as God patiently tills the soil of history and our hearts, we show ourselves impatient and want to judge everything immediately: now or never, now, now. In this way, we lose that “small” but most beautiful of virtues: hope. (From the 2021 Papal Homily for the World Day for Consecrated Life.)
Jesus’s baptism was another epiphany

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** This sermon was written in 1993. Father Kram titled it, “Baptism of the Lord.”

Without repentance, there is no forgiveness.

Repentance was the center of Jewish belief. It was at the core of John the Baptists’ preaching. It is central to the Christian faith. John the Baptist’s baptism was a baptism of repentance.

Jesus was sinless. He had no need of repentance. His baptism was another showing, or appearance or manifestation – another epiphany.

Jesus had shown Himself to His own people by the message of the angels to the shepherds. Then He showed Himself to the non-Jews by way of the Magi. Now, as He begins His ministry, He shows Himself once more to His own people; this time by the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

“This is my beloved Son,” was a quotation from the second Psalm, which every Jew accepted as referring to the Messiah. “My favor rests on Him,” is from the 42nd chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah, referring to the suffering servant, again pointing out Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, at the baptism of Jesus, God revealed to His chosen people that the Messiah had come: “This is He.”

By our baptism, the stain of Adam’s sin was washed away. The Holy Spirit entered in to cleanse and enlighten us and fill us with new life. We renounced Satan and were brought into union with Christ. We became adopted children of our Heavenly Father.

As far as God is concerned, we were not baptized in vain. Yet, in our weakened state, we remain sinners. As we keep struggling toward perfection, as our Heavenly Father is perfect, our lives are a constant reconversion and reform.

So as we celebrate this third epiphany, we rejoice to have our Savior with us. We resolve to keep our faith strong by faithfully practicing it. We strive to help others grow in faith and love by our prayers and example.

A good way to show that we really mean what we profess is to use the sacraments diligently, because the sacraments are official acts of the Church, and the power of Christ works in them.

In the Eucharist, Christ’s own Body and Blood nourish and strengthen us in all our struggles and make our burdens light enough to bear.

A man once told me that God has to help weak guys like me, but that guys like him can do for themselves. But he also stated that if he ever became disabled and unable to help himself, he would blow his brains out. Without Christ, we weaken and despair and die. With Him, all things become possible.

Now a word of caution: Nowadays, when almost everyone who attends Mass receives Communion, it makes sense to consider that we must not become too casual or too routine about it as though it were a sort of holy snack. The Eucharist is a meeting with the Living Lord. According to St. Paul, some of the early Christians died prematurely because they had received the Eucharist unworthily. To knowingly receive Holy Communion in the state of grave sin is still wrong.

If you feel uneasy about how you stand with God or if you know you have done something seriously wrong, make it a point to go to confession as soon as possible.

A good confession includes true sorrow for having offended God and also the firm intention of breaking with one’s sins. We are obliged to confess the kind and number of any grave sins we are conscious of, and we may, but need not, also mention our venial sins. The rules have not changed.

It is recommended that we go to confession every few months regardless. The examination of conscience before confession is a wonderful opportunity to take inventory of one’s life, as the words of absolution, “I absolve you from your sins,” bring deep assurance of forgiveness. When did you last go to confession?

Lord Jesus, Thank You for accepting the baptism of John, so that You might reveal Yourself to us. Help us to repent of our sins sincerely and center our lives on You. Grant that during (this year), we may change notice ably for the better, especially if this year is perhaps to be our last. Amen.

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**Retiring cemeteries director built a well-used database for public**

Continued from pg. 3

transitioning out of that role, and the diocese was looking for another director. His wife told him he needed to take on that job. His first reaction was, “Why would I want to do that?”

A little later, he said, after the job was still open and there was the possibility that a contract company might fill the position, he decided to take it, because he didn’t want a non-Catholic running the Catholic cemeteries. So, on Oct. 1, 2003, he became director.

Now, following a bypass surgery and lengthy recovery period, he decided it was time to retire.

He said he is feeling well, and looks forward to spending more time with other projects such as the TV ministry at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, and the Knights of Columbus activities.
Perpetual consecration

Pictured are members of the Incarnate Word Associates who made their Perpetual Consecration on Nov. 14 at Incarnate Word Convent. They are, from left, Marvin and Lucille Huse, Theresa Anderson, Dorothy Bujnoch, Dolores Kocian and Lillian Cooper. Standing, from left, are the clergy: the Rev. Michael Petering, also an associate; the Rev. Albert Yankey, convent chaplain; Deacon Kevin Petrash; Bishop Emeritus David Fellhauer, presider; and the Rev. Greg Korenek. Also pictured are Sister Kathleen Goike, general superior, and Sister Emiliana Grafe, director of the associates. Perpetual consecration members are from parishes in Hallettsville, Meyersville, Victoria and Wharton. (Contributed Photo)

First consecration

Nine women completed their formation as Associates of the Incarnate Word, in spite of the pandemic, and made their first consecration on Nov. 14 at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria. Pictured with Sister Kathleen Goike, superior general, center, and Sister Emiliana Grafe, their director, they are, from left, Sheila Klimeitche, Mary Santallana, Felicia Slaskey, Katy Alvarez, Pam Zieschang, Cathie Gleinser, Paulette Petrash, Benjamin Gerdes and Candy Spaulding. Participating clergy, from left, are the Rev. Michael Petering, associate; the Rev. Albert Yankey, convent chaplain; Deacon Kevin Petrash; Bishop Emeritus David Fellhauer, presider; and the Rev. Greg Korenek. The beginners are from parishes in Ganado, Hallettsville, Victoria and Yoakum. (Contributed Photo)

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VICTORIA — The American Heart Association, the leading voluntary health organization focused on heart and brain health for all, is inviting Victoria and its surrounding communities back to its premier event to boost physical and mental health through healthy habits while supporting the lifesaving mission.

On Feb. 5, Victoria area Heart and Stroke Walk participants and teams are invited to Victoria College/UHV Campuses to celebrate heart and stroke survivors, raise lifesaving funds and encourage physical activity. The 2022 Crossroads Heart and Stroke Walk is led by Bernard Leger, CEO DeTar Healthcare System.

“The past year has shown us that no matter where we are, we can come together for a common cause,” said Leger. “The Heart and Stroke Walk is all about promoting the health and well-being of our community and supporting our lifesaving mission.”

To register, visit CrossroadsHeartWalk.org. The funds raised from the Crossroads Heart and Stroke Walk go towards research, advocacy, CPR training and to promote better health in support of the Association’s 2024 Health Equity Impact Goal, reducing barriers to health care access and quality. Visit www2.heart.org to learn more.
It is a new year and we are bound to see posts on social media declaring “New Year, New Me.” Many people will go out and start a gym membership because this will be the year that they will get into the shape they desire. Diets will begin and all other kinds of New Year’s resolutions will be announced.

It seems to me that what is announced is usually something new being added to one’s lifestyle, but never something that someone will quit doing.

I understand that quitting has always seemed like a negative thing. We should always strive to keep going, to work harder, to get to that finish line that we are striving to get to.

Yet, there are some things that may be beneficial for us if we quit them. Quitting smoking has never hurt anyone; it’s actually pretty beneficial for one’s body. Still there are other things that we can quit that will be beneficial to our souls. What are things that we can quit that aren’t helpful to us and replace with things that will be helpful?

Quit complaining and start finding solutions. When I say to quit complaining I do not mean to not speak up when something is unjust. Those are times we need to be heard. What I mean is that there are times that we complain a lot about things we could change, not knowing that by spending so much time complaining, we are making the environment we live in toxic.

Many times when I’m complaining, I don’t take the time to realize that I’m complaining about things that are happening because of my own decisions. Am I complaining that I have too much work? If so, did I set boundaries to not be overworked? Am I feeling overwhelmed because I have so much to do and so little time? If so, did I procrastinate and that is why I now have less time? Next time, when I think about complaining, let me first think of how I can change the situation about which I’m complaining. At times, that may require me to make a decision that I do not want to make, but have to.

Quit retail therapy and begin actual therapy. Retail therapy is a quick fix for when we are down or upset about something, but does it really solve the issue? Aren’t our closets bursting at the bolts and we still feel upset later? There is nothing wrong with finding a therapist to talk to who will help you heal. Quit holding onto grudges, resentment and unforgiveness and learn to let go. In the movie “The Mission,” there is a scene where Robert DiNiro is hiking up a mountain with his armor tied onto his body. He’s carrying them in a net over his shoulder as a form of penance for killing his brother. A priest tries to cut it away from him but he goes down to retrieve it. It wasn’t until a native cut it away from him and showed him how easy it would be to climb without it that he understood what he was doing wasn’t helping him at all.

We’ve heard many times that holding onto grudges, resentment and unforgiveness doesn’t hurt anyone but us, but do we believe it? There is no way we are going to like everyone we meet, and there will be people who hurt us severely. When we forgive people who hurt us, it doesn’t mean we then have to become best friends. We may never speak to them again. But, in forgiving them, we are taking back the power they had over us. The power to change our mood whenever we see them or hear their name mentioned. When one has an open wound, it cannot heal if we keep picking at it. Before we know it, it will become infected. The same applies to a wound in our spirit. Holding onto grudges, resentment, and unforgiveness is just infecting that wound. Let it go, and let the Lord heal it.

Quit only seeing Jesus in the people we like, and start recognizing that He is in everyone.

Quit saying curse words, and start praising God and sending out blessings.

Quit being grumpy and/or angry, and find the root cause of those feelings so you may allow joy to enter into your life.

Remember what is written about a life based on love in Ephesians 4: 25-32. Therefore, cease your lying and speak the truth to each other, for we are all members of one another. If you are angry, do not sin. Do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not give the devil an opening. Anyone who has been stealing must no longer do so; rather, let him labor, performing some honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with those in need. Let no foul word ever pass your lips. Say only what is useful for edification, so that your words may benefit your listeners. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal for the day of redemption. Remove all forms of bitterness and wrath and anger and shouting and slander, as well as all malice from your lives. Rather, be kind to one another and compassionate, and forgive one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.

Maybe this year we can pray and reflect on these questions: Is there something that if I were to quit, would make my life better? If so, what is it? Will I take up the challenge to quit it this year and remove it from my life?
HALLETTSVILLE — Sacred Heart Catholic School is looking for graduates from the years 2000 to 2021 to share their fondest memories of school and what they have done since graduating as it prepares for its 140th anniversary.

On Jan. 5, 1882, sisters from the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament officially opened Sacred Heart Academy in Hallettsville, which later became Sacred Heart Catholic School.

The school will be celebrating its 140th anniversary throughout the month of January, beginning with a special Mass at 8 a.m. Jan. 5.

Everyone is invited to the Mass, which will be followed by presentations about the history of the school.

Throughout the month of January, the school will host special programs after the weekly Friday Masses. On Jan. 7, they will share information about the school through the past 15 years.

Graduates of the aforementioned years are asked to email Ana Henke at ana.henke@shschool.org and give information such as graduation year, college attended, current job, family, military service, as well as fondest memories. Let the school know how they prepared you for college or a career.

SCHOOLS

Sacred Heart celebrating 140 years, seeking grads from 2000-2021

THANKFUL AND GENEROUS

SCHULENBURG — The St. Rose of Lima Catholic School family donated 374 pounds of non-perishable food to the Schulenburg Area Food Pantry, and 11 Thanksgiving food baskets to the Family Crisis Center during their annual Thanksgiving Mass held on Nov. 18.

Above photo, from left, are, front row Jonathan Guerrero, Jamison Bennett and Dakota Wick; and, back row, Clara Magliolo, Phoenix Richter, Myrannda Slaton, Landry Zapalac, Grace Schramek, Cheyenne Henneke, Kenna Oliver, Keeley Warnken, Mikayla Stang and Reagan Dusek. In the photo to the left are representatives from the crisis center accepting the gifts. (Contributed Photos)

A JOYOUS MORNING

PORT LAVACA — Bishop Brendan Cahill celebrated Mass with Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic School students on Dec. 2. He then visited Ms. Martell’s third-grade class and shared his own memories of being a third-grader. He also visited with all the other grades and even sang “Jingle Bells” with the kindergarten class. The students made signs and presented gifts to him during his visit. Principal Theresa Dent called it “a joyous morning!” (Contributed Photo)

TOYS FOR CASA

CUERO — The families of St. Michael’s Catholic School worked with the Edward Jones Office in Yoakum to collect toys for Golden Crescent CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for children).

During this time of Advent, the students have been praying for children in the community that have families working with the court systems, that they may have hope, peace, and love.

Pictured with the children is Russell Goebel from Edward Jones. (Contributed Photo)
Community group invites youth to enjoy The Link

Young people from seventh to 12th grade, are invited to a free night of Christian fellowship at The Link event at Son Valley Ranch, starting at 5 p.m. Jan. 21.

This year’s event is dedicated to the memory of event founder Carrie Heldt Myers, who was a longtime coach at St. Joseph High School and one of the founders of The Link event. Myers died in October of 2021. The Link team, a group of community volunteers from various faith backgrounds, has founded a memorial scholarship in her name. Two $1,000 scholarships – one to a young man and one to a young woman – will be given in her memory. The scholarship parameters are still being set and will be posted on TheLinkEvent.net. Awards will be made in May, according to Dr. Amy Kirkpatrick-Thelin, event chairwoman.

According to Hartman, Myers helped create The Link to “link” young people in the community to God through inspiring and entertaining speakers and fellowship. She said it also aims to “link” youth of many denominations in their common love for God.

This year’s speaker is Melvin Adams, an NCAA All American basketball player and team captain of the Harlem Globetrotters. He will share his life experiences of overcoming naysayers who did not believe he could become a pro ball player. The evening will also feature illusionist Jim Munroe who performs around the country and also has a story of faith to share.

Youth will be treated to free food from Chick-fil-a, free pizza, and more than $3,000 in door prizes, thanks to generous sponsors, according to Hartman.

* The Link is not a diocesan event. It is being brought to the community by like-minded people who want to celebrate as Christians on common ground. Adult supervision is provided as well as security by local police officers.

Racial reconciliation can be hard to discuss, bishops say

BY REBECCA TORRELLAS
Catholic News Service

HOUSTON — “Racial reconciliation -- reconciliation in general -- is a matter of the heart,” retired Bishop Curtis J. Guillory of Beaumont said during a recent night of prayer and discussion about race relations in the U.S.

The discussion was moderated by Father Reginald Samuels, vicar for the Catholics of African descent and pastor of St. Hyacinth Catholic Church in Deer Park.

Speaking about the U.S. bishops’ 2018 pastoral letter on racism, “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love,” Father Samuels said, “We are here to explore what it means to have God’s love in our society.”

The event, hosted by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, brought together church leaders and members of the legal profession, following the Oct. 19 Red Mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in downtown Houston.

The heart of the pastoral “is conversion,” said Bishop Guillory, one of 10 African-American Catholic bishops and the first African-American bishop to head a diocese in Texas. He was appointed to Beaumont in 2000 and retired in 2020.

Joining Bishop Guillory as a speaker was Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas, who holds a master of theology degree with a specialization in African American Catholic studies from Xavier University in New Orleans. Xavier is the nation’s only Catholic historically Black university.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, who was president of the USCCB when the pastoral was written, said that when it was being drafted, there was a lot of anger between staff and the experts that helped develop the letter.

“The first draft of the letter was so angry -- really angry -- that we practically had to call a truce,” he said. “We had to go back. And one of the things they decided to add -- intensely -- is confronting one another with the truth and occasionally with some uncomfortable things.”

At the same time, Cardinal DiNardo said, the letter expanded on Scriptures and the importance of Jesus Christ in all of the issues. “As that happened, the second draft of the letter fell into place pretty well,” he said. “These are tough issues.”

Bishop Guillory said the goal of the pastoral letter is in line with the church’s mission to teach.

“Unfortunately today, for too many Christians, their conscience is informed and transformed not by the Christian teaching, but rather by political affiliation,” he said. “So this letter … is an attempt on the part of the bishops to give us some guidance by
BY JODI MARLIN
Catholic News Service

At 15 weeks' gestation, a fetus responds to touch. The neurotransmitters and nerves needed to process and transmit pain signals have formed, and most of the spinal column has hardened into bone. As early as 21 weeks, the fetus can survive outside the womb.

None of these realities were known in 1971, when a case came before the Supreme Court that would ultimately give a mother the right to abort her unborn child.

During the past 50 years, advances regarding the biological genesis of humans have disproven the basis on which the court, in Roe v. Wade, presumed a lack of justifiability of a ban on abortions – except to save the live of the mother – that was in place in the defendant’s home state of Texas.

The court’s 1973 decision legalizing abortion nationwide rested on the use of the word “person” in the 14th Amendment, which protects the mother’s privacy.

Notably, there was great disagreement over when an unborn child becomes a living being whose rights compete with those of the mother.

Since then, techniques in research tools and perinatal surgery, advancements in viability and the proliferation of support options for mothers with unexpected pregnancies have conspired to erode many of the arguments offered then and now for the right to terminate life in the womb.

The many layers to comprehending the humanity of an early gestation fetus begins with the “absolutely critical” advancements in science over the last five decades, according to Dr. Tara Sander Lee, senior fellow and director of life sciences for the Charlotte Lozier Institute, an organization that brings the power of science, medicine and research to bear in pro-life policies and public awareness.

Fifty years ago, expectant parents could barely see their unborn child in the womb because ultrasound technology was fairly new and rudimentary, Sander Lee explained.

Now, ultrasound technology gives physicians better and faster diagnostics and new tools that can not only detect, but when appropriate, even treat malformations of the unborn.

“So, there’s this whole development of what we call the perinatal revolution, where you can actually perform surgery on the unborn while still in the womb,” she told Catholic News Service.

While the original ultrasound images were static and black and white, 3D, 4D and real-time images are the norm today.

“We can see in real time the baby move, and with absolute clarity,” said Sander Lee. As early as 15 weeks, even whether the fetus is favoring their right or left hand can be observed.

Dr. Kathleen Raviele, past president of the Catholic Medical Association and an OB-GYN, added that mothers and their physicians can see the fetal heartbeat by six weeks, observe the movements of the baby, assess the anatomy and determine his or her sex far earlier than could be done just two generations ago could do.

“So those involved in abortion cannot say this is a ‘blob of tissue’ – they know this is a baby, and that abortion takes the life of an unborn child,” she said.

If an early ultrasound or test determines the presence of a malformation in the fetus, the most severe ones – including spina bifida and twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome, which can result in the death of both babies – has been done as early as 15 weeks in these pregnancies. In the latter situation, it proven to be a lifesaving procedure for one, if not both babies.

“This ability to be able to better visualize inside the womb has really allowed us to be able to then treat some of these conditions early on. And even for those that are untreatable, we can give the parents and physicians time to plan for a meaningful and rich life,” said Sander Lee.

In terms of viability, it was known at the time of Roe v. Wade that it was only possible to save premature babies born between 24 and 28 weeks: That clock has been moved up as well.

“We know now that we can save babies routinely at 22 weeks, and sometimes even younger as early as 21 weeks,” said Sander Lee. “That means about just 19 weeks after fertilization.” The world’s most premature baby, born last year at just 21 weeks, celebrated his first birthday this summer.

The Catholic Medical Association argues that the 24- to 28-week criterion for viability is unworkable, demonstrating the flaws in predicting viability, especially if the person responsible for such a prediction is the abortion provider, whose interest is not in protecting life.

“The viability standard for protecting human life is arbitrary,” said Dr. Marie Hilliard, co-chairperson of the association’s ethics committee.

“Much is based on access to prenatal and high quality post-natal care,” she told CNS. “Current technology available to diagnose prenatal conditions, and treat the most complex neonatal conditions, were unimaginable in 1973 (when the Roe decision was handed down), easily moving viability to as early as 22 weeks’ gestation.

“These facts are irrefutable, indicating that even earlier that 22 weeks’ gestation there is the presence of ‘potential’ human life. …Science now clearly demonstrates that from the moment of conception the unborn baby is a human being, not a ‘potential’ human being.”

Fifty years of research also has provided a much deeper understanding of fetal pain and suffering.

For Mississippi, the point at which fetal pain is possible is 15 weeks; the state’s law banning abortions after 15 weeks is currently under review by the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments in the case – Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization – Dec. 1.

But sometimes the fetus feels pain earlier.

“It’s incredible, but they may feel pain from as early as 12 weeks’ gestation – and definitely by 18 weeks,” said Sander Lee.

“This is just a phenomenal amount of information that we didn’t have at the time of Roe. We didn’t really understand how much suffering these babies could go through inside the womb.”

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Sunday Readings from Jan. 9 - Feb. 13

January 9 ~ The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10
Acts 10:34-38

January 16 ~ Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
John 2:1-11

January 23 ~ Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10
Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 15
1 Corinthians 12:12-30
Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

January 30 ~ Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19
Psalms 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17
1 Corinthians 12:31–13:13

February 6 ~ Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8
Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

February 13 ~ Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jeremiah 17:5-8
Psalms 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6
1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
Luke 6:17, 20-26

For daily and Sunday readings, as well as a daily reflection video, visit www.usccb.org/bible/readings.
‘Piensa en la gracia que es invisible’

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

Hace unos años (en el Lighthouse de mayo de 2016) me referí al segundo volumen del libro I Believe in the Holy Spirit (Creo en el Espíritu Santo) del teólogo Dominico Yves Congar. En las primeras páginas de ese volumen, citó la primera homilía que San Juan Crisóstomo dio en la fiesta de Pentecostés. Compartí esto como una reflexión sobre el don transformador del Espíritu Santo que cada persona recibe a través de los sacramentos del bautismo y la confirmación.

Ahora quiero compartirlo al comenzar el 40 aniversario del establecimiento de nuestra diócesis de Victoria, el Sínodo sobre el 40 aniversario del establecimiento de los sacramentos del bautismo y la confirmación.

... ustedes, como iniciados, saben que el “sacrificio místico” instituido por Jesucristo es visible en la celebración de la Eucaristía, el Santo, cuya unidad se realiza más plenamente en la celebración del renacimiento. Esto es a lo que se refirió el gran San Juan Crisóstomo en su homilía de Pentecostés: “y que todos seamos guiados por el Espíritu Santo, que nunca deja de traer esperanza y bendición para ustedes y sus familias, que mantengan nuestro oído en el renacimiento. Que el próximo año esté lleno de gracia sobre la sinodalidad” para la Iglesia universal. Cada porción de la tierra donde la gente vive participará. A medida que se levantó y comenzó a compartir sobre una posible idea, ¿qué tal tomar un período de tres años donde podamos enfocar nuestra enseñanza, predicción y vida de la Iglesia en la presencia real de Jesús en la Eucaristía? Puede sentir el aumento de energía a medida que se presentaba y, al final, esperaba que pudiéramos hacerlo. Ahora escucharemos sobre otro Renacimiento Eucarístico para los Estados Unidos durante los próximos tres años, con un plan audaz para organizar un Congreso Eucarístico con 80,000 a 100,000 personas en Indiana el julio de 2024. Ya ha habido “gracia que es invisible” fluyendo de las conversaciones y el intercambio sobre este proyecto, y le pido sus oraciones especiales para guiarnos a través del renacimiento. Que el próximo año esté lleno de gracia y bendición para ustedes y sus familias, que mantengamos nuestros ojos fijos en Jesús y que todos sean guiados por el Espíritu Santo, que nunca deje de traer esperanza y sanidad a nuestro mundo.

+Brendan
Resolve to share the faith in 2022

On the Table
By Justin Reyes

The easiest way to talk about Jesus with someone is simply to share what He has done for you. Will you make it a goal to do this regularly? Maybe once a month, tell someone about what God has done in your life in the hope that it helps him or her draw closer to Him. Maybe there is one friend or family member in particular you’d like to share this with. Whatever it may be, let’s be sure to share what God has done in our lives.

The success of the event was a culmination of two years of work. Reyes joined the diocese to run the new office in October of 2019. He has explained that he wanted to begin with men’s ministry, because fathers who practice their faith have the greatest impact in the spiritual growth of the family, statistics have shown.

Early on, a men’s ministry team for the diocese was formed. Members of that team are Reyes, Eamon McCourt, group chaplain, of Queen of the Holy Rosary in Hostyn; Cody Horton of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria; Rick Jahn of St. Joseph in Yoakum; and Dr. Ty Meyer of Holy Family in Victoria. The Rev. Tommy Chen, pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf in Port Lavaca and its missions, is the spiritual director of the group.

During the workshop, three things were considered a big win for the team. (Contributed Photo)

No. 1: Share your story. Did you know you can extend an invitation. We can do this! So, here are three simple ways of communicating the faith I’d like for you to consider this year:

No. 1: Share your story. Did you know some studies say that as much as three-fourths of the population are afraid of public speaking? But, to share our story, we don’t have to be on a stage; we can be at the kitchen counter, or at a coffee shop, or even at a bar watching a football game. The time is always right to

No. 2: Invite. When’s the last time you invited someone to Mass? Or to a ministry event? Or to become Catholic? Or even to your home for dinner? Jesus was always inviting. Can you make an invitation goal to invite more people to encounter him and his church? How about one invitation per quarter? We have many exciting events in 2022 for which you can extend an invitation. We can help you achieve your goal. Simply invite a friend to come to you to experience faith in a deeper away, or to open their eyes if they’ve been away for a while.

No. 3: Start something new. The church is always supporting new endeavors that will help bring people to the faith. Is there a ministry you’d like to start? Or something you’d like to get involved in to help people encounter Jesus? Let me know, and I’d love to help you brainstorm how it can become a reality. Maybe you can set a goal to start or get involved in at least one ministry this year. Your participation matters in sharing the Gospel. All of us are needed.

I hope and pray that we may all make a greater effort this year to share the faith. Our world seems to be turning from God at times, but we can help it turn back. We are His messengers. To quote Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, “The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history so that, by your faith, his name will continue to resound throughout the world.”

God bless!

Justin Reyes is the Director of Family Evangelization for the Diocese of Victoria in Texas. He can be reached at 361-573-0828 x 2265 or jreyes@victoriadiocese.org.

Men’s ministry ‘taking on a life of its own’

Team getting prepared for the 2022 conference

BY JANET JONES
The Catholic Lighthouse

A men’s ministry workshop in December had more than 40 participants from around the diocese who are either involved in leading men’s ministry or want to get involved.

“This was our biggest win in men’s ministry,” said Justin Reyes, director of the Office of Family Evangelization, “We were just on cloud nine.”

The success of the event was a culmination of two years of work. Reyes joined the
DIOCESE

Time for fellowship and gratitude

FLATONIA – The Catholic Daughters Court Sacred Heart of Mother Teresa No. 2570 gathered for a Christmas party Dec. 6. The group has had a busy few months helping with Sacred Heart parish’s Annual Turkey and Dressing Dinner to provide scholarships to graduating high school seniors (children and grandchildren of court members); leading a Patriotic Rosary at St. Mary’s in Praha and placing flowers on the graves of veterans; volunteering at Oak Manor nursing home; and providing refreshments at Raphael’s Refuge for the Feast of the Holy Innocents on Dec. 28. The Christmas gathering at Robert’s was a time for visiting, friendship and thanking God for their blessings. Pictured, from left, are, front row, Olga Salazar, Sharon Vyvjala, LaVerne Syler, Margaret Svatek, Gretchen Zapalac, Loretta Freytag, Pam Svatek and Helen Steinhauser; middle row, Rosa Velasquez, Dina Ohnheiser, Karen Novak, Denise Grieve, Isabel Garcia, Beverly Ponder, Susan Ivey Steinhauser, Ann Bratton and Donna Cockrell; and, back row, Janet Stanley, Kathy Grimsrud, Cheryl Barnes, Katrina Grochowsky, Virginia Olsovsky, Bobbie Lemke, Kathleen Svatek, Louise Barcak and Terri Hefner. (Contributed Photo)

Catholic Charities taking donations for tornado relief

Catholic News Service

Catholic Charities USA is accepting donations at https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org. The site has a button to hit to donate for tornado relief.

The tornadoes swept across the South and Midwest Dec. 10. On Dec. 14, authorities said at least 70 people were dead in Kentucky; six died when a tornado hit an Amazon warehouse in Illinois; four were dead in Tennessee; two in Arkansas; and one in Missouri. Mississippi also got hit. Towns were leveled and tens of thousands of people remained without power.

Susan Montalvo-Gesser, director of Catholic Charities of Diocese of Owensboro, Ky., said the agency had been in the process of resettling Afghan refugees when the storms hit. She called the group’s natural leader and asked him to convey to the others that she would have to redirect efforts toward the storm.

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Contact:
• The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, within 48 hours, at (800) 252-5400, www.txabusehotline.org, or local police department. If person is in immediate danger call 911.

and

• Shannon Thomas, LMSW, Coordinator of Pastoral Care and Outreach, Diocese of Victoria, (361) 827-7186, pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org.

or

• Bishop or Chancellor of the Diocese of Victoria, (361) 573-0828 Written allegations can be mailed to Office of the Bishop P.O. Box 4070 Victoria, TX 77903 marked “Personal and Confidential”

If sexual abuse by a member of clergy has occurred in another diocese, the Diocese of Victoria will help bring your concerns to church officials. For assistance contact Vicki Pyatt at (361) 827-7186 or pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org.
A Prayer for the Whole Family
(Feast of the Holy Family, first Sunday after Christmas)

DEAR Lord, bless our family. Be so kind as to give us the unity, peace, and mutual love that You found in Your own family in the little town of Nazareth.

Saint Joseph, bless the head of our family. Obtain for him the strength, the wisdom, and the prudence he needs to support and direct those under his care.

Mother Mary, bless the mother of our family. Help her to be pure and kind, gentle and self-sacrificing. For the more she resembles you, the better will our family be.

Lord Jesus, bless the children of our family. Help them to be obedient and devoted to their parents. Make them more and more like You. Let them grow, as You did, in wisdom and age and grace before God and man.

Holy Family of Nazareth, make our family and home more and more like Yours, until we are all one family, happy and at peace in our true home with You. Amen.
• From the Catholic Rural Life website.

St. Rose secretary marked 57 years at 2021 retirement

SCHULENBURG – Eunice Brosch started working at the church secretary at St. Rose of Lima parish in 1964, before she graduated from Bishop Flores High School. That after-school job turned into a career that lasted 57 years until she retired recently.

Brosch, 75, said, “I enjoyed it. I wouldn’t have stayed there that long if I didn’t.” She said she can’t name what she loved most about the job, but said she simply loved working with “all the good priests” and the many people who were in and out of her office over the years.

Brosch said the Rev. Msgr. Anthony Drost asked her to work part time after school when his secretary was injured in a wreck. She thought to herself that she would like to stay there and not return. She said, “I had a little speech all ready” to ask Msgr. Drost about being hired. “But he beat me to it. He said, ‘She’s not coming back, so if you want the job, it’s yours.’”

Her decision to retire was based on some health issues and the fact that, at 75, it was time to retire. Her retirement coincided with the retirement of the Rev. Msgr. Tim Kosler, who had been pastor at St. Rose for 30 years before retiring.

Brosch has been in and out of the office since her official retirement in June to help guide the ladies helping in the office for the time being, including Dana Hartenstein, Nichole Michalka and Peggy Kalich.

“She really did sacrifice a lot, serving our parish all these years. I have learned so much about what goes on in a parish office and a parish secretary job is definitely unique and special one – part secretary, part bookkeeper, part therapist, part executive assistant, and also ‘cat herder’ at times, trying to keep all the parish volunteers coordinated,” Michalka stated in an email to The Catholic Lighthouse.

Brosch was honored during a Mass and reception this past summer with some gifts from the parish and from several of the parish organizations.

RELEVANT RADIO® helps people bridge the gap between faith and everyday life through informative, entertaining, and interactive programming twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. The Relevant Radio network is currently serving the Church with 127 stations reaching 39 states, with a potential listening audience of 133 million people. Programming can be heard worldwide via streaming audio at relevantradio.com and on the mobile app.

Memorial dedication
BLESSING – Bishop Brendan Cahill blesses a statue of St. Joseph during a memorial Mass and dedication of the statue and several chasubles on Nov. 23 at St. Peter Catholic Church.

The Rev. Gabriel Mensah, pastor of St. Peter and St. Robert in Markham, said the statue and chasubles were purchased with memorial donations from parish families designated to buy items for the church. Mensah said he wanted to make sure the statue was dedicated during the Year of St. Joseph, which concluded on Dec. 8. Families of those being memorialized by the donations presented the chasubles to the bishop for a blessing during the celebration.

(File Photo by Janet Jones/The Catholic Lighthouse)
ACTS Retreats – Anyone needing any information regarding ACTS retreats in the diocese should e-mail dovactschapters@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.

Emmanuel 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: Nov. 12-14, 2022 Dates: Jan. 28-30; Apr. 22-24; June 3-5; Sept. 16-18; Nov. 11-13. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Fee must accompany registration form. For information, call 361-573-0828 or visit http://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.

Other Events

Victoria – Holy Family Catholic Church Altar Society will host a Lenten mini-retreat on Saturday, Feb. 26. It will begin with a Mass at 8 a.m. in the church. The retreat will be in the Activity Center following the end of the Mass, with the Rev. Dalton Erwin leading the retreat. All are welcome. There is no fee for the retreat. A light breakfast and lunch will be served. In order to prepare enough food, we need you to please call and sign up with Betty Fredricks 361-550-0064 or Millie Chapa 361-652-5630.

Victoria – The Youth Spectacular event, sponsored by the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, takes place 10 a.m. to 4:30 pm. Feb. 20 at The Cathedral Center, 3102 N. Laurent St. in Victoria. All high school students are welcome to attend. Registration deadline is Feb. 11. Theme is “The Real Presence.” For information, visit www.victoriadiocese.org/youth-spectacular. or email Wendy Eggert or Shannon Thomas at weggert@victoriadiocese.org or sthomas@victoriadiocese.org

Do you have any calendar of events for the Lighthouse?

Submit to lighthouse@victoriadiocese.org
Off to sea

Two seafarers show their gratitude for gifts received in the Christmas at Sea program organized by Rhonda Cummins, maritime associate at the Point Comfort Seafarers Center. Rhonda is shown in the driver’s seat of a van after picking up several hundred seafarer gifts at the Diocese of Victoria chancery offices. (Top photo by Rhonda Cummins/Special to the Lighthouse. Bottom photo by Janet Jones/The Catholic Lighthouse)

Synodality requires trust in the Holy Spirit

Continued from pg. 1

charged with getting the diocesan process started.

The local phase has been met with mixed reaction and a little bewilderment, which might be because synodality is a nebulous concept and everyone is wondering, “What do we do with this?” So one key instruction from the Vatican has been to open up to the Holy Spirit to see what form it will take on our local level.

The only other key instruction is to listen to everyone who wants to be heard.

Bishop Cahill said of the priests in the diocese, “I guarantee you each one has a few groups they are already listening to.”

The group agreed that there already is a lot of willingness to listen and eagerness to be heard, but the parishes must intentionally seek out and facilitate the conversations. Reports will be given to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops later in 2022, and the bishops will present a subsequent report to the Vatican for the 2023 Synod.

But the Synod is less about reports and more about changing the way we listen to others and intentionally seeking those who feel left out.

According to Bishop Cahill, the ones the Church needs to hear from might be a particular age group, or a group with common experiences. It could mean outreach to people of different ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientation.

Vincent gave an example of a woman who felt isolated after becoming a widow. Hunter said he has heard from people who don’t care for the Church’s position on birth control, and others who ask, “Why is it so hard to become Catholic?”

According to Bishop Cahill, we need to make sure to avoid the pitfall of making it about complaints. “We can also focus on what’s right.”

Another pitfall to avoid is leading people to believe that there will be some revolutionary changes in the Church. “The deposit of faith stays the same, but how we express it can change,” Bishop Cahill said.

Vincent said she has met with teams in other dioceses via Zoom and realized that each is unique in its process and everyone is at a different stage. She said she and her husband, John, who organize the Retrouvaille ministry from hurting marriages, decided to implement some different listening strategies during their recent meeting and were rewarded with a lot of ideas that could help sustain the ministry.

“When we listen to each other, good fruit comes from it,” she said.

Presently, the team is preparing a few open-ended questions to present to groups on the parish level when gatherings can be scheduled for dialogue and will be looking for ways to gather the people who need to be reached.

Bishop Cahill said he wants the diocese to make lasting connections so the “synodality” doesn’t end when the Synod concludes in 2023 at the Vatican level.

“People want to be seen and heard and know that they matter,” Vincent said.

Racial reconciliation can be hard to discuss, bishops say

Continued from pg. 9

which we might deal with these issues and hopefully help bring about, first, a change within ourselves, and then bring about a change in society.”

Bishop Cahill said bishops could help bring about change by having events such as the Red Mass, which traditionally marks the opening of the judicial year, to prompt discussion of the topic. “Whatever the events are can bring people together (to listen),” he said.

In Victoria, Bishop Cahill said, diocesan officials brought in a play about the first African American priest, Father Augustus Tolton, who is a candidate for sainthood. The play “Tolton: From Slave to Priest” was performed in several Catholic schools around the diocese. Following the play, students discussed the racism the priest encountered in his studies and his vocation as a priest.

“We had a discussion about the racism of that time, which led to a discussion of what is going on today,” Bishop Cahill said. “You have people talk about the reality of racism historically. ... In a sense, it helps acknowledge the present by acknowledging the history.”

Bishop Cahill said dioceses also should have groups that are open to having “uncomfortable conversations.”

“It’s hard to talk about race,” he said. “It takes a long time to build that kind of relationship.”

Bishop Guillory said Catholics are blessed to be part of a faith that is representative of different cultures and racial groups.

“Every culture has an opportunity to make a contribution,” he said. “(We need to promote) unity and diversity of the one faith as brothers and sisters.”

The document “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love” is available at www.usccb.org/racism.

• Torrellas is managing editor of the Texas Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.