How CRS is helping the poorest of the poor

Pgs. 11-14
The most good for the most people

Eva Tucker’s caretaker Terry Mikeska has ensured the legacy of the San Angelo philanthropist has continued

By Denise Morris
Special to the Angelus

The late philanthropist Eva Camuñez Tucker, known in the San Angelo Diocese as a humble woman who donated millions of dollars for the good of others, is still making an impact on the world.

It is her legacy of kindness and generosity, ingrained over the many years Terry Mikeska worked as her caregiver, that moved the San Angelo man toward greater giving—and on a successful mission trip to Nepal.

"Eva Tucker always said to do the most good for the most people," Mikeska said. "Nothing is more rewarding in life."

Mikeska was already sponsoring two students in Kathmandu, whom he planned to visit someday in person. But when the earthquake struck last year, he wanted to make the trip as soon as possible to help in any way he could.

"Word got out that I was planning this trip to Nepal after I announced it on Facebook and then the Standard-Times wrote about it.

"Then the money just poured out from the community, ever (Please See MIKESKA/19)"
10 lessons for the economic downturn

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

With the plummeting price of oil and the cutbacks of energy companies, many in West Texas are experiencing job losses and financial hardship. The economic downturn has a ripple effect that is being felt by local communities, families, and individuals.

Whenever we face hard times, the way we approach adversity makes a tremendous difference in our lives. Two people can suffer job loss, cancer, or divorce. One might become bitter and cynical, while the other becomes more holy and compassionate. We need to equip ourselves and teach our children how to deal with adversity in a constructive way.

Here are ten lessons that provide a healthy Christian approach to adversity:

1. Jesus Christ never promised economic prosperity.

Some contemporary Christians claim that material prosperity flows from the depth and quality of your faith in God. Their “gospel of prosperity” leads many people to think, “If I am struck by illness or poverty, then it must mean I have very little faith.” Of course, we must trust in the providence of God at all times, but Jesus never promised us that faith in him would bring economic prosperity in this world.

In fact, Jesus himself did not experience earthly prosperity. He lived a very simple life. He said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20) Jesus, the model of our faith, was not materially rich.

When Jesus called people to follow him, his invitation did not come with any promise of wealth. In fact, he said, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

Being faithful to Jesus Christ does not necessarily bring upward mobility. On the contrary, there sometimes come moments in our lives when being true to our values and being faithful to Jesus entails making choices which mean less money and less comfort for ourselves. When James and John asked Jesus for places of glory and honor, he replied, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?” (Mark 10:38)

In times of struggle, it is easy to start blaming God, as if God were not doing his job right. However, God does not owe you material wealth or complete bodily health as some kind of reward for your faith in him.

2. Count your blessings.

When times are tough, we must count our blessings and acknowledge the many ways that God has helped us. Gratitude is a powerful antidote to the spiritual ills of self-pity and despair.

Even in the midst of our struggles, God is loving us with an everlasting love. He still loves and

(Please See BISHOP/20)

Diez Lecciones de la Recesión Económica

Obispo Michael J. Sis

Con la caída del precio del petróleo y los recortes de las empresas de energía, muchos en el Oeste de Texas están experimentando la pérdida de empleo y dificultades financieras. La crisis económica tiene un efecto dominó que se siente por las comunidades locales, las familias, y los individuos.

Cada vez que nos enfrentamos a tiempos difíciles, la manera en la cual abordamos a la adversidad hace una tremenda diferencia en nuestras vidas. Dos personas pueden sufrir la pérdida del empleo, el cáncer, o el divorcio. Uno podría llegar a ser amargo y cínico, mientras que el otro se hace más santo y compasivo. Tenemos que equiparnos y enseñar a nuestros hijos cómo lidiar con la adversidad de una manera constructiva.

1. Jesucristo nunca prometió prosperidad económica.

Algunos Cristianos contemporáneos afirman que la prosperidad material fluye según la profundidad y la calidad de tu fe en Dios. Su “evangelio de la prosperidad” lleva a muchas personas a pensar, “Si me pega una enfermedad o la pobreza, entonces eso quiere decir que tengo muy poca fe.” Por supuesto, tenemos que confiar en la providencia de Dios en todo momento, pero Jesús nunca nos prometió que la fe en él traería la prosperidad económica en este mundo.

De hecho, Jesús mismo no experimentó la prosperidad terrenal. Vivió una vida muy sencilla. Él dijo: “Los zorros tienen cuevas, y las aves tienen nidos, pero el Hijo del Hombre ni siquiera tiene dónde recostar la cabeza.” (Mateo 8:20) Jesús, el modelo de nuestra fe, no era rico materialmente.

Cuando Jesús llamó a la gente a seguirlo, su invitación no venía con ninguna promesa de riqueza. De hecho, dijo, “Si alguien quiere seguirme, que se niegue a sí mismo, que cargue con su cruz de cada día y que me siga.” (Lucas 9:23)

El ser fiel a Jesucristo no necesariamente trae la movilidad ascendente. Al contrario, a veces hay momentos en nuestras vidas en que ser fieles a nuestros valores y ser fieles a Jesús implica tomar decisiones que significan menos dinero y menos comodidad para nosotros mismos. Cuando Santiago y Juan pidieron de Jesús los lugares de la gloria y el honor, él respondió: “Ustedes no saben lo que piden.”

(Mira OBISPO/24)
**Blessings of Musicians in the Liturgy**

ODESSA — The San Angelo Chapter of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians will hold its first workshop on February 13 at Holy Angels Parish Hall, in San Angelo. The workshop will begin at 9 am. Pastoral musicians from the diocese will come together as we celebrate the Order of Blessing of Musicians, led by Bishop Sis. Following the blessing, Bishop Sis will give a keynote address on music in the liturgy, and its importance.

The agenda for the day includes:

- **8:30-9:00am** – Registration, coffee and doughnuts
- **9:00-9:15am** – Welcome, introduction of Chapter officers
- **9:15-9:30am** – Order of the Blessing of Musicians
- **9:30-10:30am** – Keynote by Bishop Sis
- **10:30-12:00pm** – Discussion on NPM Convention in Houston, Breakout into deanery groups
- **12:00-1:00pm** – Lunch

The cost of the workshop is free, and lunch is $10 a person. Registration deadline is February 8. For more information contact Christopher Wilcox, chapter director at 432-367-4657 or music@seton-parishodesa.org

**St. Valentine’s Dance and Fundraiser**

MIDLAND — Saturday, February 13
St. Stephen’s Ballroom
Dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m.  
Cocktail Hour Begins at 6:00 p.m.  
$50 per Ticket

Dinner catered by RiverSmith  
Entertainment by Boyd Events  
Silent Auction  
Open Bar

Join us on February 13th for great food, music, and fellowship all for a good cause. The Knights of Columbus’ annual Saint Valentine dance and fundraiser helps raise money for the Knights’ active role in community helping the Catholic Church, The Life Center, Choose Life Midland, West Texas Food Bank, Helping Hands, Special Olympics, and many other charitable organizations.

If you or anyone you know is interested in donation to the silent auction or have any questions or concerns about the dance, please contact us at (432)894-2446 or at agood828@gmail.com

**Ash Wednesday Special Collection**

On Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016, all the parishes of our diocese will take up a collection for three important causes: the Church in Latin America, the Church in Africa, and the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. Our gifts will be joined with contributions from Catholics throughout the United States to provide grants that fund projects to build new churches, form priests and religious, and train lay evangelization leaders for local parish communities. Your support will truly make a difference. Thank you for this expression of solidarity with our Catholic brothers and sisters around the world.

**KC Agent Jim Seideman retires**

Jim Seideman has served the members and their families of the Knights of Columbus for 42 years and as of February 1st, 2016 will officially be passing the baton to the newly appointed General Agent Mike Payne.

Mike has been a field agent with the Knights of Columbus for the last 8 years, serving the members of Lubbock and Midland areas.

Jim had one of the most successful careers in Knights of Columbus history. He is considered the “Godfather” by many field agents and general agents around the country, for his dedication and leadership. Jim is a lifetime member of the Million-Dollar Round Table. Over the years, Jim has earned countless Supreme Knights Club Status.

In retirement, Jim is looking forward to spending more time with Cyd, his wife of 36 years, and their six grandchildren from their three sons. You can email him at kcliffeins@gmail.com.

Mike, our new agent, is ready to hit the ground running, so please reach out to him and offer your congratulations. Email Mike at Michael.Payne@kofc.org or call his cell 806-790-5420.

**Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat**

If you feel like you are being crushed by the weight of abortion pain, consider a Rachel’s Vineyard retreat, a safe place to share your story and find healing. The next retreat scheduled in the area will be in Lubbock, April 15-17, 2016. For more information, call Kathy Krlie, 806-577-5912.

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**2016 Holy Family-Abilene Parish Mission**

Holy Family Catholic Church  
Abilene, Texas
Mission Priest – Father Jim Ward, CM
Mission Date – February 15-18, 2016
Schedule:
- **10:00 a.m.** – Morning Mass
- **7:00 p.m.** – Evening Session followed by questions around 7:45

Topics:

Monday: “The Blessed Mother as listener”
Tuesday: “Overview of the 7 Sacraments”
Wednesday: “The Sacrament of Reconciliation”
Thursday: “The Eucharist”

Each night should conclude by 8:30. All are welcome.

Fr. Jim Ward has been a Vincentian priest for 37 years. He has taught in seminaries and universities and has been involved in parish Ministry, the missions, outreach to the Hispanics, promoting devotion to the Blessed Mother and preaching parish missions.

**Alan Ames to visit Midland, Odessa**

Alan Ames is scheduled to return to West Texas in March as follows:

**Thurs., March 17** — 7 p.m., St. Ann’s, Midland

**Fri., March 18** — 7 p.m., St. Mary’s, Odessa

Alan’s story and God’s messages that he delivers are so powerful you won’t want to miss his talk to understand how we must live our lives in order to gain eternal salvation. Alan’s service consists of a Mass, followed by a 40-minute talk. Alan will then individually pray over people who come to the altar (it seems that everyone wants to be prayed over after listening to Alan). Please invite your family, friends and neighbors to come and listen to his experiences. Unable to attend? Anyone unable to attend can have anyone stand in and receive a blessing on their behalf.

**Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat**

If you feel like you are being crushed by the weight of abortion pain, consider a Rachel’s Vineyard retreat, a safe place to share your story and find healing. The next retreat scheduled in the area will be in Lubbock, April 15-17, 2016. For more information, call Kathy Krlie, 806-577-5912.

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**Ryan Lee Ramirez**

Birthday: July 3, 1994
Age: 21
Birth place: Odessa.
Siblings: 2 sisters
Seminary: Conception Seminary College
Studying: Philosophy, 2nd year
Home parish: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa
Favorite saints: St. Joseph, St. Christopher, St. Peter
Favorite scripture: John 15:13
Favorite color: Blue
Favorite sports: Baseball, football, basketball
Favorite teams: Dallas Cowboys, Texas Rangers, San Antonio Spurs
Favorite restaurant: Buffalo Wild Wings
Favorite dessert: Cookies with ice cream
Hobbies: playing sports, hanging out with friends

**Biography**

Hello, I am Ryan Ramirez and I am a seminarian for the Diocese of San Angelo.

There were many reasons why I chose yes to seminary, but one of the reasons was from this past year when I made my 2015 New Year’s resolution to pray and discern more about my vocation to the priesthood. Then in the summer of 2015 I took a mission trip to Rome which was the icing on the cake for my YES to seminary.

I was born and raised in Odessa, and I have attend St. Elizabeth Ann Seton since I was a child. I graduated from Permian High School in 2013 and played football and baseball there. For extracurricular subjects, I did photography for the yearbook and was in choir.

I then moved to San Angelo, where I attended Angelo State University for 2 1/2 years. I majored in pre-dental then business during the course of the years. I was also involved and helped out at St. Mary’s Catholic Church.

I like food, sports and hanging out with friends. I am a very chill person, but I’m also very competitive when it comes down to playing sports. I like smiling a lot and long walks on the beach and having a good time.

**Students: New Catholic HS to be named Holy Cross**

On January 11, 2016, the Board of Directors for the Permian Basin Catholic High School selected the high school’s name. The Naming Committee, chaired by Sr. Elizabeth Swartz and Mary Jaramillo, presented two names for the board to vote on. Over 400 Catholic elementary and middle school students from Midland and Odessa participated in the naming process. The students both derived names and voted on their favorite. The top two names were St. Michael the Archangel and Holy Cross. After discussion, a formal vote showed that Holy Cross Catholic High School was the name selected by majority. Our board appreciates the dedication of all who were instrumental in this process. Visit the group’s web site at holycrosscatholichigh.org

--- Wendy Holland, president, Permian Basin High School Board of Directors
On developing an attitude of gratitude

By Elizabeth Moore
St. Ann’s School

MIDLAND — Thanksgiving is an attitude, a way of life, not just a holiday that we celebrate once a year. I learned about Thanksgiving as a student of St. Ann’s School. Today, my children and their classmates are learning this same attitude, as they attend St. Ann’s Catholic School in Midland. In these current, fast-paced times, when we seem to be continually beckoned to buy or acquire the new, next-best shiny thing, all of us should slow down and be grateful for the true blessings that come with life. If we slow down, we will find places like the halls of St. Ann’s School, in which there exists the true blessings in life. There in those halls, we will find a rich mixture of God, Church, love and learning.

When he was recently asked about the attitude of gratitude that thrives in Catholic Schools, Monsignor Larry Droll responded by first reflecting that the word “Eucharist” is the Greek word for Thanksgiving. As a former student of St. Joseph’s Catholic School in Rowena, Msgr. Droll shared that “Catholic Schools can make the connection between the holiday of Thanksgiving and every Mass that we attend.” He pointed out that “in the dialogue before the Preface of the Mass, the priest says, “Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God,” and the congregation responds, “It is right and just.”

The students, teachers, staff and parents at St. Ann’s School gather weekly on Fridays to celebrate the Lord by attending Mass. Each week, a designated class or grade prepares for Mass, in Thanksgiving, to be celebrated with the entire school. By celebrating weekly Mass, St. Ann’s students are exposed to the Word of our Father through the daily readings, which are always followed with a beautifully-prepared homily, tailored for the younger audience. Children learn to give thanks in these moments for the teachings of our wonderful and intelligent priests who have studied the Word of our Father. It’s quite amazing how the Priests at St. Ann’s are always able to engage our children in a way that allows every child the opportunity to learn about God, plain and simple.

St. Ann’s School teaches our children that God is love and all who live in God, live in love. God’s love is reinforced continually throughout the day and sets the pace for their everyday learning. Another example of giving thanks at St. Ann’s is the lunch blessing, which is recited daily by all of the students. In this way, the students at St. Ann’s School are given the opportunity to stop, breathe and praise our God for the bounty of the food he provides.

St. Ann’s school children also learn about Thanksgiving in their religion classes, which reinforces the religious teaching that my husband and I do

Pope Francis Visits Mexico

CHICAGO (CNS) — With the poverty on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, Pope Francis' visit to the region in February will be an important opportunity for the Catholic Church "to emphasize the mercy of God that is at the core of the Christian faith."

That's how Catholic Extension views the trip, which will take place during the church's newly launched Holy Year of Mercy.

"In building up the faith among the poor," said Father Jack Wall, president of Chicago-based Catholic Extension, "we are answering the Gospel call to serve 'the least of our brothers and sisters' and the Gospel mandate of the 'preferential option for the poor,' which is a cornerstone of Catholic social teaching.

"During his visit to the border, Pope Francis will undoubtedly show us the way," he said in a statement. He will visit some of the country's most marginalized communities. Pope Francis will stop in six cities, including two in the state of Chiapas and — across from El Paso — Ciudad Juarez.

Following the Vatican's announcement, Catholic Extension issued a news release saying it will work with the Diocese of El Paso to plan papal visit events on the U.S. side of the border. The Chicago-based papal society has a long history of providing support to El Paso and the other Catholic dioceses at the U.S.-Mexico border.

El Paso to host simulcast event in Sun Bowl

EL PASO (CNS) — El Paso Bishop Mark J. Seitz and El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser announced plans for a local event that will be held Feb. 17 in conjunction with Pope Francis’ visit to El Paso’s sister city of Ciudad Juarez in Mexico.

Called "Two Nations, One Faith," the celebration will take place at Sun Bowl Stadium on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso.

"In spite of the borders and boundaries that exist, we see ourselves as one great Catholic community, and we are immensely grateful and honored that our universal pastor, Pope Francis, has chosen to come to our area," Bishop Seitz said in a Jan. 18 statement. "We celebrate this great day for our brothers and sisters in Juarez."

Schedule for Sun Bowl Stadium Simulcast

The Diocese of El Paso will help celebrate the Holy Father’s visit by hosting a Papal Telecast event at Sun Bowl Stadium on February 17, with this schedule:
12:00 p.m. Gates to Sun Bowl Stadium open
1:30 p.m. Bilingual music and entertainment program begins
4:00 p.m. Telecast of Papal Mass in Juarez begins
6:00 p.m. Event concludes

The event in El Paso will help allow guests to be united in faith and energized in spirit by His Holiness’ message of hope in this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. It will also be a tremendous opportunity for the community of the faithful to experience together the excitement of Pope Francis’ proximity to the border.

Find more information on the Papal Telecast event, as well as information on lodging and ticket purchasing by clicking the image above, or visiting at www.twonationsonefaith.com.
A Message from Bishop Michael J. Sis

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In order to inform you of the financial condition of the Diocese of San Angelo, our practice is to give you an annual summary of our financial report. In this section of the February edition of the West Texas Angelus, we present a basic summary and introductory explanation. If you would like more details, please see our audited annual financial statements at this website: sanangelodiocese.org/documents/2016/1/2015FinancialStatement.pdf.

As your Bishop, I am responsible for administering the material resources of the Church as a good steward, and this includes providing an account of the contributions received and used. The sacrificial giving of our Catholics in West Texas is what makes possible the ministry of our parishes and our diocese. I deeply appreciate the dedicated service of all our priests, deacons, religious, staff, and volunteers, who pour out their energies in the mission of the Church.

All of our efforts in the Church depend completely on God’s help. He has blessed us in so many ways. We seek to respond to his goodness by developing his gifts and returning them to him with increase. May he continue to bless and protect you.

I am eternally grateful for your prayers and support.

In the joy of Christ’s service,

Most Rev. Michael J. Sis
Bishop of San Angelo

* * *

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Total Income for Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue, Grants, and Other Support</th>
<th>$3,363,030</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish Assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$461,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat Center Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance Fund</td>
<td>$363,297</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$255,968</td>
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<td>Angelus Support</td>
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<td>Interest and Dividends</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,414,576</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parish Assessments accounted for over 62% of operating income of the diocese for the fiscal year 2014-2015. This income is calculated and paid by parishes as a function of regular parish income. Sixteen percent of the annual parish income is calculated at the end of each fiscal year on June 30. Then, over the course of the subsequent year, it is paid monthly from the parish to the diocese. This income supports the operation of the diocesan offices, which coordinate the functions of the Church that reach beyond the local parish. This source of income was up 17% over the prior year.

Contributions are a source of funds given by individual donors. This type of income is not highly predictable from year to year. Contributions were down 40% from the previous year.

Retreat Center Fees include registration, meals, lodging and other fees collected in connection with the use of Christ the King Retreat Center.

Insurance Fund includes insurance premiums paid by the parishes and other related organizations for insurance coverage under diocesan plans.

Grants are financial awards given by private foundations and other non-government sources. The grants are not expected to be repaid by the diocese. The greater part of our grant support comes from the Catholic Extension Society, Catholic Home Missions, the Kenedy Foundation, and the Scanlan Foundation. We are always interested in learning about new grant sources.

Other Income and Fees include insurance proceeds received and receipts for a variety of initiatives such as our diocesan criminal justice ministry, Operation Rice Bowl, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, our diocesan immigration services, and the annual Diocesan Conference Day. Amounts received by the Tribunal are also included in this category.

Angelus Support is calculated and paid by parishes as a function of the number of households within the parish. This income helps cover the cost of publishing and distributing the West Texas Angelus.

Interest and Dividends reflects the returns on funds held by the diocese. A group of volunteer experts from around the diocese advises us in the prudent management of these funds.

Total Expenses for Operations

| Office in Support of Parish and Diocesan Administration | $2,896,183 |
| Pastoral Programs                                     | $1,536,837 |
| Seminarians and Vocations                             | $855,094   |
| Social Services                                       | $129,742   |
| **Total Expenses**                                    | **$5,408,854** |

CASH AND INVESTMENTS

The diocese maintains assets for operations to support current programs, ministries, and future capital needs. Investments also include longer-term funds of the Parish Savings and Loan Pool, which are loaned to parishes for building projects.

PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The diocese is required to report the real property, land and equipment that it holds for diocesan uses. This includes the land surrounding the pastoral center, Christ the King Retreat Center, the pastoral center offices, the bishop’s residence, and the Newman Center in San Angelo.

Questions: If you would like more information or clarification about this report, or if you would like to make a contribution, please contact Steve McKay, Diocesan Finance Officer, at smckay@sanangelodiocese.org or at 325-651-7500. Please consider including your local parish or the Diocese of San Angelo in your will.
Greg Popcak on Families

Overcoming bitterness in 5 easy steps

By Gregory K. Popcak

No one wants to be bitter. It sneaks up on us. Bitterness is unforgiveness fermented. The more we hold onto past hurts the more we become drunk on our pain and the experience can rob us of the joy we can find in anything.

Bitterness occurs when we feel someone has taken something from us that we are powerless to get back. We hold on to the hurt in an attempt to remind ourselves and others of the injustice we’ve experienced in the hopes that someone will save us and restore what we’ve lost. Unfortunately, bitterness only makes our sense of the injustice grow. It does nothing to heal the wound caused by the injustice. In fact, it causes the wound to become infected with anger.

Bitterness: Wrath’s Little Sister

Bitterness is wrath’s little sister. Where anger can be just and moral if it propels us to seek solutions for the wrongs we have experienced or witnessed, wrath is a deadly sin because it becomes anger that feeds on itself and adds to wreckage caused by the original wound. Bitterness does this too, but instead of burning down the house with everything we value inside, bitterness is quieter, slowly poisoning our life until we lose it one joy at a time.

Here are some things you can do to begin to overcome bitterness:


→ Forgive
Forgiveness does not mean pre-tending everything is “OK.” It doesn’t mean forgetting the hurt either. According to St. Augustine, forgiveness is simply the act of surrendering our desire for revenge; that is, our desire to hurt someone for having hurt us. Forgiveness is the gift we give ourselves that enables us to stop picking at the scab and start making a plan for healing. My book, Broken Gods: Hope Healing and the Seven Longings of the Human Heart, can help you identify the steps you need to heal the hurt, and find authentic peace.

→ Make a plan
Forgiveness allows you to free up the energy you need to begin healing the wound. If the person who hurt you is willing to work with you (Please See POPCAK/21)
Clergy Appreciation Dinner

Priests, women religious and deacons from the Midland-Odessa-Stanton area gathered January 28, 2016 for the annual clergy appreciation dinner, sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 3071. Bishop Michael J. Sis, front row, 6th from right, was one of many clergy members who attended the dinner, at the St. Stephen’s Church Ballroom in Midland. (Photo by Karen J. Patterson)

Annual Knights District Banquet in Ballinger

At right, Grand Knight Max Long, of St. Mary’s Star of the Sea council in Ballinger, host of the banquet, welcomes those in attendance to the Knights’ District Banquet in Ballinger, January 23. The KC banquet is celebrated annually in January by the four KC districts in the Southern half of the diocese. Each district is made up of 4 to 5 councils which use the occasion to announce their ‘Family’ and ‘Knight’ of the year. (Photos by Don Piwonka)

W.E. and Sandie Knickerbocker

Growing older in years, yet bolder in Christ

By Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

We're all aging!! From the time we're born until we die, we're growing older in years. Some of us, however, can be classified as "older adults." There are a rapidly increasing number of us in the U.S., as well as many other countries. This population is called variously seniors, retirees, older adults, the elderly, older people, the third age, the aging. In fact, we older adults are not a homogeneous group. Depending on the source you consult, three general age groups can be identified: young-older adults, 60-70 years, mid-older adults, 70-85 years, and oldest-older adults or elderly, 85 and over. Within these age groups there is enormous diversity in terms of health of body, mind, and spirit; social situation; economic status; and many other factors. Can we make any general statements that apply to all of us older adults?

Clark Tibbits, a gerontologist, describes five needs that should be met if we are to grow old gracefully:

- the need for relationships and association with others;
- the need for creativity;
- the need for security;
- the need for individuality and recognition,
- and the need for an intellectual frame of reference.

Deacon Dr. Bob McDonald adds an essential sixth need, "the deepest need of the human heart ... faith in something higher and more reliable than oneself"— the need to believe there is meaning in this life regardless of ones condition or situation and that life continues after death (The Catholic Family, vol. 1, "Growing Older in Years: Growing Bolder in Christ"). In Catholic Christian terms, this is the need for faith in and a relationship with the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the community of the Church. God created each of us with this sixth need: "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they can find rest in you," as we read in St. Augustine's Confessions. Actually, all persons regardless of age have these six needs, but they become more pressing and, perhaps, more problematic in us older adults.

As Catholic Christians we are concerned about being fully who God created us to be through the graces of our Baptism, regardless of age. What are the calls God has placed on each of us? The USCCB, in its document (Please See KNICKEROCKER/22)
Staff and Wire Reports

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — More than 1,000 Missionaries of Mercy from all over the world will receive a special mandate from Pope Francis to preach and teach about God’s mercy.

About 700 of the missionaries who were chosen by Pope Francis will be in Rome to receive their special mandate in person during an Ash Wednesday ceremony in St. Peter’s Basilica Feb. 10, said the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, the office organizing events for the Year of Mercy.

Representing the Diocese of San Angelo is Fr. Sam Matthiesen, who was ordained in 2013.

For the holy year, which runs until Nov. 20, Pope Francis said he would designate Missionaries of Mercy to be unique signs of God’s mercy.

“My general focus will of course be on mercy, and I will be available for retreats or talks at different parishes about mercy, with a special focus on reconciliation,” said Fr. Matthiesen. Some priests will be called to do mission work outside of their diocese. It is unknown if Fr. Matthiesen will be among those called upon for that type of mission work.

Pope Francis is also giving these Missionaries of Mercy special authority during the Jubilee Year of Mercy to pardon sins that carry penalties that only the Holy See can lift.

“These (sins) occur in very rare situations such as the intentional sacrilegious violation of the Eucharist, the violation of the sacred seal of Confession, or physically attacking certain persons,” noted Most Rev. Michael J. Sis, Bishop of San Angelo.

During a news conference at the Vatican January 29, Archbishop Fisichella said there had been a huge response from priests and religious men who — with per (Please See MERCY/19)

Pro-Life Procession

Bishop Michael J Sis, third from left, with Deacon Steve Zimmerman, left, and Deacon Frankie Aguirre, process in with Pro-Life supporters at the annual Pro-Life Mass marking the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, January 22, 2016. The Supreme Court decision was handed down 43 years ago, January 22, 1973. (Photo by Don Piwonka)
Speakers: Religious freedom is being challenged in fundamental ways

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Religious freedom is being challenged in fundamental ways, according to speakers at a panel discussion on "Religious Liberty and the Future: Faith, Skepticism, Culture and Hope" at the Heritage Foundation in Washington Jan. 21.

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore said the fundamental problems include "the decoupling of our basic freedoms from the search for truth." He noted that 50 years ago, the Second Vatican Council issued a document on religious freedom known as "Dignitatis Humanae." Some of those debating the document wanted it to focus only on the freedom from coercion, which is important. "Indeed," he said, "no government and no social force should coerce individuals or groups in religious matters, and that made its way into the document."

However, the archbishop added, other Vatican II fathers, including then-Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, argued that religious freedom is linked to the search for truth — truth about the human person made in God's image and endowed with free will, made for the search for truth.

Archbishop Lori, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, was joined on the panel by Kevin D. Roberts, president of Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, Wyoming; and Roger Severino, director of the DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society at the Heritage Foundation.


The discussion was sponsored by the foundation, a conservative research and education think tank. Wyoming Catholic College co-hosted the event.

The archbishop said the decoupling of freedom to choose from responsibility also is a problem, because choice does not mean the ability to do anything. The current state of our society de-emphasizes that this freedom must be properly linked to the search for truth — truth about the human person made in God's image and endowed with free will, made for the search for truth.

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A Letter from Amman to West Texas ...

Catholic Relief Services provides love, support for refugees

By Rachel Hermes
Catholic Relief Services-Jordan

February 3, 2016

Dear Friends in West Texas and the San Angelo Diocese,

AMMAN, Jordan — Greetings from Amman! It’s cold and snowy here — not unusual for Jordan in winter, but unusual enough that the government issued an announcement encouraging people to be home and off the roads by 6 p.m.

In the past week, I have seen the news and footage of the winter storm along the East Coast. While the conditions looked incredibly difficult for travel and work, I also received dozens of fun-loving photos of friends romping around in the snow.

Given my current perch, I can’t help but think about how a snowy day for Syrian refugees here in Jordan doesn’t translate into a carefree play day. Even conditions like heavy rains — which I understand have recently occurred in Texas — can wreak havoc on a family’s wellbeing.

Here in Jordan, a majority of Syrian refugees are families — in fact, 76 percent of the refugee population registered in Jordan are women and children. On top of that, most families are not living in the large camps you might associate with a refugee crisis. Nearly 82 percent of the 635,035 Syrian refugees registered in Jordan are urban refugees — living in shared rooms or in unfinished apartment buildings. Still, for many families, they provide what is most essential: a safe place, far from the fighting, in which they can shelter their children.

It can be disheartening to look at the living conditions, and to see the numbers and news of this crisis from a distance. But I constantly witness the spirit, strength and vigor of Syrian refugee families as they attend parent-teacher meetings and take their children to health centers and child-friendly spaces. There is a pursuit for survival, of protecting the ones they love the most, and of dreaming about — and planning for — the day they can safely return home.

Equally inspiring are those serving them with utmost grace and dignity: Caritas Jordan, the social service agency of the Catholic Church in Jordan. Caritas is a critical partner of Catholic Relief Services in its wide range of humanitarian assistance for Syrian and Iraqi refugees — from children’s trauma counseling and education, to medical care and shelter support.

You can’t escape the youthful energy and unwavering commitment of Caritas Jordan staff — most of whom began as volunteers with the organization — some more than a decade ago. Signs decorate the walls at all of the Caritas Jordan offices, community centers, and health centers declaring: “Caritas: it’s not a job. It’s a mission.” (Please See LETTER/14)
Violence hurting children throughout Middle East

Syria is at the center of one of the world’s most devastating humanitarian emergencies today. Once a vibrant hub of Middle Eastern culture and history, Syria is besieged by internal conflict that has uprooted millions of innocent families. Since the start of the conflict in March 2011, an estimated 4 million Syrians have fled across the border into primarily Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt. More than 70 percent of Syrian refugees in the Middle East are women and children.

These images from Jordan focus on those who are paying the heaviest price: children. Many Syrian children have lost family members, witnessed atrocities, feel the destruction of their homes and cities, and now live in fear in a foreign place. Education and care for children in times of crisis is critical to providing stability, normalcy and routine. 

Through the generous funding from private donors throughout Texas, Catholic Relief Services/Caritas Jordan is able to provide a handful of Syrian children with vital education, trauma counseling and support. With these activities, children can better adjust to their new environment, continue their development, heal their trauma, and be ready to return home when safely and security allow.

Ultimately, they can start to regain some semblance of childhood.

Q: What have you seen—in your recent visit with refugees in Europe, and also with those in the Middle East?

A: It is remarkable to see the presence of Catholic social services agencies at the front-lines of this crisis, and the comprehensive, dignified support they offer to people’s greatest needs. The assistance ranges from people’s immediate needs—living supplies, soap, blankets, essentials: food, a roof over their heads, a safe place to sleep, medical assistance – to provide a handful of Syrian refugee children with remedial and catch-up educational activities.

A displaced Yazidi woman sits outside her tent at the Nowrouz refugee camp in the Hassake province in Rojave, the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Syria. The camp, originally set up for displaced Syrians, became overwhelmed as Iraqis were increasingly displaced by ISIS. Bottom right also shows Yazidi women displaced. (Photo by Sam Tarling for CRS).

A: The refugees I’ve met in Serbia, Macedonia and Greece are exhausted. They have been traveling such a long way and—on top of that—have endured years of oppressive fear and hardship. Thousand of families are resting in parks or makeshift camps along the road to northern Europe. You see people limping because they have done so much walking. More than anything, people talk about being so relieved to have made it. These are the same people who—when you ask what is the most important item they have with them (apart from their families)—show you their university degrees. How much their lives have changed in a few years. One mother said to me, “You wouldn’t put your child on one of these boats unless it was safer than your home.”

Q: What are some ways the Catholic community is responding to this crisis?

A: The refugees I’ve met in Serbia, Macedonia and Greece are exhausted. They have been traveling such a long way and—on top of that—have endured years of oppressive fear and hardship. Thousand of families are resting in parks or makeshift camps along the road to northern Europe. You see people limping because they have done so much walking. More than anything, people talk about being so relieved to have made it. These are the same people who—when you ask what is the most important item they have with them (apart from their families)—show you their university degrees. How much their lives have changed in a few years. One mother said to me, “You wouldn’t put your child on one of these boats unless it was safer than your home.”

In Jordan and Lebanon, I found a surprising level of hospitality and generosity among Syrian refugees in their tents or squalid rooms where they are living. I was welcomed among Syrian refugees in their tents or squalid rooms where they are living. I was welcomed with such warmth. I quickly realized how important it was to ensure that people see them beyond this madness, and that they aren’t lost in it.

Q: What are some ways the Catholic community is responding to this crisis?

A: It is remarkable to see the presence of Catholic social services agencies at the front-lines of this crisis, and the comprehensive, dignified support they offer to people’s greatest needs. The assistance ranges from people’s immediate needs—living supplies, soap, blankets, education and care for children in times of crisis is critical to providing stability, normalcy and routine.
In Jordan, keeping Syrian refugee children in school

By Nikki Gamer
Catholic Relief Services

Asha’s frail frame and weary gaze suggest someone who is accustomed to hardship. She lives in a small apartment in the town of Zarqa in Jordan, with her husband, who is sick, and five children. The family fled their native Syria, and now relies mostly on aid to survive.

But something changes in Asha’s demeanor when she starts talking about the educational support her family receives through Caritas Jordan with Catholic Relief Services and other partners. She comes to life.

“Before coming to Caritas classes, my children used to be down and depressed. They didn’t have anything to do. They didn’t have routine,” Asha, 31, says. “Now I’ve noticed a change in their behaviors. They’ve become more relieved, more excited.”

Jordan, a Mideastern country bordering Syria, is home to more than 600,000 refugees, more than half of whom are children.

With the Syrian war well into its fifth year, government resources in neighboring countries like Jordan are stretched thin. That has resulted in long waiting lists for Syrian families trying to enroll their children in school. It’s estimated that fewer than half of the Syrian children in Jordan are receiving formal education.

“Education is critical for Syrian refugee children who are increasingly facing child labor, underage marriage, and other child protection concerns,” says CRS Jordan program manager Michelle Ryan.

To address this dire need, CRS, through our partner Caritas Jordan, provides Syrian children with four distinct educational opportunities: kindergarten classes, catch-up classes, remedial classes and child-friendly spaces. All four include psychosocial activities, counseling, and interventions to address refugee children’s emotional and mental health needs.

Since the crisis began, the educational programming has grown exponentially, from a few partner schools with a few hundred students to nearly 7,000 students in 21 schools. Support comes from CRS donors, Caritas Austria, the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.

“With more resources, we have the potential to double this number in the coming years,” Ryan says.

Asha’s 10-year-old daughter Waed, who is on a public school waiting list, takes catch-up classes intended for primary school-age children who have missed significant years of formal education. The classes help students with basic education to pass government-recognized exams and prepare them for formal schooling should the opportunity arise. Given the duration of the conflict, many children have been out of school for years. Others have missed out on formal schooling entirely.

“Before Caritas, my daughter didn’t know the alphabet. Now she can read,” Asha says. “When the news comes on, she reads me what’s on TV.”

It’s not just Asha’s children who are benefiting from the educational programming. Daylong workshops for parents help them with issues like handling bullying, and supporting children at home and school. “I’ve learned that I should insist that all of my children go to school so that when they grow up, they can help themselves have a better future,” Asha says.

Ryan explains the importance of supporting parents as well as students:

“Navigating the education system in host countries and countries of origin is a game-changer. Just think about it: for many of these refugees, coming to Jordan was a game-changer. Now they can help their children get the education they need.”

Questions

Q: What are some of the ways that people in the Diocese of San Angelo can help?
A: One of the most powerful ways you can help those affected by the Syrian war is through learning more about it. The more you learn, the more you’ll understand its underlying causes and can spread the word. Yet another way you can help is through donating to accredited nonprofit organizations that are responding to the crisis. More than 90 percent of money donated to CRS goes directly to people in need. (See box for info on West Texas Emergency Fund, “What Can You Do to Help,” Pg. 23)

Q: Any last words?
A: Please keep refugee families in your thoughts and prayers. Know that they are hopeful — in fact, that's the thread that links so many people of different origins to walking this same path, with the shared destination of a better life. As one man described his hope to me, "With every step, my future is so much closer here.”

Letter

And, they mean it. When I recently visited a Caritas health center, one man who is living as a refugee told me how kind he had been treated by a Caritas staffer. He didn’t mention the types of assistance he had received, and only expressed delight with the Caritas staff who had served him with kindness and dignity.

This commitment to dignity is one we take to heart. And, for the Jordanian social service workers who work tirelessly to help ease the burdens of those facing such hardship, it is an answer to a higher calling.

I write to you now because I have seen the impact of the generosity of West Texans for those families who are urgently in need. I wish you could be here to see it, too. It is a privilege to witness the comfort that a warm blanket, shelter, or living supplies can offer a family in the cold; the normalcy that a classroom offers a child yearning for a semblance of childhood; and the relief a counselor offers a child or a parent who is struggling to heal from trauma.

I offer my thanks to West Texas from so many of us here in Amman. Yours is a gift of the highest value: to know that these refugees are not being forgotten, and there are people throughout the world in solidarity with them.
Family Life

With open doors, let us encounter our Muslim neighbors

By Carolyn Woo
Catholic News Service

A few months ago, I wrote a column about the word "they" and how it can be a dangerous word. Since then and after the tragedies in Paris and San Bernardino, California, the point is driven home by the consequences when some segments of global societies label Muslims as "they."

In the U.S., some political candidates have called for banning all Muslim immigrants and the establishment of a registry to track their whereabouts — both are antithetical to the U.S. Constitution, which provides for religious freedom and forbids discrimination on the basis of religion.

In a society with a strong sense of decorum, we've heard reports of people spitting on Muslims; feces have been smeared at their places of worship; and the routine act of boarding a flight has been challenged by a fellow passenger because of prejudice. Where could this lead?

Violence is a reality in the United States and globally. It is a daily concern for Catholic Relief Service colleagues, partners and beneficiaries from different faith traditions who work in countries torn asunder by acts of annihilation.

I deplore that mass shootings have invaded our society. I grieve the poverty in spirits that bleeds hearts of all love and fills them with the desire to kill. I fear most what fear can do to us as people: how it can rob us of compassion, harden us, hijack our ability to think rationally, diminish our openness to different cultures, and dull our sense of optimism.

Fear, however, does not always have the upper hand.

Despite the mass shootings and bombings in Oklahoma City, Columbine, Virginia Tech, Aurora, Sandy Hook, Charleston, Colorado Springs, Roseburg, Washington's Navy Yard, and many more unnamed shootings here in the U.S., we do not label all American males as threats to society. We do not segregate nor banish them from our families and communities.

We are able to distinguish an aberrant fringe that we do not allow to define our conception of males at large. Why would we not do this for our Muslim neighbors?

If we get to know Muslims better, we will have an image rather different from the one that dominates Western media and that shapes our perception. Muslims are part of U.S. history from the early days with Bampett Muhammad, Yusuf Ben Ali and Peter Buckminster serving in battles under George...

And the Oscar for the best homily goes to ...

By Fr. William Byron
Catholic News Service

It would be interesting if every diocesan office of liturgy were to take a page each year from the book of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and award an Oscar to high-performing parishes in the areas of preaching, presiding, participation and music.

Best preacher, best presider, best participating congregation and best liturgical music in any given diocese deserve recognition, and by recognizing the best, the diocesan office could encourage other parishes to improve.

Gradual improvement across the board in any diocese would make weekend worship more attractive to former parishioners who have drifted away. There should be no difficulty finding or designing an appropriate statuette to accompany the recognition. And instead of calling it an Oscar, the award in this case might be named in honor of a saint or familiar liturgical gesture, item or event that all would recognize. Something like a "thurible" or "prie dieu" might work.

If any creativity at all resides in a diocesan office charged with the promotion of good liturgy, it should not be difficult to set standards and select judges for this holy competition. All parishes would have to be visited over the course of any year by judges who are there only to help, not to police or punish.

Dramatic improvement in the quality of worship is likely to result. And it is also a good probability that positive playback would be felt in the seminaries where future contenders for this recognition are in formation.

If, say, the Sunday morning 11 a.m. liturgy at a given parish were so honored, it is probable that visitors would be attracted, regular attendees would be retained and the disaffected young might be prompted to take a look to see what's going on. And isn't this exactly what any parish wants to see happen?

If anything close to this is going to occur, however, pastor and parish staff will have to pay more attention to what is actually taking place on weekends in the parishes where the faith community looks to them for leadership. They might see this as an opportunity to engage young people in the planning and preparation of liturgies. They might invite experienced professionals in the parish to help evaluate the quality of preaching, presiding, participation and music in parish liturgies.

Nothing but good can come from an initiative like this. It won't happen, however, without diocesan leadership and widespread cooperation from the people in the pews who, I suspect, are just waiting for something like this to happen.

(Please See WOO/23)
Making Sense of Bioethics

At the heart of the tragedy of addiction

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

Addiction can be extremely harmful, and in some cases, fatal for those individuals ensnared by it. It can be seriously disruptive and damaging to those around them. Who is to blame when it comes to addiction? Family and friends may think to themselves, “Why can’t Jane just stop drinking?” Or, “Doesn’t Joe understand that his gambling addiction is bankrupting the family?” Or, “Can’t Bob see how his pornography habit is destroying his marriage and his relationships?” For those facing addiction, it seems they ought to be able to recognize their behavior as harmful, and turn away from it by a resolute decision.

Family and friends, however, can face years of frustration when they see their loved ones fall into a slow motion “crash and burn,” spiraling downwards as they remain stuck. Family and friends, however, can face years of frustration when they see their loved ones fall into a slow motion “crash and burn,” spiraling downwards as they remain unwilling or unable to step away from their addiction.

The individual caught in the web of addiction objectively falls prey to a loss of personal freedom. His will becomes weakened, and he becomes enslaved in a way that limits his ability to recognize the right order of goods in his life. By repetitively choosing the addictive behavior, it becomes ingrained, and the ability to choose better, alternative behaviors becomes enfeebled, if not seemingly impossible. For these reasons, there is almost always diminished personal responsibility in situations of addiction. To be accountable for our acts, we must freely choose those acts, but the internal pressure and downward spiral of the addiction may have already co-opted the individual’s ability freely to choose otherwise. Eventually this bondage can appear to be permanent, and addicted individuals can imagine themselves pathetic and hopeless to such a degree that they almost give up. In the words of a formerly-addicted individual:

“I believe that I did not have a choice to stop…. It never became clear to me that I could live another way until a medical intervention from my physician and friends took place. Willpower plays a small role here, but it too cannot work if one has a malfunctioning brain. I speak for myself here… I could not stop. Period. Now, I have stopped. Not just because of the intervention, but because I have turned my life and my will over to the God of my understanding. That is something 12-step programs have taught me.”

This radical loss of freedom lies at the heart of the tragedy of addiction. Because we are creatures of habit, the choices we make, either for good or for evil, form us in one direction or the other, so we become individuals who are either capable or incapable of choosing the good freely.

Virtue is a habit of good, while vice is a habit of evil. Early choices leading down the road towards addiction, freely made, can quickly snowball into vice, addiction and a loss of freedom. As one recovered addict graphically described it:

“My beef is with those who claim that they never chose to become an addict or never chose to hurt their families…. While we likely didn’t intend to end up helpless, dysfunctional people who [hurt] our loved ones, the choices we made put us at risk of ending up in a sorry state where we were capable of doing things we would have never dreamed of. Unless you were raised on Mars, we all deep down knew the risk of our choices, especially if you’re talking about coke, crack, meth, or heroin but we chose to roll the dice anyways. At a certain point, when I was starting to do coke almost every weekend, I knew that it would be wise to stop, but I chose not to because I was having fun and I told myself it will never happen to me. By the end, I was going on solo three day benders with alcohol and cocaine, and I landed in treatment… my point is that I made the choice to try the substance, the choice to begin to use the substance more regularly, and the choice not to quit when I could have.”

While there may have been significant moral culpability at the beginning of an individual’s descent into addiction, it is still critical for us to never stigmatize, patronize or abandon those who are in the throes of addiction. They may feel they are defined entirely by their addiction, unlovable and wretched, rather than seeing that they are, in fact, human beings who are precious to God and those around them, and even now endowed with some tiny space of remaining freedom. That tiny space will become key to determining whether they ultimately choose the behavioral changes needed to improve their situation and recover the human freedom that is rightfully theirs. We should support, encourage and love them in ways that will help lead them toward those good choices and successful outcomes.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org

Valuing the friendships that help shape us

By Eric Rommel

Catholic News Service

In life, we are continually on the move. Sometimes the move involves a new home or new town. Sometimes it means graduation or a new job.

Regardless of the type of change, every time we make a move, we naturally assess where we were, where we’re going and what we need for the next part of our journey.

We evaluate what we own, eliminate what we no longer need and plan for new additions that match our new lifestyle. Leaving college may mean an end to trendy posters of movies and musicians, but also the start of a professional clothing collection to make us look like successful adults.

We also take a similar assessment of the people in our lives, often without realizing it. In high school, we see the same people every day for four years. There’s an undeniable connection. Then, when our four years are over, we toss our graduation caps into the air and never see some of those people again.

After they meant so much, for so long, those people are gone. It’s not because we’re forgetful, but the bond we had no longer exists. Our relationship is reduced to nothing more than a broken connection.

This occurs often as we grow older. People we thought we could never live without become less prominent as others enter our lives. Sometimes, some of those people disappear from our lives, and sometimes they don’t.

Sometimes the bonds we make are more than where we went to school, where we worked or the neighborhood where we lived. Sometimes our connections are much deeper and refuse to fade, while others are easily forgotten.

I have friends from high school and college whom I rarely have seen since graduation. We’re separated in many ways, but I know a connection still exists. I feel it. If we randomly meet, it feels as if no time has passed. If they needed help, I’d give it.

Those are the people with whom our bond is the strongest, those we refuse to forget.

Sometimes the effect on each others’ lives is mutual. Sometimes the connection only goes in one direction. What if what they mean to us is far greater than what we mean to them? Should that matter?

Relationships are rarely equal. Think back to the days when you and your friends discussed the person who was your best friend and the one who was your third-best friend. We all wanted to be number one on every list. As a child, those determinations meant something. As an adult, what’s important is to be true to oneself.

Every time we make a move, we naturally assess where we were, where we’re going and what we need for the next part of our journey. Through that process, we continually create the person we want to become.

It’s important, however, to remember those who made us the person we are presently. Their role in creating our identity should never be overlooked.

Fortunately, it’s easy to know who those people are. Even when they’re gone, they’re the ones we can never forget. In our hearts, we know we will see them again. If we remember the lessons they taught us, we’ll be precisely where we need to be, no matter where life takes us.
If you can’t get out ... get in even more deeply

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Leo Tolstoy once commented that “each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” I like to think that restlessness is like that, it takes many forms but each of us is restless in his or her own way.

One form of restlessness that many of us share in common, however, is a sense of feeling trapped in certain marriages, families, vocations, careers, churches, jobs and locations which frustrate us, but which, for all kinds of reasons, we feel powerless to ever leave.

Hence, we live in a state of dissatisfaction and restlessness, unable really to make peace with our lot in life and yet unable to leave it either.

Thus, we all know people who feel that their marriages are really not good, but who cannot ever leave those marriages, just as we know people who cannot make peace with the fact that they are not married, but who themselves know that, realistically, they will never be married.

What we see in these people and in ourselves since we all have our own particular experiences of this is a perpetual kicking against the goad, a cancer of spirit, a refusal to accept one’s lot in life, an incapacity to make peace with what one is in fact living.

Theologically this can be described as a blockage of pentecost, an unwillingness to receive the Holy Spirit for one’s own life.

How do we move beyond this kind of restlessness? There is an old adage, now the motto for Outward Bound programs in the U.S., that reads: If you can’t get out of something . . . get more deeply into it.

There is more than a little wisdom in that line, despite its rather glib sound. Taken seriously, it is a paschal prescription, a challenge to die so that we might live.

If you can’t get out of something . . . get more deeply into it. Christ illustrated what that means in his prayer in Gethsemane.

First he prayed that he might get out of it: “Father, let this cup pass from me.” Then, when he couldn’t get out of it, he got deeply into it. The result was the resurrection.

Many resurrections, for us, lie in imitating Christ in this matter. Thus, for example . . .

If we find ourselves restless in a marriage which is far from what we would now choose, but which we know we can never leave then we have no other choice but to get more deeply into it. We are so restless because we are no longer drawing life from the relationship.

Only by entering that marriage more deeply can that restlessness be turned to restfulness and can that seeming death be turned to life. Not to enter it more deeply is to condemn ourselves to the living death we are now experiencing—our relationship is neither alive nor dead.

The same holds true for those of us who struggle restlessly with the single life and celibacy. If we cannot get out of it, we will avoid a cancerous restlessness only by getting more deeply into it.

If we do enter more deeply into it and grieve properly our inconsummation we can turn that frustrated longing into a wider hunger that creates advent space, that helps us enter into a deeper mysticism within the communion of saints, and which drives us outward to try to create and enter human union beyond the individual and romantic level.

Again, not to die to our daydreams here, not to enter more deeply into celibacy, is to perpetuate a living death within our sexuality.

The same dynamic is likewise operative in our relationship to our church. Today there are many people who are very unhappy with their churches but, for all kinds of reasons, can never leave those churches.

As some put it: “Even if you leave the church, it never leaves you!” If that is the case, then the prescription is clear: If you can’t get out of it, get more deeply into it. Enter your church more deeply, see and experience in the tensions, pettiness, divisions and angers of this particular community the basic and universal struggle of all people to come together around one table, to have one heart.

The struggle for one community is, singularly, the most difficult and demanding of all human endeavors. Your local church offers you the laboratory to work at the project.

All of us are unhappy in our own way, be it with our marriage, our family, our celibacy, our church, our career, our neighborhood, our temperament, or even our physical appearance. If we can’t get out of these—get more deeply into them!

Mother Teresa: Saint of light, saint of darkness

By Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles

Like so many others around the world, I was overjoyed to hear of the recent decision of the Vatican to canonize Mother Teresa, a woman generally recognized, during her lifetime, to be a “living saint.” Mother Teresa first came to my attention through Malcolm Muggeridge’s film and attendant book Something Beautiful for God. Of course Muggeridge showed Mother’s work with the dying and the poorest of the poor on the streets of Kolkata, but what moved me the most were the images of the saint’s smile amidst so much squalor and suffering. She was a very bright light shining in exceptionally thick darkness.

Mother’s life reveals so many aspects and profiles of holiness, but I would like to focus on three of them. First, she shows something remarkable about love, which is not a sentiment but rather willing the good of the other. I think it is fair to say that Mother Teresa went to extremes in demonstrating love in this proper sense. She renounced practically everything that, in the opinion of the world, makes life pleasant—wealth, material goods, power, comforts, luxuries—in order to be of service to those in need. Further, for decades, she personally reached out to the most vulnerable in one of the worst slums in the world and sent her sisters to some of the most disagreeable places on the planet. Most of us, I imagine, manage to love a degree, but few ever express this theological virtue more dramatically and radically than she did. This is not simply admirable, it constitutes a crucial witness to the nature of love. Unlike the other virtues, both natural and theological, love has no limit. Justice, limitlessly expressed, excludes all mercy; too much temperance becomes a fussy puritanism; exaggerated courage is rashness; unlimited faith is credulity; infinite hope devolves into presumption. But there can never be too much love; there is never a time when love is inappropriate, for love is what God is, and love constitutes the very life of heaven. Mind you, in heaven there is no need for faith and hope fades away. But in that supremely holy place, love remains in all of its infinite intensity and radicality. Mother Teresa’s way of life, accordingly, is an icon of the love that will obtain in heaven, when we are drawn utterly into the very life of God.

A second feature of Mother’s holiness is her dedication to prayer. When I visited the Mother House of the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata some years ago, what impressed me most was a life-size statue of Mother Teresa in the very back of the chapel, in the attitude she customarily assumed when she prayed: legs folded under her, palms facing upward, head bowed. From the very beginning of her community, Mother insisted that her sisters should engage in substantial amounts of prayer every day; and in time, she established a branch of her order dedicated exclusively to contemplative prayer. She understood something that is essential to the Christian spiritual life, namely, that the kind of love she and her sisters endeavored to practice could come only through the grace of God, only as a sheer gift. To get that gift, it was necessary to ask, to ask again, to beg one’s whole life long. Without this explicit connection to God and his purposes, their work, she knew, would turn into mere do-goodism, and the egos of her sisters would inevitably assert themselves. Saints, those who embody the love that God is, are
Saints in the Mass / How to handle distractions in Mass

By Fr. Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. In the Canon of the Mass, we honor the saints Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian.

The church recognizes more than 8,000 saints, many of whom are much better-known than the list in the Canon. Couldn't we draw more inspiration from saints whom we know a bit about -- perhaps St. Francis of Assisi, St. Patrick, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Joan of Arc, St. Clare, St. Augustine, St. Bernadette, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Benedict or St. Padre Pio? (Woodbridge, Virginia)

A. The Canon of the Mass to which you refer is the first of four general eucharistic prayers in the Roman Missal from which the priest may select. More commonly called Eucharistic Prayer 1, it is also known by its former title, "the Roman Canon," and it served as the only eucharistic prayer in the Roman rite for more than a thousand years.

It mentions, first, several of our best-known saints (Mary and Joseph, Peter, Paul and Andrew) before listing in parentheses a list of 21 saints that the priest may add if he so chooses. That longer list includes the saints you mention, who -- naturally, given the prayer's early origin -- come from the church's first few centuries. (Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus and Cornelius, for example, were martyred popes.) My experience is that Eucharistic Prayer 1 is not used often and, when it is, the priest celebrant rarely opts to name the saints on the longer list.

Only the third eucharistic prayer specifically gives to the priest the option of adding other saints -- the saint whose feast is being celebrated, perhaps, or the patron saint of the parish -- but my sense is that celebrants sometimes choose to do this regardless of which of the eucharistic prayers they have chosen.

I agree with you that greater attention should be given to saints, particularly the more contemporary ones. In our parish, I typically give a 90-second talk at the beginning of weekday Mass about the particular saint whose feast we are marking. They are our heroes in the faith, and we ought to keep their example in front of us.

Q. Why do we permit and even encourage distractions at the most solemn times in the Mass? Soon after the consecration, we invite people to converse with one another at the sign of peace, which I believe should come much earlier in the eucharistic celebration.

Then we ask them to sing during the distribution of holy Communion. (What could be more distracting than having to carry a song book up the Communion aisle -- or hearing the fellow behind you singing wildly out of tune?) Why not keep this period a "quiet time," as a sign of our deep reverence for the presence of Jesus in the sacrament? (Following Communion, after the Eucharist has been returned to the tabernacle, we could then sing a celebratory hymn of thanksgiving.) (The Bahamas)

A. In June 2014, following lengthy discussion, the Vatican issued a letter determining that the sign of peace should remain in the Mass where it had traditionally been placed. It had been thought by some that this exchange might better be placed earlier in the Mass, prior to the presentation of the gifts, and that possibility was given serious consideration.

But the letter, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship, explained that the present positioning highlights the unity of the congregation as it prepares to receive the body and blood of Christ. Interestingly though, the letter did advert to the danger you discussed: that the motion and conversation during sign of peace could prove distracting.

To minimize that concern, the letter notes among other cautions that the faithful should not move about while exchanging the sign and that the priest should not leave the altar to greet members of the congregation. In addition, during ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, the greeting should not become the occasion for congratulations and condolences, the letter said.

When it comes to singing during the distribution of Communion, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal does say (in No. 86) that the Communion chant is "to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices" as they process to receive the Eucharist.

I would think that the chant should be a familiar one, simply sung, so that hymn books would not have to be carried to the altar. Also to your point, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, in No. 88, notes that "when the distribution of Communion is over, if appropriate, the priest and the faithful pray quietly for some time."

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St. Albany, N.Y. 12208.

Making resolutions that extend beyond the new year

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

By now, many people have given up their resolutions. A couple of articles I saw in January confirmed this. In one, a local writer who exercises regularly and writes for a fitness blog reports that she dreads the gym in January. Finding a parking spot is frustrating, and the gym is so packed that you must wait in line for a machine.

But not to worry, she reports. In a few short weeks, all of those folks with good intentions slack off and the treadmills free up.

A Washington Post article explains this phenomenon in economic terms. January is money-making time for gyms, many of whom lower their rates for longer-term contracts. And here's the kicker: They count on us not showing up. The Post visited a gym that had signed up 6,000 members but had a capacity to hold 300 people at any one time.

This would be a recipe for chaos, except most of those paying customers stay home. I found those articles depressing, because I sense the feelings of failure many people must experience when January ends along with their commitment. I can identify. I've sometimes been on the losing end of good intentions. That's the human condition.

Pope Francis has announced an extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy extending from Dec. 8, 2015, to Nov. 20, 2016. Ash Wednesday is right around the corner on Feb. 10. The timing of these momentous events offers great opportunities to explore what we really want to "resolve" and how we want to get there.

Did all of those folks avoiding the gym really want those great abs, or did it merely sound like a good idea at the time?

We have to know what we really desire. Pope Francis recently quoted St. John of the Cross: "In the evening of life, we will be judged on love alone."

Maybe that's what I really want: to love better. How to get there? I'd recommend buying a journal, a nice one on which you'll never be tempted to write a grocery list.

Pray first and ask what God wants of you. Then write down some goals. Don't get too specific because as you pray your way through the year, God may help you define or refine your goals.

I found myself writing down just three things. One was simply "mercy." I want to grow in mercy. I'm starting by rereading Kerry Weber's great little book, "Mercy in the City -- How to Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty, Visit the Imprisoned, and Keep Your Day Job."

I hope that at the end of 2016, my journal will reflect my own acts of mercy.

The second thing I wrote down was "prayer." Sometimes in January, after the mayhem of the holidays, I slide in my prayer routine. I'm recommitting.

Margaret Silf, in her book "Inner Compass," says this about prayer: "Prayer is time taken out of the linear journey of our days, and it is also our most profound reality."

Prayer has to come first, even though it came second on my list.

The third thing I noted was "healthy lifestyle." This is a constant challenge for me, and I didn't put down any specifics. I hope daily abstinence will help me with specifics.

Pope Francis' new book is entitled "The Name of God Is Mercy." It's important to understand that God's mercy extends to us lavishly and returns to us over and over again. Don't judge yourself harshly in 2016. Just keep going back to the source of mercy, again and again, and write down what you've learned.
Encuentro

MERCY
(From 9)

mission from their bishops or superiors — requested to serve as these special missionaries.

The original plan was to have just 800 missionaries, however, the number of requests was so great, 1071 men ended up being chosen, Archbishop Fisichella said. The missionaries will serve in their own dioceses, but they may be invited by other bishops to visit other dioceses as well.

The pontifical council will send out to all the world’s bishops a list of the names and personal contact information of all the missionaries appointed by the pope, the archbishop said.

It will then be up to an individual bishop to reach out to a missionary on the list to invite him to his diocese, as well as cover expenses and provide what may be needed for his stay, the archbishop said.

“I really like the way Pope Francis is carrying out the Year of Mercy and I’d like to promote it as much as I can,” Fr. Matthiesen said. “I think people need to understand we’re not going to be judged as soon as we walk into church.”

San Angelo

(From 2)

nothing from $10 donations to checks. So many people, individuals, churches, businesses and foundations contributed, even military from overseas, many I’ve never met,” the San Angelo entrepreneur said.

Mikeska already was well-traveled, and a few years ago he was looking for a way to make a difference. Searching online, he found two young men, brothers in Kathmandu, and started contributing to help them through school.

When the earthquake happened, Mikeska was worried about his young charges, their families and countrymen.

“The kids managed to Skype me after five days, and I was so excited to hear from them, but then so sad because I couldn’t send them anything to help because all the systems were down for quite awhile.”

Nightmares and sleeplessness drove him to make the journey to Nepal as soon as it was accessible – despite U.S. State Department warnings against the trip because of continuing earthquake potential and political unrest.

“I kept seeing the boys wet and cold, with only a tarp over them to shelter from the constant rains. They were hungry and frightened.”

Mikeska wound up becoming an emissary from San Angelo, carrying $16,000 in donations that made a difference to 3,000 fragile lives, their world crumbled by an explosive 7.8-magnitude earthquake and ensuing mudslides in April. An estimated 9,000 people had died and 3 million were displaced from their homes, family members and their most important worldly possession: the rice-cooking pot.

He made the trip in late October and experienced not only a vastly different culture but also unimaginable poverty. His three-day flights, each way, were funded through frequent flier miles, and he usually stayed in the homes of villagers in the remote destinations where help was most needed. His hosts and guides on the mission journey were Sujan and Rajan Kafle, the 19- and 23-year-old brothers he sponsors, and their extended family.

The three-week "Fill the Rice Pot" mission managed to restock a school, library and several orphanages and provide rice pots in several villages.

While Mikeska is not officially Catholic, he said he “feels Catholic” due to working for 23 years with Tucker — who donated millions to Catholic charities and was a member of St. Joseph in San Angelo. Already well known in the Diocese, Mikeska received a lot of financial support for the Nepal mission from churches.

One person most familiar with Mikeska, and the work of Eva Tucker, is retired Bishop Michael Pfeifer.

“I admire and appreciate very much Terry Mikeska and what he and his companions are doing to bring vital basic human assistance to our sisters and brothers in Nepal, who have suffered much because of the terrible earthquake,” said the former bishop of the San Angelo Diocese. “Terry has a very generous heart and is always concerned about helping God’s people who are needy and lack the very basic necessities of life. His efforts are ecumenical as he is crossing religious lines and inviting all of God’s people to share in such a worthy and necessary project. In my many years in San Angelo I always enjoyed working with him.

“Disasters like the earthquake in Nepal remind us that we are first members of the human family all over planet earth and that God is our Father and Father of all people wherever they might be on earth which is our common home. In my some 29 years in San Angelo, I often made ecumenical appeals to help our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world who were suffering because of disasters and devastations. I pray many people will support Terry’s good efforts and to bless him and those serving with him. The sacred Scriptures and the teachings and encouragement of all recent popes, especially Pope Francis, remind us to see in each suffering person the face of Christ.”

Mikeska is planning another trip later this year, this time focusing on solar energy and education.

“I would like to take a group of educators from Kathmandu, to improve hygiene, farming, clean water and education for the poor kids -- and hope for a better tomorrow.”

Donations for the Nepal mission can be sent to: Mikeska Inc. with “Nepal” in the memo line, 2197 Club House Lane, San Angelo TX 76904.
BISHOP

(From 3)

cares for us, even when he does not make us rich. We should thank him every day, even for the most basic things, such as air, water, and life.

We should even give thanks to God for the boulder that stands in the middle of our path, for it provides an opportunity for us to grow stronger by climbing over it.

3. Consider where your real treasure is.

Jesus Christ said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-20)

Jesus teaches us not to put our faith in material things, but to lean on God. This attitude has actually been printed as a reminder on every bit of American currency: “In God we trust.”

We must always pray, asking God for what we need. Then, we must pray to be able to trust in God’s answers, which might or might not be exactly what we had in mind.

In times of adversity, we also come to realize the importance of our family and true friends. The Book of Sirach says, “Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure.” (Sirach 6:14)

4. Opportunity to grow in the virtues.

When we practice good habits and attitudes, they eventually become an enduring part of our character. Going through hard times presents us with the special opportunity to practice particular virtues that help us to follow Christ more faithfully, whether in bust or boom times. These include the virtues of humility, simplicity, patience, moderation, self-control, fortitude, sharing, saving, industriousness, solidarity, and living within our limits.

An economic downturn is a great opportunity for all of us to learn to be content with less, to find joy in simple things, and to let go of our inordinate attachment to material things. It is also a chance to exercise our God-given creativity and resourcefulness.

Maybe there will be a miracle and you will win the lottery, or maybe the miracle will be that you find the humility to live joyfully within new limits, accepting the loving support of family and friends.

5. We all take turns.

Many of us have been trained to have a fierce spirit of individual independence, wanting to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We therefore find it hard to accept help from others, or to ask for assistance when we need it. Some people consider it a sign of weakness to let ourselves be helped.

However, the reality is that we all take turns helping others and being helped by others, depending on the circumstances. That is the normal rhythm of life. In a marriage, in the family, and in all human communities, there are times when we give help, and times when we receive it. Even Jesus himself sometimes asked for help and support. We need to embrace humbly this basic fact of life.

6. Consider the situation of others.

No matter how difficult our own situation, we should always look around and consider the situation of others. There are some who have it worse than we do. We should look for ways to reach out and help, even from our own poverty.

St. Francis of Assisi prayed, “O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console.”

When we have been wounded by life, and we seek to help others to heal, we become what Fr. Henri Nouwen called “wounded healers,” capable of true compassion and Christ-like love.

7. Your true net worth.

All too often, we are tempted to evaluate ourselves according to financial resources and material things. However, it is not the size of our house or our bank account that makes us worthwhile. Our true worth as human beings is based on the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God.

This is what leads the Psalmist to pray to God, “It was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

There are some things that are more important than money. These include our faith, our eternal salvation, our character, our moral integrity, and our human dignity.

8. The dignity of work.

When we lose a job in today’s economy, it is often difficult to find another job at the same level of salary or prestige. Even so, our faith tells us that, regardless of salary level, all honest work has dignity.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he

should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare composed poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’”

Whether we have to sweep streets or dig ditches, each one of us can do something. With God’s strength, we get up, put one foot in front of the other, and take a step in the right direction.


For the Christian, suffering is not meaningless. God is with us in our suffering. Jesus Christ allowed himself to go through suffering, and he is with us when we suffer. He helps us to carry our cross, and we embrace our cross in loving union with him when we choose to join our suffering to his.

When St. Paul reflected on his own experience of weakness, hardship, and calamities, he said, “Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” (II Cor. 12:8-9) If we were perfect, we would not need a Savior.

St. Peter was also familiar with suffering, and he considered it to have a purifying effect on us. He wrote, “In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (I Peter 1:6-7)

10. Keep an eternal perspective.

This world is not all that there is. No matter how much money we might have on earth, we cannot take it with us when we die.

Jesus teaches us in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). The Kingdom of God endures for eternity, whereas all the wealth and kingdoms of this world are temporary.

Sometimes we panic when everything seems to be going wrong. However, with our limited human capacity to understand, we are only able to see a small slice of the pie of reality. God sees the big picture, with an eternal perspective. God is in charge, and he has our eternal best interest at heart, far beyond the passing splendors — and challenges — of this world.
you, begin mapping out exactly what changes or effort you would need to see from that person to let you know that it is safe to reconcile. If you are on your own, focus your energy on making a plan for how will you strive to regain as much of what was lost/taken from you as possible. The more you strive to find alternative ways to recoup your losses, the less bitter you will feel even if the hurt persists. It can be tempting to give into feelings that “there’s nothing I can do” but resist the temptation. In fact, if you feel this way and can’t think of solutions, talk to a professional to check your math before deciding that you just need to grieve your loss. If, after consultation, you find that there really is nothing you can do to reclaim what was lost or taken from you, focus your energy on developing new goals that will help you reconstruct a compelling future. The book, The Life God Wants You to Have: Discovering the Divine Plan When Human Plans Fail can be a tremendous help for figuring out what God is calling you to work toward in the next chapter of your life.

**Seek Grace**

It can be next to impossible to heal some wounds without God’s grace. Bitterness causes us to shun God’s grace in favor of obsessing over the wound. If you are holding on to bitterness I encourage you to take it to confession. Please don’t be insulted by the suggestion. I know that you are the victim and you have a right to your pain. Still, holding on to anything except God’s love, mercy and healing grace separates from God and the life he wants us to have. Confession can open your heart to receive the healing that God wants to give you. It can help you surrender the pain and powerlessness and begin to discover new options. Stop hoarding your hurt. Make your desire for healing official by taking your tendency to dwell in the powerlessness to the confessional and seek the grace to leave it there.

**Seek Professional Help**

If the bitterness won’t let go even after you’ve tried all of the above, it’s time to seek professional help. Working with a professional can help you see possibilities that your pain has blinded you to and give you new tools to heal the wounds that are holding you back. If you have a faithful professional in your area that you have worked with before, it may be time to reconnect. If not, I would invite you to contact us through the Pastoral Solutions Institute to learn more about our telephone counseling practice. Healing is possible with the right resources.

Hebrews 12:5 says, “See to it that no one fails short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” You don’t have to be bitter or consumed by feelings of powerlessness and sadness. Take action today to cooperate with the grace God is giving you to break free of the bonds of bitterness. You can discover that with God’s help, there is so much more to life than pain.

**Stop Dwelling and Retelling**

When we are hurt, we have a tendency to turn the painful events over and over in our head or tell anyone who will listen about our pain—over and over again. It is fine to talk to people we think can help us heal the hurt, facilitate reconciliation or help us rebuild our lives, but other than that, we should do what we can to stop dwelling on the story of our injury ourselves and stop speaking of it so freely to others. When we are tempted to “dwell or retell” the best course of action is to refocus on what we can do — today — to take at least some small step toward refining or actualizing the plan we’ve developed in Step 2. The more you are focused on solutions, the less you will experience the sense of powerlessness that comes from ruminating on the hurt.

**Human Plans Fail**

Have: Discovering the Divine Plan When

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The pope's answers to those questions made Father Spadaro laugh, the Jesuit said. The pope admits in the book that when he was small he wanted to be a butcher because the butcher his grandmother bought meat from had an apron with a big pocket that seemed to be full of money.

The children's questions are "simple, but not silly," said Father Spadaro, who discussed them with Pope Francis and recorded his answers.

Father Spadaro heads La Civilta Cattolica, a Jesuit journal filled with articles on philosophy, theology, literary criticism and political theory. He has never worked with young children and said he was in awe of how the pope handled the questions - taking them seriously and responding to them honestly and clearly.

Some of the pope’s answers, he said, are “inspired.”

"This is important," Father Spadaro said. "It says a lot about the magisterium of Pope Francis; he knows his ministry can reach children."

At the request of Loyola Press, Father Spadaro asked Pope Francis last May if he would be willing to do the book. The Jesuit publishing house had asked Father Spadaro to approach the pope since he had conducted the first big interview with Pope Francis in 2013.

"The pope said yes immediately and with enthusiasm," Father Spadaro said.

Loyola Press then reached out to dozens of Jesuits and collaborators around the globe, asking them to solicit questions and drawings from children. Sometimes Loyola had to ship off crayons, markers and paper because the children had none.

In the end, 259 children in 26 countries submitted questions. The big batch of letters are in 14 languages and come from children in wealthy cities, poor rural areas and even refugee centers.

Choosing which letters the pope would answer in the book was done with input from the children, parents, grandparents, teachers and Jesuits, Father Spadaro said. But he went into the reserve pile and pulled out a few more as well.

In August, Father Spadaro read the letters out loud to the pope in Italian, but the pope also scrutinized the drawings, the Jesuit said. He commented on the scenes and colors and often had a good laugh over the way the kids drew the pope.

For the answers, "I was not just taking dictation," Father Spadaro said. The pope enjoys a conversation; for the book, that meant the pope would sometimes discuss the questions and potential answers with the Jesuit scribe and, often, would return to add something to an answer after they had already moved on to other letters.

"He's a volcano," Father Spadaro said.

The pope would look off into space as if picturing the children and responding to them in person, usually in Spanish, but sometimes in Italian, the Jesuit said.

**SCHOOLS**

with our children in our daily family life. I love that in a secular world, which has become consumed with being politically correct, our children are allowed to learn and express their faith at St. Ann’s School. Children who attend St. Ann’s School praise God every day for the gift of life, love and learning. This is priceless. In this loving, thankful and safe environment, our children can express their love of the Lord and share that gift with their friends who share their faith in God.

Among the many other opportunities to show thanks, St. Ann’s students are frequently encouraged to provide service to others through service projects. These projects are vital in serving the needs of our community and are designed to educate children about the importance of serving the Lord and his people.

St. Ann’s students will learn the value of volunteering at a young age and will give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity to serve others: “For in the service of the Lord, work not halfheartedly but with conscisentiousness and an eager spirit. Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; share with any of God’s holy people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable.” (Romans 12:11-13)

As Catholics, we have an opportunity to bring love and peace to this world. We must first begin by possessing an “Attitude of Gratitude.” For Thanksgiving is not a day or a season, but an attitude. As a Diocese, in this year of Mercy, we must always support our Catholic Schools and the children who attend daily. By supporting Catholic schools, we will perpetuate this “Attitude of Gratitude” for future generations. Whether it be through sending your children to Catholic schools, donating to scholarships, or contributing to the School’s Endowment Fund, it is imperative that we support these vital institutions. With support, Catholic Schools can continue to impart to our children the value of Thanksgiving and can draw the connection between our life and the Eucharist.
Pastoral Message on Growing Older Within the Faith Community," has identified these as calls to holiness, community, service, and Christian maturity. The difference for us older adults is our living these calls in the context of major life changes: retirement from active work life and the need for meaning and purpose; illness or disability; financial insecurity; loss of loved ones and loss of independence; caring for adult children, grandchildren, spouse and/or family members older than we; dealing with our past and fear of the future; facing death as part of life. We are called to reflect on who we are and how we relate to God and others in the face of these and other challenges.

From the Biblical perspective, life is a continuum—the perspective of eternity for which life at every stage is a meaningful preparation. "We need to accept old age as a stage in the journey by which Christ leads us to the Father's house (cf.Jn 14:2). Only in the light of faith, strengthened by the hope which does not deceive (cf.Rom 5:5), shall we be able to accept old age in a truly Christian way both as a gift and a task. That is the secret of the youthfulness of spirit which we can continue to cultivate in spite of the passing of years" ("The Dignity of Older People and their Mission in the Church and in the World." Pontifical Council for the Laity).

With all of its difficulties, how can we think of older adulthood in terms of gift? St. John Paul II in his "Letter to the Elderly" tells us, "It remains true that the years pass quickly, and the gift of life, for all the effort and pain it involves, is too beautiful and precious for us ever to grow tired of it." We are gifted with life—made in the image of God (Gen 1:26). We have hope because "God is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Lk 20:38). "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Our hope is in Jesus Christ through His passion, cross, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. The human spirit remains vital and young if it sees itself in a continuity of life to life as gifted by God. The ordinate response to gift is gratitude. It is only in a spirit of gratitude that we can live through the exigencies of aging without bitterness, anger, resentment, or despair; there is no space for these in gratitude. St. John Chrysostom said that "Tribulations not only do not destroy hope; they are its foundation."

In gratitude for the gift of life, we consider the tasks God is giving us as older adults. "The service of the Gospel has nothing to do with age!" according to St. John Paul II. Scripture gives witness to this truth through the obedience of older adults whom God called for specific tasks: Abraham, Moses, Tobit, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Simeon and Anna, Nicodemus, St. John, and the Apostles and Church Fathers who bore witness to their faith by martyrdom. We can think of our tasks—to be undertaken as fully as our circumstances allow—in terms of our "calls" mentioned at the beginning of this article: holiness, community, service, Christian maturity. Jesus says, "Follow me" (Mt 9:9). How do we experience and respond to these calls "especially the call to holiness which embraces all other calls and leads to wisdom...a sign of Christian maturity"? (USCCB) To grow in union with Christ, our task is to avail ourselves of the means of grace within the Church: Mass, the heart of the spiritual life; regular Confession; a deeper prayer life—Rosary, intercession leading to contemplation; Bible study; retreats; and other means of formation. The homebound and those in residential care can grow in holiness through an apostolate of prayer in union with Christ and Mary. Growing in holiness also involves reflecting on our past: recognizing the good and letting go of mistakes and failures; and seeking reconciliation through forgiveness of others and ourselves.

Everyone in this life suffers because we and all creation fell from God's original goodness and harmony into sin. Although most of the time we do not choose our suffering, we do choose how we respond to it. Our natural response is negative; we don't want to suffer, and when it is thrust upon us, we fight it. It is only by the grace of God that we can begin to accept suffering and offer it up to Him to be used for our eternal good and the good of others. We can unite our suffering with Christ's suffering on the cross to participate in His redemption of souls—offering our suffering for particular persons and intentions. As we grow in union with Christ, we can begin to embrace suffering, with our Blessed Mother Mary. "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that sufferings produce endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:3-5).

Growth in holiness leads to wisdom. Wisdom does not come automatically with age. It is our task to cultivate it through prayer and reflection and an intentional life of faith and service. Wisdom is the outgrowth of a life lived in faithfulness to Christ and the Church. It is our task to continue to grow, learn, and share our faith journey with others, especially younger generations—hopefully, with our own grandchildren.

Dealing with our losses can draw us closer to Christ or put up barriers in our relationship with Him and others. Two major losses are decline of our own or our spouse's health—leading to loss of health, independence, and purposefulness—and death of a spouse or late-in-life divorce. In these and other losses we are faced with the need for assistance in some form. As highly as we prize independence, we need to be reminded that interdependence, not independence, is the true Gospel value. We are called to community. We need each other and should not fear or resist asking for and accepting help—from family, friends, and parish, including our priest, deacon, or Christian counselor. Interdependence requires that we grow in humility as we relinquish some self-sufficiency. Interdependence is a means of growing in holiness. It is a grace for others and ourselves. We are blessed if we are part of a family circle where we are appreciated and respected for our age and wisdom and are allowed to pass on our faith and family heritage. We do this by the example of our lives—in the midst of our losses and suffering.

Increasingly, older adults are caring for their elderly parents, in their home or in residential care (cf. Ex 20:12). Because of the brokenness in many families, older adults may be called upon to provide care and stability for adult children and grandchildren, as well as other older adult family members in the community of the home. The older adult caregiver should reach out to their parish family and community agencies to get the help they need to carry out their labor of love and to deal with stress, mixed emotions, and difficult decisions. Sadly, many older adults have no living family or are separated from family by distance, broken relationships, or are in institutional care. They are without community and feel isolated and lonely. It is the parish community that should minister to them by providing the Sacraments, companionship, and prayer or providing transportation to Mass, Confession, and parish activities—and, when needed, by meeting material needs.

Finally, it is the calling, the task, of older adults—yes, even our responsibility—to be in service to others. As we grow bolder in Christ, we can make significant contributions to our family, our parish, and the larger community by using our talents, gifts, experience, and wisdom, as our health and circumstances allow. We express our gratitude to God for these gifts through the generosity of self. We can use our expertise from our life's work in a variety of volunteer opportunities to effect change; we can teach; we can speak out on pertinent issues facing our society, especially sanctity of life and its violations in abortion, euthanasia, and human trafficking; we can minister to other older adults, or we can work with children and young people in some capacity; we can lead a Rosary prayer group or study group. The possibilities are as varied as our talents, gifts, and experience.

A sense of humor, especially the ability to laugh at ourselves, is essential for us older adults—when we can't recall someone's name, when we walk into a room in our home and can't remember why we're there, when our "train of thought gets derailed" in the middle of a conversation, when we can't find our car keys or cell phone. You fill in the blanks. (Remember to ask the prayers and assistance of St. Anthony, who is known as the intercessor for lost souls and lost things. We find ourselves carrying on a daily dialogue with him!).

Either we can laugh at our older adult foibles or become discouraged, disgruntled, and hard to live with. Among the many benefits of laughter, it enhances digestion and healing. Laughter truly is the best medicine! Not taking ourselves too seriously helps us focus upward and outward with an attitude of gratitude, instead of an attitude of complaining or self-pity. So be kind to yourself and those around you by "lightening up" as you grow older in years and bolder in Christ!

In all of the circumstances of older adulthood, we draw strength from the Sacraments, Scripture, prayer, reaching out to others in need, and from the community of saints and angels who pray for, assist, and inspire us on our journey. We humbly ask your grace, prayers, and assistance, Mother Mary, and your prayers, St. Joseph, for holy aging and holy dying.

Look for part 2 on older adult issues in the March Angelus.
Washington.

Muslims continue to be part of the U.S. military. They contributed innovations that built America: Fazlur Rahman Khan devised the structural system of frame tubes that enabled skyscrapers including the Sears Tower and Trump International Hotel and Tower in Chicago; Ayub Ommaya invented the intraventricular catheter system for relieving cerebrospinal fluid; Ernest Hanwi concocted the first edible waffle cone that makes ice cream street vending something we all enjoy; Ahmed Zewail, Nobel Laureate in chemistry, situates his research and teaching at a leading U.S.

university. And in the sporting culture of America, who would not know Muhammad Ali? Shaquille O'Neal? Kareem Abdul-Jabbar?

Extremism is a scourge, but let us fight this by reaching out to and encountering Muslims. Isn't this the point that Pope Francis made at a mosque during his trip to the Central Africa Republic, "Together, we must say no to hatred, to revenge and to violence, particularly that violence that is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself" In the Gospel, fear is not countered by security, but by love.

Woo is president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services.

BARRON

(From 17)

necessarily beggars.

I remarked above that Mother Teresa struck me as a light in the shadows. How mysterious, therefore, that she herself once said, "If I ever become a saint, I will surely be a saint of darkness." She was referring to something that only a handful of people knew in her lifetime, that for upwards of fifty years, Mother Teresa experienced the pain of the absence of God. The living saint often felt abandoned by God or even that God does not exist. Once a visiting bishop was kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament with Mother and her nuns. A note was passed to him from the saintly foundress, which read, to his infinite surprise, "Where is Jesus?" That she lived through this crucible for decades, even as people routinely saw her as the very paragon of holiness, shows forth a third dimension of her saintliness. To be a saint is to allow Christ to live his life in you. Indeed, St. Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me;" and this means the whole Christ. Jesus was a person of service to the poor and needy, and Mother certainly embodied this aspect of his life; Jesus was a person who prayed intently and for long periods of time, and Mother participated in this dimension of his existence. But Jesus was also the crucified Lord, who said, at the limit of his suffering, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" To allow Christ to live his life in you, is therefore, necessarily to experience, to one degree or another, the absence of God, to undergo the agony of the crucifixion in all of its dimensions. St. John of the Cross, the greatest mystical theologian in the Church's history, said, quite simply, that there is no path to holiness that does not lead through the cross. Though it is a high paradox, the fifty-year darkness that Mother endured is, therefore, one of the surest indicators of her saintliness.

Saints exist for the Church, for in them we see the very raison d'être of the Church, and this is why canonizations are always joyful affairs. So let us rejoice in this new saint whose love, prayer, and very darkness, are light for us.

SAINTS

(From 7)

the king's request, and with Pope John XIII's permission, he became archbishop while remaining bishop of Worcester. Burns explains that this arrangement may have been done to share the resources between the rich and powerful see of Worcester and the poorer see of York. It was abolished in 1061.

Many biographers agree that Oswald was not heavy handed in his reforms, but relied instead on prayer, fasting, dialogue and fatherly admonitions. He gained a great reputation for his love of the poor. Sean Kelly and Rosemary Rogers describe him in "Saints Preserve Us!" as a man of political savvy as well as personal piety.

David Farmer writes in the "Oxford Dictionary of Saints" that he remained an influential diocesan bishop until his death, administering his two dioceses, building churches and acting as judge. His lasting achievement was the founding of the great Benedictine abbey at Ramsey.

He died on Leap Year Day, February 29, 992 while washing the feet of the 12 poor men near his monastery. According to Burns, this was his daily custom every day throughout Lent. Prior to the 1930s, his feast day was celebrated only in leap years. His feast is not on the General Roman Calendar. His relics are in the priory Church of St. Mary in Worcester.

FREEDOM

(From 10)

to "the freedom to choose what is good and true."

The third fundamental cultural problem is the view that our freedoms are given to us by the state and not God, he said.

"I think the challenges we see to religious freedom today stem from roots like these, whether it's Christians being beheaded in the Middle East or the tendencies of so-called liberal democracies to manage religion, such as we see in the HHS mandate or the difficulties that individuals, institutions and religious groups experience. ... If you challenge one fundamental freedom, you challenge them all," he said.

Archbishop Lori added, "The defense of religious liberty is, at the same time, the defense of human dignity and the common good of society. It is fundamental to the task of building a civilization of love. It is fundamental toward ... rebuilding the fabric of our society." He noted that the defense of religious liberty is essential to the outward-reaching ministries of faith organizations. "It is these ministries precisely that are in the crosshairs of our society today."

CLASS

(From 14)

What can you do to help?

Join the West Texas Emergency Fund and make a lasting impact on the vulnerable community of Syrian refugees. During this most holy season of Lent, your gift will be a sign of mercy and solidarity for those suffering without a place to call home. Your gift will go a long way both in spirit and impact.

Here are just a few examples of how you can make a difference, right now, in the lives of refugee families:

- School materials kit: $56
- Hygiene kit: $50
- Winter kit: $150
- Formal school enrollment preparation: $750 annually per student
- Summer school program: $1,450 annually per student

*Symbolic examples of the good your donation can do for refugee families in Jordan.*

How do I make sure my gift is going to the West Texas Emergency Fund?

By Check: If you would like to support this effort, please write West Texas Emergency Fund on the memo line of your check and send to: Catholic Relief Services P.O. Box 17526 Baltimore, MD 21298-8180

By Phone: Call 877-435-7277 from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Time.(Please indicate West Texas Emergency Fund on the memo line of your check)

By Fax: Call 410-328-6100

By Online: Donate.crs.org/emergencies

Under special request at the end of the form, please write West Texas Emergency Fund.

Finally, if you would like to be put in touch with a representative with CRS to learn more about our work, please send your request to Jimmy Patterson at jpatterson@sanangelodiocese.org.

You can also visit www.crs.org to learn more about the impact Catholics are making throughout the world.

Thank you for your careful consideration around supporting the West Texas Emergency Fund.


Para 3)

¿Acaso pueden beber este trago amargo que voy a beber yo, y recibir el bautismo que yo voy a recibir? (Marcos 10:38)

En tiempos de lucha, es fácil empezar a culpar a Dios, como si Dios no estuviera haciendo bien su trabajo. Sin embargo, Dios no nos debe la riqueza material o la salud completa como un tipo de recompensa por nuestra fe en él.

2. Cuente sus bendiciones.

Cuando los tiempos son difíciles, debemos contar nuestras bendiciones y reconocer las muchas maneras en que Dios nos ha ayudado. La gratitud es un antídoto poderoso contra los males espirituales de tener lástima por uno mismo y la desesperación.

Hasta en medio de nuestras luchas, Dios nos está amando con un amor eterno. Él todavía nos ama y nos cuida, incluso cuando él no nos hace ricos.

Debemos darle gracias a Dios por la roca que se encuentra en medio de nuestro camino, ya que ofrece una oportunidad para crecer más fuerte al subir nuestro camino, ya que ofrece una oportunidad para crecer más fuerte al subir hacia la luz de la esperanza.

3. Considere donde se encuentra su verdadero tesoro.

Jesucristo dijo: “No amontonen riquezas aquí en la tierra, donde la polilla destruye y las cosas se echan a perder, y donde los ladrones entran a robar. Más bien amontonen riquezas en el cielo, donde la polilla no destruye ni las cosas se echan a perder ni los ladrones entran a robar. Pues donde está tu riqueza, allí estará también tu corazón.” (Mateo 6:19-21)

Hoy nos enseña a no poner nuestra fe en las cosas materiales, sino más bien de apoyarnos en Dios. Esta actitud ha sido actualmente impresa como un recordatorio en cada moneda estadounidense: “En Dios confiamos.”

Siempre debemos orar, pidiendo a Dios por lo que necesitamos. Luego, debemos orar para ser capaces de confiar en las respuestas de Dios, que podrían o no ser exactamente lo que teníamos en mente.

En tiempos de adversidad, también llegamos a realizar la importancia de nuestra familia y de los amigos verdaderos. El libro del Eclesiástico dice, “Un amigo fiel es una protección segura; el que lo encuentra ha encontrado un tesoro.” (Eclesiástico 6:14)

4. La oportunidad de crecer en las virtudes.

Cuando practicamos buenos hábitos y actitudes, con el tiempo se convierten en una parte permanente de nuestro carácter. Pasando por tiempos difíciles nos presenta la oportunidad especial de practicar virtudes particulares que nos ayudan a seguir a Cristo con mayor fidelidad en los altibajos. Estas virtudes incluyen la humildad, la sencillez, la paciencia, la moderación, el autocontrol, la fortaleza, la generosidad, el ahorro, la laboriosidad, la solidaridad, y vivir dentro de nuestros límites.

Una recepción económica no es una gran oportunidad para todos nosotros para aprender el estar contentos con menos, de encontrar alegría en las cosas sencillas, y de dejar a lado nuestro apego excesivo a las cosas materiales. También es una oportunidad de ejercer nuestra creatividad e ingenio que Dios nos ha dado.

Tal vez habrá un milagro y usted ganará la lotería, o tal vez el milagro será el de encontrar la humildad para vivir con alegría dentro de los nuevos límites, aceptando el apoyo amoroso de familiares y amigos.

5. Todos nos turnamos.

Muchos de nosotros hemos sido entrenados a tener un espíritu feroz de independencia individual, para poder levantar los nuestros propios medios. Pero lo tanto, resulta difícil aceptar la ayuda de otros, o el pedir ayuda cuando la necesitamos. Algunas personas lo consideran como una señal de debilidad el dejar que otros nos ayuden.

Sin embargo, la realidad es que todos hacemos turnos en ayudar a los demás y ser ayudados, dependiendo de las circunstancias. Éste es el ritmo normal de la vida. En un matrimonio, en la familia, y en todas las comunidades humanas, hay momentos en que damos ayuda, y otros momentos en que la recibimos. Hasta Jesús mismo en ocasiones pidió ayuda y apoyo. Necesitamos abrazar humildemente este hecho básico de la vida.

6. Tenga en cuenta la situación de los demás.

No importa lo difícil de nuestra situación, siempre debemos mirar a nuestro alrededor y considerar la situación de los demás. Siempre hay algunos que lo tienen peor que nosotros. Debemos buscar la manera de llegar y ayudar, hasta de nuestra propia pobreza.

San Francisco de Asís oró: “Oh, Divino Maestro, concédezmelo que no busque ser consolado sino consolar.”

Cuando hemos sido heridos por la vida, y tratamos de ayudar a sanar a otros, nos convertimos en lo que el Padre Henri Nouwen llama “sanadores heridos,” capaces de la verdadera compasión y el amor de Cristo.

7. Su verdadero valor.

Con demasiada frecuencia nos sentimos tentados a evaluarnos a nosotros mismos según los recursos financieros y las cosas materiales. Sin embargo, no es el tamaño de nuestra casa o nuestra cuenta bancaria que nos da valor. Nuestro verdadero valor como seres humanos se basa en el hecho de que hemos sido creados a la imagen y semejanza de Dios.

Esto es lo que conduce al salmista a orar a Dios, “Tú fuiste quien formó todo mi cuerpo; tú me formaste en el vientre de mi madre. Te alabo porque estoy maravillado, porque es maravilloso lo que has hecho.” (Salmo 139: 13-14)

Hay algunas cosas que son más importantes que el dinero. Esto incluye nuestra fe, nuestra salvación eterna, nuestro carácter, nuestra integridad moral, y nuestra dignidad humana.

8. La dignidad del trabajo.

Cuando perdemos un trabajo, la economía de hoy, a menudo es difícil encontrar otro trabajo al mismo nivel de salario o prestigio. Aun así, nuestra fe nos dice que, independientemente del nivel de salario, todo trabajo honesto tiene dignidad.

El Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., dijo: “Si un hombre está llamado a ser barrendero, debería barrer las calles, tal como Michelangelo pintó, o Beethoven compuso música o como Shakespeare compuso poesía. Debería barrer tan bien que todos los ejércitos de los cielos y la tierra tomarán una pausa para decir: ‘Aquí vivió un gran barrendero que hizo su trabajo muy bien.’

Sea que tenemos que barrer las calles o escarbar zanjas, cada uno de nosotros puede hacer algo. Con la fuerza de Dios, nos levantamos, ponemos un pie delante del otro, y damos un paso en la dirección correcta.


Para el Cristiano, el sufrimiento no es sin significado. Dios está con nosotros en nuestro sufrimiento. Jesucristo se permitió a sí mismo a pasar por sufrimiento, y él está con nosotros cuando sufrimos. Él nos ayuda a cargar nuestra cruz, y abrazamos nuestra cruz en unión amorosa con él cuando decidimos conectar nuestro sufrimiento con el sufrimiento de él.

Cuando San Pablo reflexionó sobre su propia experiencia de la debilidad, de las dificultades y calamidades, dijo, ‘Tres veces le he pedido al Señor que me quite ese sufrimiento; pero el Señor me ha dicho: ‘Mi amor es todo lo que necesitas; pues mi poder se muestra mejor en los débiles.’ Así que me alegro de ser débil, para que en mí se muestre el poder de Cristo.’” (II Cor. 12:8-9) Si fuéramos perfectos, no necesitariamos un Salvador.

San Pedro también estaba familiarizado con el sufrimiento, y él consideró que tiene un efecto purificador en nosotros. Él escribió: “Por esta razón están ustedes llenos de alegría, aunque quizás sea necesario que durante en poco de tiempo pasen por muchas pruebas. Porque la fe de ustedes es como el oro: su calidad debe ser probada por medio del fuego – al ser así probada, merecerá aprobación, gloria y honor cuando Jesucristo aparezca.” (I Pedro 1:6-7)

10. Mantener una perspectiva eterna.

Este mundo no es todo lo que hay. No importa la cantidad de dinero que podríamos tener en la tierra, no podemos llevarlo con nosotros cuando morimos.

Jesús nos enseña en las Bienaventuranzas: “Dichosos ustedes los pobres, pues el reino de Dios les pertenece.” (Lucas 6:20) El Reino de Dios permanece por toda la eternidad, mientras que toda la riqueza y los reinos de este mundo son temporales.

A veces nos entra el pánico cuando todo parece ir mal. Sin embargo, con nuestra capacidad humana limitada de entender, sólo podemos ver una pequeña parte de la realidad. Dios ve el panorama general, a lo largo plazo, con una perspectiva eterna. Dios está a cargo, y él tiene nuestro mejor interés eterno en el fondo, más allá de los esplendores – o dificultades – pasajeros de este mundo.