A Blessed Advent, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the West Texas Angelus
West Texas Angelus

RENEW International, a Catholic not-for-profit organization based in Plainfield, N.J., began celebrating its 40th anniversary by honoring four bishops who have demonstrated their dedication to evangelization.

The Champions for Evangelization award was presented during a reception at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Fall General Assembly in November to Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, OFM, Cap, archbishop of Boston; Most Rev. Michael Pfeifer, OMI, bishop emeritus of San Angelo; and Most Rev. Michael Sis, bishop of San Angelo.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, offered an invocation before Joseph Cardinal Tobin, archbishop of Newark — RENEW’s home diocese — addressed the guests regarding his own experiences with the RENEW process when he was a pastor. Sister Terry Rickard, OP, president and executive director of RENEW, presented the awards to the four prelates who have partnered with RENEW in the work of evangelization, sponsoring RENEW small-group evangelization processes to deepen faith.

Cardinal O’Malley established the decade-long relationship between the Archdiocese of Boston and RENEW International. Boston was the first diocese to participate in ARISE Together in Christ/LEVÁNTATE. Unámonos en Cristo. The partnership was so successful that, once it completed the process, the dio-

Campus ministries see involvement on the upswing in Midland, Odessa

By Lisa Martinez
Campus Minister
Midland-Odessa

The UT-Permian Basin Catholic Student Association (CSA) recently participated in the university’s annual Halloween festival, a fundraiser for all student groups who apply to participate. Lorena Najera, CSA president and Marcos Aguilar, CSA vice-president, showed great leadership ability in organizing the booths. The CSA’s Cupcake Walk and Ghost Bowling were a hit with the various superheroes, princesses and skeletons who visited.

The Midland College CSA celebrated All Soul’s Day/Día de los Muertos by decorating and staffing a table in Amistad Atrium located in the Marie Hall Academic Building. Students were invited to light a candle in memory of a loved one, and to write that person’s name on a card. The cards were gathered in a basket and remembered at Mass in the campus Chapel. Msgr. Bridges celebrated Mass for All Saints Day, assisted by students and staff.

The All Saints Mass at UTPB drew a larger than usual crowd with more than 35 attending. Fr. Joe Uecker was the celebrant and left students and others with a memorable image of the saints cheering us on from the stands, as we on the field endeavor to become saints ourselves.

The first ever “Ram Awakening” was hosted by the Angelo State University Newman Center in San Angelo. The Awakening movement features retreats for college students on campuses throughout the nation. UTPB students were in attendance and blessed by the event!

“My favorite part of the retreat was to see our small groups called ‘families,’ actually become a family throughout the weekend,” Marcos Aguilar, CSA vice-president said. “There will always be a special connection with my first ‘Awakening’ family.”

Lisa Martinez is the campus minister at UT-Permian Basin, Midland College and Odessa College.

Pictured, left to right, are UT-Permian Basin students Marcos Aguilar, Lorena Najera, Klarisa Molina. This was taken at the Awakening retreat at Angelo State University in San Angelo. Related coverage Pgs. 12-13. (Courtesy photo)
from the bishop’s desk

**Avoid the low tide of mudslinging cynicism**

By Bishop Michael Sis
Diocese of San Angelo

Our nation is increasingly divided politically and culturally. This atmosphere can have a disturbing effect on our relationships in the family and in the parish. In a society where political discussions tend to operate in attack mode, it can be difficult to keep conversations from degenerating into bickering or name-calling.

Of course, we can never expect full agreement on every social issue among our family members or fellow parishioners. Each one of us has a unique personality and life history. Our world-view is shaped by our life experiences.

There are many vital social issues that are currently being debated in our country today. These are not trivial matters. However, sometimes the way we say something is more hurtful than the point we are trying to make. The manner in which we discuss social issues in the family or with fellow parishioners can contribute either to new insight or to alienation.

For example, if I am driven by my pride and the need to be right all the time, that can interfere with fruitful conversation. I will make a deeper impact by sincere, respectful dialogue than by antagonizing, throwing darts, or demonizing those who have differing views.

It is important to keep things in proper perspective. My relationship with this family member is more important than a political slogan. Political parties come and go, but they cannot take the place of our family or our fellow members of the Body of Christ. It is possible to love the person, despite the fact that we have differences of opinion.

It can be helpful to talk over the reasons behind our opinions, particularly by discussing how our own values and experiences have shaped our perspective. This includes a willingness to enter into dialogue without writing the other out of my life. We should try to understand what is going on in this person’s life — their concerns about society, their fears, their dreams, and what they would like to see happen in our world to make it a better place.

Over time, with God’s grace, these conversations can lead eventually to conversion. However, in the meantime, on some topics we may just have to agree to disagree.

Family life is a laboratory for learning how to love. It’s a gymnasium for the virtues. It is a place where we put Christian virtues into practice, by choosing the virtuous response in our interactions with family members. Over time, these virtues thereby become second nature to us, and our character improves.

As Catholics we acknowledge the serious problems in the world around us, but we do not allow the low tide of political mud-slinging to trap us in a swamp of cynicism. We know that God is more powerful than any politician or party. God is at work in history. Because God is at work, we have hope.

(See BISHOP/22)

**Cómo vivir en familia cuando la sociedad está dividida**

**Obispo Michael Sis**

Nuestra nación se divide cada vez más política y culturalmente. Este ambiente puede tener un efecto perturbador en nuestras relaciones en la familia y en la parroquia.

En una sociedad donde las discusiones políticas tienden a operar en el modo de ataque, puede ser difícil evitar que las conversaciones degeneren en disputas o insultos.

Por supuesto, no podemos esperar un acuerdo completo sobre todos los temas sociales entre los miembros de la familia y feligreses. Cada uno de nosotros tiene una personalidad e historia de vida única. Nuestra visión del mundo está influenciada por nuestras experiencias de vida.

Hay muchos problemas sociales vitales que se debatan actualmente en nuestro país hoy en día. Estos no son asuntos triviales. Sin embargo, a veces la manera en la cual decimos algo es más dañino que el punto que estamos tratando de hacer. La manera en que se discuten los problemas sociales en la familia o con otros feligreses puede contribuir ya sea a una nueva visión o a la alienación.

Por ejemplo, si me dejo llevar por mi orgullo y la necesidad de tener la razón todo el tiempo, eso puede interferir con una conversación fructífera. Haré un impacto más profundo con un diálogo sincero y respetuoso que con una actitud de antagonizar, lanzar dardos, o demonizar a aquellos que tienen puntos de vista diferentes.

Es importante mantener las cosas en la perspectiva correcta. Mi relación con este miembro de la familia es más importante que cualquier eslogan político. Los partidos políticos van y vienen, pero no pueden tomar el lugar de nuestra familia o nuestros compañeros miembros del cuerpo de Cristo. Es posible amar a la persona, en lugar del hecho de que tenemos diferencias de opinión.

Puede ser útil hablar sobre las razones detrás de nuestras opiniones, en particular al discutir cómo nuestros propios valores y experiencias han dado forma a nuestra perspectiva. Esto incluye una disposición a entrar en un diálogo sin sacar a la persona fuera de mi vida. Deberemos tratar de entender lo que está pasando en la vida de esta persona - sus preocupaciones acerca de la sociedad, sus miedos, sus sueños, y lo que les gustaría ver que suceda en nuestro mundo para que sea un lugar mejor.

Con el tiempo, con la gracia de Dios, estas conversaciones pueden conducir finalmente a la conversación. Sin embargo, mientras tanto, en algunos temas tendremos que aceptar estar sin acuerdo.

La vida familiar es un laboratorio para aprender a amar. Es un gimnasio para las virtudes. Es un lugar donde podemos poner en práctica las virtudes Cristianas, eligiendo la respuesta virtuosa en nuestras interacciones con los miembros de la familia. Con el tiempo, estas virtudes de ese modo se convierten en una segunda naturaleza para nosotros, y nuestro carácter mejora.

Como Católicos reconocemos la gravedad de los problemas en el mundo que nos rodea, pero no permitimos que la bajaras de los insultos políticos nos atasen en un pantano de cinismo. Sabemos que Dios es más poderoso que cualquier político o partido. Dios está trabajando en la historia. Y donde Dios está trabajando, hay esperanza.

Es por esto que, en la liturgia de la Iglesia en la Plegaria Eucarística II para la Reconciliación, oramos, “Con tu acción eficaz puedes con

(See BISHOP/22)
**Fishers of Men Award**

Msgr. Larry Droll, left, presents Glenn Hoelscher with the Fishers of Men Award at the 4th annual Guadalupe Radio Network's Fishers of Men Dinner, October 28, 2017, at the Petroleum Club in Midland. Hoelscher accepted the award, which was jointly given to Hoelscher and his wife, Anna, who could not attend because of illness. (Photo by Alan P. Torre/aaptorre.com).

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**December Liturgies Schedule**

As we make plans to participate in the liturgy of the Church at Christmas, we are in a unique situation this year. December 25 will be on a Monday. Christmas is always a holy day of obligation, so Catholics need to participate in Masses both for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and for Christmas.

The Church does not offer a “two-for-one” option on Sunday evening, December 24, which means that one cannot attend just one Mass on Sunday to fulfill both the Sunday obligation and the Christmas obligation.

All Masses on Saturday evening, December 23, and Sunday, December 24, any time before 4:00 p.m., will be for the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

On Sunday, December 24, any Masses at 4:00 p.m. or later will be for the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Eve) rather than for Sunday.

On the following weekend, the situation will be different. January 1 falls on a Monday this year. Since the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, takes place on a Monday, it is not a holy day of obligation in the U.S. in 2018. When an observance is not a holy day of obligation, there is no need for an anticipated Mass the evening before.

Therefore, on Saturday evening, Dec. 30, and all day on Sunday, Dec. 31, including the evening, all Masses will be for the Feast of the Holy Family. Masses celebrated any time on Monday, Jan. 1, will be for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Although it is not a holy day of obligation this year, Mass is always a spiritual benefit.

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**Pastoral Center new hours**

Effective Monday, December 4, 2017, office hours for the pastoral center will be 8:00 am-12:00 pm and 1:00-5:00 pm. The pastoral center will be closed for lunch from noon to 1:00 pm.

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**Victims Assistance Information**

If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you need a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church due to abuse, exploitation, or harassment, we are here to help you. To report sexual misconduct call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609, or write Diocese of San Angelo Victim Assistance Ministry, P.O. Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the sexual abuse occurred outside this diocese, the Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing the concern to the appropriate authorities.
Cooking for the Joy of Sport

The St. Stephen’s Knights of Columbus Council 12657 served 300 meals for athletes and volunteers at the Area 18 Special Olympics bowling tournament, Saturday, November 11, 2017, at Diamond Lanes in Odessa. Special Olympics’ mission is transforming lives through the joy of sport, every day, everywhere.

Clockwise from top photo: From left, Knights Omar Barnes, Sammy Gonzales and, far right, Sean Carroll with Midland Team coaches Gladys Qualls and with team members Teresa Palmer, and Omar Barnes’ daughter; Knights Ray LeBlanc, with cap, and John White; Grand Knight Austin Good with Knight Chad Wiesman, and above, Sean and Susan Carroll.
Books on women saints may bring them appreciation beyond church

By Graham Yearley
Catholic News Service

It's good to have new biographical works of two women saints: St. Clare of Assisi and St. Therese of Lisieux. Both are famous saints to Catholics, but there is limited knowledge of them outside the church. These publications may correct that.

Eight hundred years separate the lives of these two women. Clare lived in the 12th and 13th centuries and Therese in the 19th.

But both sought the religious life early, both had no interest in following the standard roles of women as wife and mother and both practiced forms of self-mortification and self-denial that make us uncomfortable to hear about in the 21st century. We no longer believe that extreme fasting and sleeping on beds of twigs makes us dearer to God.

Bret Thomas' "St. Clare of Assisi" is not a biography, as the author openly states in the preface. Some parts of St. Clare's life are well documented, but there are other parts where there is no record. Consequently, the author has imagined scenes and thoughts from her life, so "St. Clare of Assisi" bears greater resemblance to an historical novel than a biography. It is, nonetheless, a lively and informative read.

Clare, born into a wealthy noble family of Assisi's upper class, had an early sense that the life of an arranged marriage and child rearing was not for her. She got to know Francis, who became St. Francis, from an early age in Assisi. She was attracted to his preaching and dedication to a life of poverty that imitated the life of Christ. When she turned 18, she sold off her possessions and gave her inherited money to the poor.

On Palm Sunday in 1212, Clare escaped by night with the help of a sympathetic servant. Several miles from Assisi, she met up with Francis and some of his followers. That night she was given her tonsure by Francis, her hair was cut short and she was dressed in a rough woolen tunic. The rigors of poverty and sustained fasting undermined Clare's health and she would live for many years confined to her bed. Despite the toils she exacted on her body, Clare still lived over 60 years, a very advanced age in the 13th century.

August Pierre Laveille's "The Life of St. Therese of Lisieux" is a biography, but not a new one, as it was published originally in 1925. Laveille's work was commissioned by Therese's own sister Pauline, who also had been her prioress in the Carmelite order. Eventually, all four daughters of Louis and Zelie Martin would join the order.

One could say the four girls got their call to the religious life directly from their parents. Louis Martin had wanted to be monk; Zelie had wanted to become a saint. They lived as a married couple in harmonious celibacy. It was a priest who pointed out to them that bearing children was a natural and holy vocation, too. The couple would take that advice to heart and bear nine children, but only four survived to adulthood, all girls. Therese was the youngest.

The first great crisis was her mother's death when Therese was 4 and a half years old. From then on, Therese was raised by her sister Celine. Her second crisis came when Celine joined the Carmelites several years later.

Her sister's departure, however, only intensified Therese's desire for the religious life. At 15, she asked the prioress of the Carmelite convent in Lisieux if she could be allowed to enter and she was refused. She went to the local bishop and asked again and was refused again. Both wondered if the beautiful but delicate Therese could withstand the rigors of religious life.

After Therese eventually received permission to join the order, her joy was evident, but further trials would await her. Therese would be told that as she had two sisters who had taken their final vows, she would have to remain a novice, junior in both age and status.
To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three children in Fatima, Fr. Kumar Jujjuvarapu (bottom left in above photo), led parishioners from St. Isidore Mission in Coyanosa (above), Sacred Heart Church in McCamey (at right), Good Shepherd Church, in Crane, and Our Lady of Lourdes Church, in Imperial. All processions occurred in October 2017. (Courtesy photo)

Consider a gift that keeps on giving this year: a loving home for a foster child

By Jennifer Carr Allmon
Executive Director
Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops

Even after news reports of children sleeping on office floors, or worse, their tragic deaths, Texas' foster crisis continues. We need more foster parents ready to serve God's children who are caught in the state's beleaguered child welfare system. It would be so simple if Christians heard the Scripture's call to "let the children come unto me" and opened their homes to the thousands of children needing safe families. But fear and circumstance hinder many of us from answering this call.

During Advent, we wait for our Savior, while these precious children wait for their saviors every day of the year. The Scripture we read in Advent gives us a clear example to follow when we see a child in need of a parent and shows us what to do when we are paralyzed and can't respond.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us when Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he intended to divorce her quietly and leave the child fatherless. Despite being a righteous man, taking on the care of a child that was not "his" was more than he could bear. The angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream telling him, "Do not be afraid." Through Joseph's courage, he became our Lord's foster father; he became the protector of Jesus and Mary. Later, another angel tells Joseph, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Egypt." Through obedience to God, Joseph shielded our Lord and our Blessed Mother from Herod's wickedness.

As the foster children of Texas wait, we must have the courage to heed this same message: "Do not be afraid." Yes, the needs of these children are many, and you may not feel adequate. Let's be honest, you probably aren't. But your Church and your community has resources to help you. Like the magi who brought gifts to the Holy Family, ministries and non-profits stand ready to assist you in providing for the needs of these children. While we may not experience angelic dreams calling us to action, foster children in Texas need us to be attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit telling us to rise up and take care of these beloved children. Will you consider the call?

Jennifer Carr Allmon is executive director of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops (TCCB), the association of the Roman Catholic bishops of Texas which represents 15 dioceses and 19 active bishops. Through the TCCB, the bishops provide a moral and social public policy voice, accredit the state's Catholic schools, and maintain archives that reflect the work and the history of the Catholic Church in Texas.

Follow Joseph's example to become a foster parent

To find a local foster care provider near you, visit Texas Alliance of Children & Family Services at www.tacfs.org. Or, follow the Magi’s example and donate to the Rainbow Room (http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Rainbow_Rooms/), a resource center for children in foster care.
Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

On the fullness of time

By Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

St. Paul, writing about the birth of Christ, says "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (Gal. 4:4-7, NAB). The Catholic philosopher, Father James Schall, reflecting on this statement of the Apostle, says: "In some sense, the 'fullness of time' applies to each of us. We are, as Jeremiah already said, known in our mother's womb (1:5). There was only one brief, magic moment in which any particular person could have been conceived and subsequently born" (The Modern Age, 7).

In other words, the birth of Jesus in the fullness of time is meant to proclaim that each one of us has come in the fullness of God's time. It means that each of us is meant to be right here, right now. It means that all our ancestors right down to our mother and father all lived in God's fullness of time for them. This is so, because the love of God for each one of us is more powerful than any sin we or our ancestors can commit.

Each of us is the person God means to be right here, right now, not some person we may imagine ourselves to be or some person someone else wants us to be. Each of us is right here, right now, not to fulfill some other person's dreams for us—parents, teachers, coaches—or even our own dreams of who we wish we were.

We are right here, right now, to fulfill God's dreams for each of us. In God's good time, His dream for each of us will come true. This, in fact, is what heaven is all about. Heaven is where God's dream for each of us comes true. In this life we are moving from His dream for us to His reality, His dream come true for us. Each of us is becoming the person God always means us to be.

So, Jesus teaches us at Christmas what the fullness of time means, both for Him, who is Son of God and fully human, fully one of us, and what the fullness of time means for each of us. At Christmas we are called to receive Jesus in our lives by the Holy Spirit so that God the Father can continue to realize His dream for each of us in this world and in the world to come. And this world to come is so beautiful, so true, so good that it takes the breath away of our old selfish dreams, and Jesus' dream of us, for us, in us is made fully real, fully alive, as we come to the (Please See KNICKERBOCKERS/21)

Speaking of Saints

17th century priest saw to it children in his parish received free educations

By Mary Lou Gibson

Some of the things we take for granted in our classrooms like blackboards, group instruction, and different reading levels for students according to their abilities were innovative educational tools in some French schools in the early 17th century. They were among some of the new teaching methods that Peter Fourier, a French priest and theology professor, introduced in his parish's schools. He had previously worked to reform the observance of the monastery of Chaumousey where he was the procurator.

His focus turned to education after he accepted an appointment in 1597 to one of France's most neglected parishes—Mattaincourt in Lorraine. This was a remote mountainous area and Peter had to travel on foot to visit villages and often slept on bare floors. He saw that the main reason for a lax religious life among the people was the lack of a sound and broad religious education.

Paul Burns writes in Butler's Lives of the Saints that a free education of children became Peter's main priority.

He first focused on educating the boys, but editor Michael Walsh writes in Butler's Lives of the Saints, that the time was not yet right for that project. He then turned his attention to the girls of the parish and recruited four women, including Blessed Alix Le Clercq, and put them in charge of a free school for girls. This group evolved into a religious institute of nuns under the title of Canonesjes Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady. Vocations increased and the Institute received papal approval in 1616.

His schools became models for their time. Peter required that the older girls be taught how to draw up invoices and receipts. Walsh writes that he also encouraged practice in composition and writing letters and that the girls should be able to speak correctly. Editor Bernard Langley writes in Butler's Lives of the Saints that Peter had a very good memory and was reputed to know by heart all of Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas.

He believed that everyone should be educated in the love of God and in everything that would help them live with decency and dignity. To improve the financial lives of his people, he set up a community bank from which the townspeople could borrow without interest.

His success in the work of religious renewal in his parishes brought him an appointment from the Bishop of Toul in 1622 to re-establish discipline in the canons regular of Lorraine. The Rev. Clifford Stevens writes in The One Year Book of Saints that Peter was opposed by the canons themselves, but he eventually succeeded in establishing regular discipline. In 1632, he was elected superior of the reformed congregations.

Peter had hoped that his reformed canons would take up the work of educating boys which he had failed to establish in Mattaincourt. They sent representatives to Rome in 1627 hoping to get recognition of the Congregation of Our Savior, but they were refused. Instead they undertook other kinds of educational work including operating the Jesuit colleges in Lorraine when the Jesuits were suppressed. Burns writes that like so many religious foundations, it did not survive the French Revolution.

Peter remained loyal to the dukes of Lorraine, his birthplace, and when the duchy was incorporated into France in 1636, he refused to take an oath of allegiance to King Louis XIII. He fled to Franche-Comté where he spent the last years of his life. He died on December 9, 1640 and was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1897. His shrine at Mattaincourt is the site of many pilgrimages today.

Mary Lou Gibson writes about the saints for the West Texas Angelus from her home in Austin.
Construction progress at The Way Retreat Center continues to make steady progress. Photos from early December show, top photo, the facility from a berm immediately west of the hacienda. Above right, the retreat center's bell tower. At right, the chapel, and above, the porte-cochere and main entrance.

The facility is targeted for an opening date of Spring 2018.

(Photos by Jimmy Patterson)
Holy is His Name

Above photo, youths from Midland, Odessa, Colorado City, Crane, Andrews and Merkel descended on St. Mary's in Odessa on Sunday, November 5, 2017, for the junior high youth event, “Holy Is His Name. At left, San Angelo Bishop Michael Sis talks to the assembled youth. (Photos by Alan Torre / aptorre.com).

Retiro Cristo Misionero

Hispanic parishioners convened at the Far West Event Center in West Odessa, Saturday, November 4 for “Retiro Cristo Misionero,” an evangelization event presided over by San Angelo Bishop Michael J. Sis (photo at right).
Bishops take on immigration, racism at assembly

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE — At the start of their annual fall assembly in Baltimore Nov. 13, U.S. Catholic bishops faced some big issues — immigration and racism — straight on and zeroed in on how to raise the national level of discussion on these topics starting in the church pews.

They acknowledged the current polarization in the country and divides within the Catholic Church and stressed their responsibility as church leaders to promote immigration reform, educate parishioners on justice issues and listen to those affected by "sins of racism."

On immigration, Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, who is chairman of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said there needs to be a "path to legalization and citizenship for the millions of our unauthorized brothers and sisters who are law-abiding, tax-paying and contributing to our society."

The bishops responded with applause and an agreement by voice vote to issue a statement calling for comprehensive immigration reform.

The bishops were keenly aware that their defense of immigrants was not necessarily the view of the U.S. church at large. For example, Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich spoke of dangers of Catholics falling prey to and believing "poisoning rhetoric" about immigrants that demonizes them.

"There's something wrong in our churches, where the Gospel is proclaimed, and yet people leave our worship services, our Masses on weekends, with that rhetoric still echoing in their hearts," he said.

Several bishops also brought up the notion of prudential judgment — referring to the view Catholics could take on immigration that differs from the bishops — since it is not a specific matter of church teaching.

The bishops who spoke on the floor didn't buy that argument and said Catholics can't use it to push aside the need to care for immigrants. Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco took this a step further saying prudential judgment can't be "taken lightly" on a "justice issue like immigration."

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami said the bishops' defense of immigrants, as brothers and sisters, not problems, is not only right for immigrants but "for our society as a whole."

"We can make America great, but you don't make America great by making America mean," he added, referring to a slogan of President Donald Trump without naming him.

On racism, Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, head of the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, said the church must recognize "and frankly acknowledge" its failings. He said the issue has found a "troubling resurgence" in recent years, referring particularly to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, this year where he said racial hatred was "on full display."

"Racism isn't going to be conquered by speech but by actions," said Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, adding that this was a watershed moment where the church could play a leadership role.

He spoke about discussions happening at diocesan and parish levels, and several bishops commented about them as well noting that these discussions are not easy, but so necessary to bring about healing.

Other key issues of the day where church leaders are responding include health care, taxes and abortion, mentioned by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston in his first address as USCCB president. He took office at the close of last year's fall assembly.

"We are facing a time that seems more divided than ever," Cardinal DiNardo said. "Divisions over health care, conscience protections, immigration and refugees, abortion, physician-assisted suicide, gender ideologies, the meaning of marriage and all the other headlines continue to be hotly debated. But our role continues to be witnessing the Gospel."

He explained that the National Catholic War Council, created by the U.S. bishops in 1917 in response to the world refugee crisis that emerged from World War I and the forerunner to the USCCB, was formed to address great national and international needs at a time not unlike today.

The cardinal emphasized other modern challenges such as recent natural disasters and mass shootings.

But the problems of the day should not overwhelm church leaders who should recognize signs of new hope in the church, mentioned by the papal nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who addressed the bishops at the start of the meeting and encouraged them to make time for prayer amid "burdens of the office."

He told them to be adventurous in the "new frontier of faith" and to make a strong effort to accompany young people who often question their faith.

The bishops also heard from the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at a Nov. 12 Mass where he was the main celebrant and the homilist, and at a dinner celebrating the USCCB's 100th anniversary.

The cardinal told the U.S. bishops that the church needs them today to "bring not only material assistance but also the spiritual balm of healing, comfort and hope to new waves of migrants and refugees who come knocking on America's door."

He also urged them to follow the pope's call to accompany the modern church.

Prior to the Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a few protesters held placards or placed them on the sidewalk, calling on the U.S. bishops to embrace pacifism.

Also in the lobby of the hotel where the bishops were meeting, a protester sought dialogue with church leaders to urge them to offer sanctuary to immigrants facing deportation, and another voiced displeasure with church leaders he said support war.

The second public day of meetings did not tackle major societal issues but examined ways the bishops can continue to uphold the Catholic faith from specific wording in the baptismal rite, a review of catechetical materials and a pastoral plan for marriage and family life that will give Catholic couples and families resources to enable them to live out their vocation.

They also voted to move forward the sainthood cause of Nicholas W. Black Elk, a 19th-century Lakota catechist who is said to have introduced hundreds of
Ram Awakening comes to Angelo State

By Nathan Castro
Student Vice President
Angelo State University

November 10-12 was a weekend of many firsts. I had never been to a full-fledged retreat despite the many that have taken place around me in my time. Naturally, the impact of such retreats was unknown to me. I had heard a lot of hype and desire to bring the Awakening retreat to Angelo State University since Father Francis arrived in San Angelo in the summer of 2016. I didn’t commit to going on this retreat until a week before the first Ram Awakening was finally planned out and in full swing to take place. Very uncharacteristically, not much thought had gone into what my experience would be like and what I would get out of it. In contrast, I could see that a lot of thought, dedication, and work were being poured out by the retreat staff in preparing the whole event. Most of the staff were fellow students of ASU and the Catholic Newman Center. An inherent aspect of the Awakening retreat is that it is a weekend-long retreat for college students, given by college students. This effort would develop into a large reason that the retreat was so impactful to me as I began to witness all of the treasures unfold throughout the weekend.

The biggest challenge in describing what I gained from Ram Awakening is expressing the sheer volume and doing all of the precious details justice without revealing any of the surprises that are meant to preserve the experience. All of the behind-the-scenes work and eventual revelations that I am ambiguously referencing led to one of the most touching pieces of the retreat that occurred to me — that is serving others. As each new development was revealed to retreaters, we felt a more and more overwhelming sense of being cared for. With each surprise, I remember thinking, “They’ve done so much work! They’ve been so disciplined in keeping these surprises! They’ve been working really hard, and they must be this committed because they believe in what this experience can offer, and they care about all of us so much that they want to give us that experience. They want to serve us, their fellow brothers and sisters, in a very committed, humble fashion.” And they did; they were serving us all weekend long in very Christ-like fashion. Every minute of labor and stress was endured by the amazing team so as to give love and substance to each and every retreatee.

This was an amazing, profound gift that was built into the very nature of the retreat. Many staffers were already friends and fellow classmates of mine at ASU, and I was very impressed and proud to see what they are capable of. Also, many of the staffers were complete strangers from other universities out of town. To think that strangers would display such compassion and care for so many people that they didn’t even know truly highlighted the presence of the very essence of Christianity — communion and fellowship.

Prayer was another heavy theme throughout the weekend. I was able to begin a re-emphasis on the power and mystery of prayer. I began to wonder how much of my life has been affected by prayer, how many graces I have received or profound thoughts I have experienced because of prayers from loved ones, strangers, and saints in...
US, Mexico bishops renew Alta-Baja friendship

SAN DIEGO (CNS) -- Three archbishops and nine bishops representing at least 13 million Catholics from Sacramento to the Mexican coastal city of Ensenada have resurrected their "Alta-Baja" friendship, paving the way to potentially working together in the future.

Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez and Archbishop Francisco Moreno Barron of Tijuana, Mexico, had worked with their respective episcopal organizations for more than a year to coordinate a meeting of the two sides.

Their efforts culminated in an "Encuentro de los Obispos de Alta y Baja California" held recently in the San Diego Diocese.

The California Conference of Catholic Bishops organized the participants north of the border, which included San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone and seven bishops.

The conference's president, Sacramento Bishop Jaime Soto, chaired the meeting, and its vice president, San Diego Bishop Robert W. McElroy, hosted the Oct. 30 event, which ended with a dinner.

The Tijuana Archdiocese coordinated the participation of its retired archbishop and the bishops of Ensenada and Mexicali.

The purpose of the six-hour meeting was for the leaders from one side of the border to meet their counterparts from the other, and see where the conversation took them. The bishops spoke candidly, often one elaborating on a point raised by one of their colleagues.

They shared what was occurring in their individual dioceses regarding issues of common interest, such as immigration; the North American Free Trade Agreement, known as NAFTA; and "Laudato Si!," Pope Francis' call to protect the environment.

Regarding immigration, the California bishops described how the Trump administration's executive orders related to immigration had sowed fear in their dioceses as deportations increased.

For their part, the Baja California bishops said the deported migrants face bleak conditions in their communities, which lacked the resources to assist them.

By the end, the bishops committed to meeting next October, this time in Baja California, to explore ways they could work together to strengthen each other's ministry.

"This was the resurrection of Alta-Baja," said Archbishop Gomez, referring to the name of the group of bishops from both sides of the California-Mexico border that had met regularly until the early 2000s.

"Aztâ," which means "higher" in Spanish, and "Baja" California, or "lower," were once one territory. In the 19th century, the vast area was governed first by Spain and then by Mexico. Alta California became part of the United States in the Treaty of Hidalgo of 1848, which ended the Mexican-American War.

Archbishop Gomez noted that when Pope Francis visited Mexico last year, he urged the bishops there to step up their coordination with their U.S. counterparts, given that so many Latino Catholics live north of the border.

"I think it's important to find new ways to help our people to grow in their spirituality and to grow in their missionary spirit," Archbishop Gomez said.

Tijuana's Archbishop Moreno Barron said the most important outcome of the gathering was the opportunity to meet each other -- and to build from there.

"More than the words we exchanged were the attitudes we shared," he said.

"We did not know each other but we saw each other as brothers in faith."

At the meeting, the Tijuana archbishop said he had recently attended a meeting of a group of bishops from the Texas-Mexico border, known as Tex-Mex. He expressed the hope that a bishop from that organization could join next year's meeting of the Alta-Baja bishops.

Archbishop Gomez participated in Tex-Mex during the five years he served in San Antonio. He's familiar with the benefits and challenges of working on cross-border projects.

Strong net neutrality protections called critical to faith community

WASHINGTON -- The chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Communications has urged the Trump administration to keep current net neutrality rules in place because an open internet, he said, is critical to the nation's faith communities and how they interact with their members.

"Without open internet principles which protect paid prioritization, we might be forced to pay fees to ensure that our high-bandwidth content receives fair treatment on the internet," said Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of Burlington, Vermont.

"Nonprofit communities, both religious and secular, cannot afford to pay to compete with profitable commercialized content," he said in a Nov. 28 statement.

"The concept of an open internet has long been called "net neutrality," in which internet service providers neither favor nor discriminate against internet users or websites. Neutrality means, for example, providers cannot prioritize one type of content over another, nor can they speed up, slow down or block users access to online content and services."

On Nov. 21, the current chairman of the Federal Communications Commission announced his proposal to roll back rules on neutrality put in place in 2015 by the Obama administration.

Bishop Coyne urged that the current rules remain in place. "Strong net neutrality protections are critical to the faith community to function and connect with our members," he said.

These protections "are essential to protect and enhance the ability of vulnerable communities to use advanced technology, and necessary for any organization that seeks to organize, advocate for justice or bear witness in the crowded and over-commercialized media environment," Bishop Coyne said.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said in a statement that under his plan, "the federal government will stop micromanaging the internet. Instead, the FCC would simply require internet service providers to be transparent about their practices."

Bishop Coyne said: "Robust internet protections are vital to enable our archdioceses, dioceses and eparchies, our parishes, schools and other institutions to communicate with each other and our members, to share religious and spiritual teachings, to promote activities online, and to engage people -- particularly younger persons -- in our ministries."

The FCC is scheduled to vote on Pai's proposal at its monthly hearing Dec. 14. Observers predict the vote will fall along party lines. Chairman Pai is Republican as are Commissioners Brendan Carr and Michael O'Rielly. Commissioners Mignon Clyburn and Jessica Rosenworcel are Democrats.
Vatican II continues to shape church, Pope Francis’ legacy

WASHINGTON — The Second Vatican Council continues to have an enduring impact on the Catholic Church and on the papacy of Pope Francis, according to the Vatican’s top diplomat, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

That gathering of bishops from around the world presented a new paradigm of a "world church — a church with a global dimension," said the cardinal, who is the Vatican’s secretary of state.

During a mid-November visit to the United States that included celebrating a Mass in Baltimore to mark the centenary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Parolin stopped in Washington to deliver an address at The Catholic University of America.

He spoke on the topic "The Council: A Prophecy That Continues With Pope Francis." Afterward, he received a received an honorary doctorate in theology from the university.

In his Nov. 14 talk, he said that although Vatican II occurred more than 50 years ago (1962-65), "it certainly retains for the church a prophetic character."

Cardinal Parolin said the main consequences of the council included the introduction of local languages in the liturgy, and a "new awareness of a church that is historically realized in more diverse cultural contexts."

Noting themes that have been stressed by Pope Francis, the cardinal said Vatican II sowed seeds of synodality and paved the way for "a church that lives in a conciliar way" with collaborative and consultative efforts underway at every level of the church. "No more parishes or dioceses without pastoral councils, no more countries without episcopal conferences," he said.

That process, he added, has proven to be irreversible. "In the end, is this not the most beautiful inheritance that the council could have prepared for us?" he asked.

Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, Catholic University's chancellor, offered an invocation and then introduced Cardinal Parolin. He noted the prelate is known as an expert in Middle East affairs who was responsible for efforts bringing Israelis and Palestinians together for peace talks. In Asia, Cardinal Parolin also was instrumental in efforts to build up ties between the Vatican and Vietnam, Cardinal Wuerl said.

"In this whole process, Cardinal Parolin has always been able to put the face of the church and the face of Christ's love into diplomatic action," Cardinal Wuerl said.

Cardinal Parolin spoke to the Catholic University audience in Italian, while a translation in English appeared on video screens via closed captioning. Those in attendance included university administrators, faculty members and students. Guests included Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

In his remarks, Cardinal Parolin underscored the importance of four key Vatican II documents: "Sacrosanctum Concilium," the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963); "Lumen Gentium," the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964); "Dei Verbum," the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965); and "Gaudium et Spes," the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (1965).

The cardinal noted that from the council's conclusion and then throughout his pontificate, Blessed Paul VI "dedicated himself to focusing on the inheritance of the council, to illustrate the richness of the teachings," using the "image of a river which flows nourishing itself from its source," reaching generation to generation, in "new lands and new situations."

Quoting Pope Francis' 2013 interview with La Civilta Cattolica, the Jesuit Italian-language magazine, the cardinal pointed out that the pope said: "Vatican II was a re-reading of the Gospel in light of contemporary culture. Vatican II produced a renewal movement that simply comes from the same Gospel. Its fruits are enormous."

The image of the people of God in "Lumen Gentium," the cardinal added, shaped the themes that Pope Francis emphasized in his 2013 apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" ("The Joy of the Gospel").

In that document, the pontiff pointed out how the faith unfolds in people's daily lives around the world and is shared in their own languages and cultures as they carry out the work of the new evangelization as missionary disciples in today's world.

Pope Francis, the cardinal added, also has emphasized the dignity of the laity and warned against clericalism, drawing attention to "the process of the transformation of a church that passed from total concentration of every active function in the hands of the clergy, to a recognition of the right and duty of the lay faithful to participate in the life and mission of the church."

Jesus maps the path to peace, reconciliation, pope says

YANGON, Myanmar (CNS) — Jesus' love "is like a spiritual GPS" that guides people past the everyday obstacles of fear and pride and allows them to find their way to a relationship with God and with their neighbors, Pope Francis said.

Christ's message of "forgiveness and mercy uses a logic that not all will want to understand, and which will encounter obstacles. Yet his love, revealed on the cross is ultimately unstoppable," the pope said in his homily. "The temptation is to respond to these injuries with a worldly wisdom" or to think that "healing can come from anger and revenge. Yet the way of revenge is not the way of Jesus."

Pope Francis prayed that Catholics in Myanmar would "know the healing balm of the Father's mercy and find the strength to bring it to others, to anoint every hurt and every painful memory. In this way, you will be faithful witnesses of the reconciliation and peace that God wants to reign in every human heart and in every community."

Father Francis Saw from St. John Cantonment Church in Yangon said he had 400 guests at his parish. "Many people came from the hill towns. I welcomed them and fed them and then they came here at 10 p.m." the night before the Mass.

"We are very happy and encouraged by the pope’s visit," he said. "It is good for our country and for our church."

Some people had reserved seats close to the altar. "Every parish got some VIP tickets for those who are very involved in the parish, very poor or sick," said Noeli Anthony, a ticket-holder from the Myanmar Catholic community in Perth, Australia.

Salesian Father Albert "Sam" Saminedi, pastor of the Perth community, said the immigrants he ministers to "love their country and are very strong, very loud and full of faith." More than 100 of them traveled home to be with the pope.

The "VVIP" section at the sports field was reserved for government officials, diplomats and representatives of other Christian communities and other religions.

The Rev. U Chit Toe Win, chair of the Myin Thar Baptist Church and deputy chairman of an interfaith dialogue group in Yangon, sat with the Anglican, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim members of his group in the very front row.

Like any Baptist minister, Toe Win said, "I believe in Jesus first," but these are my brothers. We are for unity."
Catholic Voices

True measure of our decency? How we treat the poor

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Jesus tells us that in the end we will be judged on how we dealt with the poor in our lives, but there are already dangers now, in this life, in not reaching out to the poor.

Here’s how Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy, teases out that danger: “I’ve come to believe that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned. We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us petty, vindictive, and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we condemn others.”

What needs to be highlighted here is what we do to ourselves when we don’t reach out in compassion to the poor. We corrupt our own decency. As Stevenson puts it: An absence of compassion corrupts our decency – as a state, as a church, as family, and as individuals. How so?

St. Augustine teaches that we can never be morally neutral, either we are growing in virtue or falling into vice. We never have the luxury of simply being in some neutral, holding state. There’s no moral neutrality. Either we are growing in virtue or sliding into virtue’s opposite. That’s true for all of life. A thing is either growing or it’s regressing.

So too with our attitude towards justice and the poor: Either we are actively reaching out to the poor and being more drawn into concern for them or we are unconsciously hardening our hearts against them and unknowingly sliding into attitudes that trivialize their issues and distance ourselves from them. If we are not actively advocating for justice and the poor, it is inevitable that at a point we will, with completely sincere hearts, downplay the issues of poverty, racism, inequality, and injustice.

It’s interesting to note that the famous text on the final judgment in the Gospel where Jesus describes how God will divide the sheep from the goats on the basis of how they treated the poor, neither group, those who did it correctly and those who didn’t, actually knew what they were doing. The group who did it right state that they didn’t know that in touching the poor they were touching Christ; and the group who got it wrong protested that had they known they were dealing with Christ in the poor, they would have reached out. Jesus assures us that it doesn’t matter. Mature discipleship lies simply in the doing, irrespective of our conscious attitude.

And so we need to be alert not just to our conscious attitudes but to what we are actually doing. We can, in all sincerity, in all good conscience, in all good heart, be blind towards the poor. We can be moral men and women, pious church-goers, generous donors to those who ask help from us, warm to our own families and friends, and yet, blind to ourselves, though not to the poor, be unhealthy elitist, subtle racists, callous towards the environment, and protective of our own privilege. We are still good persons no doubt, but the absence of compassion in one area of our lives leaves us limping morally.

We can be good persons and yet fall into a certain hardness of heart because of kindred, ideological circles that falsely affirm the received values of friends, either we are talking about ways that we can more effectively lessen the gaps between rich and poor or we are talking, however unconsciously, about the need to defend the gaps that presently exist. One kind of conversation is stretching our hearts; the other is narrowing them. Lack of compassion for justice and the poor will inevitably work at turning a generous heart into a defensive one.

We all have friends who admire us and soil us. Heals that we are good, big-hearted, virtuous persons. And no doubt this is substantially true. But the affirmation we receive from our own kind can be a false mirror. A truer mirror is how those who are politically, racially, religiously, and temperamentally different from ourselves assess us. How do the poor feel about us? How do refugees assess our goodness? How do other races rate our compassion?

And what about the mirror that Jesus holds up for us when he tells us that our goodness will be judged by how we treat the poor and that the litmus test of goodness consists is how well we love our enemies?

An absence of compassion in even one area subtly corrupts the decency of a community, a state, a nation, and that eventually turns our generosity into defensiveness.

By Most Rev. Robert Barron

Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles

Jean Twenge’s book iGen is one of the most fascinating—and depressing—texts I’ve read in the past decade. A professor of psychology at San Diego State University, Dr. Twenge has been, for years, studying trends among young Americans, and her most recent book focuses on the generation born between 1995 and 2012. Since this is the first cohort of young people who have never known a world without iPads and iPhones, and since these devices have remarkably shaped their consciousness and behavior, Twenge naturally enough has dubbed them the “iGen.”

One of her many eye-opening findings is that iGen’ers are growing up much more slowly than their predecessors. A baby—someone who recently got his driver’s license on his sixteenth birthday (I did); but an iGen’er is far more willing to postpone that decision until his sixteenth birthday (I did); but an iGen’er is far more willing to postpone that decision until his eighteenth or nineteenth year. Whereas previous generations were eager to get out of the house and find their own way, iGen’ers seem to like to stay at home with their parents and have a certain aversion to “adulting.” And Twenge argues that smartphones have

Undeniably turned this new generation in on itself. A remarkable number of iGen’ers would rather go out with them and would rather watch videos at home than go to a theater with others. One of the upshots of this screen-induced introversion is a lack of social skills and another is depression.

Now there are many more insights that Dr. Twenge shares, but I was particularly interested, for obvious reasons, in her chapter on religious attitudes and behaviors among iGen’ers. In line with many other researchers, Twenge shows that the objective statistics in this area are alarming. As recently as the 1980s, 90% of high school seniors identified with a religious group. Among iGen’ers, the figures are now around 65% and falling. And religious practice is even more attenuated: only 28% of twelfth graders attended services in 2015, whereas the number was 40% in 1976. For decades, sociologists of religion have been arguing that, though explicit affiliation with religious institutions was on the decline, especially among the young, most people remained “spiritual,” that is, to say convinced of certain fundamental religious beliefs. I remember many conversations with my friend Fr. Andrew Greeley along these lines.

But Twenge indicates that this is no longer true. Whereas even twenty years ago, the overwhelming number of Americans, including young adults, believed in God, now fully one third of 18 to 24 year olds say that they don’t believe. As late as 2004, 84% of young adults said they regularly prayed; by 2016, fully one fourth of that same age cohort said that they never pray. We find a similar decline in regard to acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God: one fourth of iGen’ers say that the Scriptures are a compilation of “ancient fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men.” Her dispiriting conclusion: “The waning of private religious belief means that young generations’ disassociation from religion is not just about their distrust of institutions; more are disconnecting from religion entirely, even at home and even in their hearts.”

Now what are some of the reasons for this disconnect? One, Twenge argues, is the growing preoccupation with individual choice. From their earliest years, iGen’ers have been encouraged, by practically every song, video, and movie, to believe in themselves and perform a great service to all those interested in a scientific view of the world. One young man that Twenge interviewed is typical: “Religion, at least to people my age, seems like it’s something of the past. It seems like something that isn’t modern.” Another said, “I knew from church that I couldn’t believe in both science and God, so that was it. I didn’t believe in God anymore.” And a third—also attested to in lots of studies—is the “antigay attitudes” supposedly endemic to Biblical Christianity. One of Twenge’s interviewees put it with admirable succinctness: “I’m questioning the existence of God. I stopped going to church because I’m gay and was part of a gay-bashing religion.” One survey stated the statistical truth bluntly enough: 44% of 18-24 year olds believed that Christianity is antigay, and for good measure, 58% of those iGen’ers thought the Christian religion is hypocrisy.

Dismal stuff, I know. But Dr. Twenge performs a great service to all those interested in the flourishing of religion, for she lays out the objectives unblinkingly, that is to say, this is all to the good, given our extraordinary capacity for wishful thinking and self-deception. Further, though she doesn’t tell religious educators and catechists how to respond, she unambiguously indicates what is leading this most unreligious generation in our history away from the churches. Her book should be required reading for those who wish to evangelize the next generation.
Catholicism rarely without debate: A tale of two popes

By Greg Erlsandor
Catholic News Service

There’s a quote attributed, probably falsely, to Mark Twain that observes, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.”

I suppose it is a sign that I’m getting older, because I’m starting to hear the rhymes in a lot of the current debates in the church about papal leadership.

Almost 40 years ago, a Polish pope, a man from a far country, came to Rome with a new vigor and a new attitude. He not only told us not to be afraid, he energized us with his vitality and willingness to take on big challenges facing the church. I was one of many attracted to his self-assured vision of what some called a “Catholic restoration.”

He challenged the politically powerful in the East and helped to topple governments. He shook his finger at political clerics he judged disobedient. He was not afraid to discipline theologians. He appointed new bishops and called synods to address the major issues of the day, invariably pleasing some and outraging others.

Not everyone embraced him. Some said he was too Polish, too much a product of the church-state conflicts of his communist homeland, with an insensitivity that was insensitive to Western democracies. Others said he was busy appointing bishops in his own image, and they worried that the church would be irreversibly locked into what they saw as an anti-modern agenda.

Some claimed he had abandoned the Second Vatican Council, at least as they understood it. When critics challenged him in public forums, his defenders fought back. They talked about papal authority and the deference all Catholics owed the supreme pontiff and suggested his critics were disloyal and dissenters.

Fast-forward a few decades, and I start to hear the rhyme. We have another pope from a far country. Argentina. He was not a young man when he was elected, but he riveted the world with his humility, with his willingness to eschew the trappings of the office, to reach out to the poor, the disfigured, the marginalized.

He emphasizes the joy of the Christian life, and rallied against sourpuss Pharisees. His use of concrete images to describe a pastoral reality has been electrifying: the shepherd who smells like the sheep, the church as field hospital.

People are drawn to his emphasis on joy and mercy, but his emphasis on pastoral concerns, while pleasing to some, worries others. He has challenged powerful forces in the church by reorganizing the Vatican, or trying to, and by appointing new bishops who are often in his mold.

He has called the synods to talk about the crisis of the family and about youth. He also has challenged the politically powerful. He has shaken his finger at Catholics who seem more interested in political influence than in helping those on the periphery.

Not everyone has embraced him. Some say he doesn’t understand the United States, that he has a Latin American bias. Others worry that he is embracing the heresies of modernity, or undermining doctrinal teaching. His defenders fight back, asking that there be more deference to papal authority, that he has the right to pursue his vision of a truly Vatican II church, and that those who attack him in public forums are disloyal and even dissenters.

Catholicism has never been without theological debate, and these debates rarely spare even popes. Those quick to criticize papal authority and decisions 30 years ago have changed places with those who criticize now. The rhyme may not be perfect, but a bit of humility would seem to be in order lest our own hypocrisy give greater scandal than that which we claim to protest.

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Agoraphobia and Mass attendance: Is sign of peace required?

By Fr. Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. Togetherness seems to have become such an integral part of Catholicism, and extroverts tend to look disdainfully at those who prefer to sit at the end of the pew, are shy about grasping hands, shudder at the thought of being hugged or have difficulty with extemporaneous small talk. For me, being squashed in the center of a pew is agonizing, and there is no way I can focus on the Mass in that situation.

About once every two or three months, I feel compelled to go into our parish’s adoration chapel during Mass and follow the prayers and readings from there -- or I find it necessary to stay at home and follow the Sunday Mass on television from my den. If that counts as missing Mass, there’s just nothing that I can do about it.

Agoraphobia is no joke, and even those of us with milder forms suffer greatly. But I believe that we are also loved by God. (Nokesville, Virginia)

A. No, your behavior does not count as missing Mass. And yes, you are surely loved by God. Agoraphobia is a very real disease, affecting as many as 1.9 million U.S. adults at some level in a 12-month period. It is characterized by significant anxiety in places where crowds gather, especially in situations where one might feel trapped and unable to escape.

This disease can justify one’s absence from Mass as certainly as would a high fever or a contagious cold. If it is more comfortable for you to pray in a side chapel, by all means do that. (Perhaps you might want to mention your situation to your pastor to help him to understand, and you might benefit by his words of approval.)

Or, if sometimes you find it necessary simply to stay at home and pray, do that. I credit you for your desire to share in the Eucharist to the extent you are able.

Your letter serves, too, as a reminder to us all to forgo judging the behavior of others -- those, for example, who insist on sitting at the end of a nearly vacant pew or those who choose to stand in the back of the church. They could well be suffering from the same sensibilities you have described.

Q. I have been attending one Catholic parish in my hometown for several years now. As far as I know, this is the only Catholic church where parishioners do not shake hands at the sign of peace. I can understand churchgoers declining to shake hands if they have a cold or other ailment -- or at times of widespread sickness.

However, at this particular parish, the congregation will not even turn around and greet others -- let alone, shake hands. It is not really a big deal for me, but I do find it a little odd. Is there an explanation for this, or are parishes simply not required to follow the practice of shaking hands? (Portland, Oregon)

A. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal in section No. 82 indicates that the rite of peace should be a regular part of the liturgy in which “the faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity” before receiving the Eucharist. As to the actual gesture to be used, the general instruction leaves that up to the bishops’ conference, to be determined in accord with local culture and customs.

For the United States, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has noted that this would typically be done by shaking hands. So while this ritual can be eliminated in particular circumstances -- a flu epidemic, for example -- it should not be skipped regularly.

In 2014, the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments reminded Catholics that a certain restraint should mark the ritual so as not to distract from receiving Communion, that the gesture of peace should be extended by the faithful only to those nearest them and that such abuses as “the movement of the faithful from their places” should be avoided.

Q. A friend told me recently that the cause of Father Patrick Peyton had been sent to the Vatican for sainthood. Do you know how it stands and when he might be declared a saint? (I hope and pray that it will be in my lifetime.) Also, what are the stages for someone to be declared a saint? (Albany, New York)

A. Father Peyton, hailed throughout the world as the “Rosary Priest,” died in 1992 at age 83. He promoted family prayer and coined the oft-heard slogan, “The family that prays together stays together.” He organized rosary crusades in 40 nations that drew 28 million people and was a pioneer in using modern media to advance religious values, producing 600 radio and television programs using Hollywood stars and other celebrities.

There is no way to forecast exactly when his canonization might take place, but I, too, would feel a personal thrill in witnessing it. I was honored when Father Peyton invited me to write the foreword for one of his final books; and once, when he was then in his late 70s and in failing health, I ran into him in Rome. He asked about my mother, whom he had known when he first began the Family Rosary organization in the 1940s. I told him that she was, in fact, visiting me that very week in Rome. Though I pleaded with him not to, he insisted on climbing the steep set of stairs to my apartment to see my mother and give her a blessing. I will always remember “Father Pat” not only as a very holy man, but a kind man as well.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.
Speaking about racial issues to Hispanic children

By Hoffsman Osphino
Catholic News Service

My 6-year-old son came home after school and unexpectedly asked my wife and me: “What am I?” The question caught us off guard. “What do you mean,” we replied. He said, “Am I Mexican? Are people who speak Spanish Mexican?”

We explained that he and his sister are “estadounidenses,” the demonym in Spanish for people born in the United States. In other words, they are American. We also explained that people that Mexican roots who live in the United States are also known as Latinos or Hispanics.

Likewise, people born with roots in other parts of Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, like in my case, born in Colombia, and my wife, born in Guatemala, are Hispanic. We have lived most of our lives in this country. We are committed to its best values and contribute with the best of who we are. We are also “estadounidenses.”

Staring as if something was still bothering him, he asked, “Why are Mexicans taking over the country?” Then he added, “Are we taking over the country.”

I asked, “You may have heard that” He said, “My friends say that Mexicans are taking over the country. They said that America is for white people. They heard it on television.” Then he concluded, “My arms are white. Are we white?”

Our hearts sank. A deep sense of sadness engulfed me. Should not these 6-year-olds be engaged in playing and imagining amazing worlds full of hope? Should they wrestle with these questions at such a tender age?

If you are Hispanic in the United States, the conversation about race and ethnicity is personal, complex and rather confusing. Talk about race in our country is frequently framed within a “white-black” paradigm. Yet Hispanics know that it is more than that. “Hispanic” is not a race, but an ethnicity. There are Hispanics who are white, black and indigenous. Many embody a mix of these.

Hispanics are caught up in a conundrum of racial categories that often lead to misunderstandings about identity and sometimes to exclusion and prejudice -- even in our own faith communities. This goes without mentioning language and culture.

This is too much for a 6-year-old. Frankly, it is too much for anyone, young or adult. Yet this is the context where young Catholics are growing up. Remember that about 60 percent of Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic.

My children attend one of the best Catholic schools in Boston, a place that intentionally strives to welcome a diverse student body and thrives in cultivating an environment of inclusion and respect. Still, the conversation about race that our son brought home is a reminder that we cannot be naive.

Children are always influenced by their surroundings and what they hear from adults on matters related to race. They watch television and social media. They see how our national leaders behave, what they say and what they fail to say.

My wife and I are not the only Hispanic parents having these conversations at home. We are also “estadounidenses.”

This is a time for all Catholics in the country, starting with our bishops, universities, elementary and secondary schools, dioceses, parishes, catechetical programs and ministerial organizations, among others, to step up to the plate firmly and lead frank conversations about race and racism. We must do this for the sake of a healthy society, the vibrancy of our faith communities and our children.

Hablando tocante raza con niños hispanos

By Hoffsman Osphino
Catholic News Service

Mi hijo de 6 años regresó de la escuela y de un momento a otro nos preguntó: “¿Qué soy?”. Mi esposa y yo quedamos un tanto sorprendidos. “¡Qué soy?” le preguntamos. “Soy mexicano”, dijo el niño. “¿Todos los que hablan español son mexicanos?”

Explicamos que él y su hermana son estadounidenses. En otras palabras, ellos son americanos, como se acostumbra a decir en este país. También les explicamos que a las personas con raíces mexicanas que viven en este país también se les conoce como latinos o hispanos.

Lo mismo ocurre con personas que nacieron o tienen raíces en otras partes de América Latina y los países caribeños de habla hispana. Tal es el caso mío, quien nació en Colombia, y el de mi esposa, quien nació en Guatemala.

Ambos hemos vivido la mayor parte de nuestras vidas en este país. Ambos estamos comprometidos con sus mejores valores y contribuimos con lo mejor de lo que somos. También somos estadounidenses.

El niño nos siguió mirando como si algo todavía le preocupaba y preguntó: “¿Por qué los mexicanos están invadiendo este país? ¿Lo dijo papá el otro día, ¿o lo añadí? ¿Estamos invadiendo este país?”

Le pregunté: “¿Dónde escuchaste eso?” Él dijo, “Mis amigos dicen que los mexicanos están invadiendo el país. Dicen que los Estados Unidos son un país para gente blanca. Lo escucharon en la televisión”. Luego concluyó, “Mis brazos son blancos. ¿Somos blancos?”

Un gran silencio se apoderó de nosotros. De hecho, me llené de tristeza. “No debieran los niños de 6 años estar preocupándose más bien por sus juegos y pasar el tiempo imaginando mundos sorprendentes que les llenen de...”
Catholic Voices

Instilling a culture of life is taking action against gun violence

By Christopher White
Catholic News Service

I was in sixth grade when two gunmen entered Columbine High School and mowed down 12 of their fellow students and a teacher before taking their own lives. By the time another madman decided to shoot up his own campus, killing 32 students and faculty members, I was halfway through college.

What had become immediately clear was the lesson that classrooms had the potential to become battlefields — a reality that the generation following mine knew in even more painful and immediate ways.

Since then, that battlefield has extended to concert venues, airports, movie theaters and churches. By one count, there have been 739 victims of mass shootings in the United States since 1987, the year I was born.

This year alone, over 13,000 people have died as a result of gun violence in this country. And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 93 Americans is killed by guns each day based on data from the past five years.

It’s for this reason that the U.S. bishops have recently called for a national debate on this country’s gun policies. Following the latest shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, where a 26-year-old gunman killed 26 individuals in a Texas church, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged the nation to reckon with the “fundamental problem in our society,” that leads to such violence.

“A culture of life cannot tolerate, and must prevent, senseless gun violence in all its forms,” he added.

As both the nation and the U.S. church attempts to address this crisis, Pope Francis is also encouraging that conversation — and also action.

In one of the questions addressed to America in the preparatory document for the upcoming synod on young people, the Holy Father asks, “How does your community care for young people who experience extreme violence … and accompany them in various ways in their life?”

Violence takes a range of forms, through gangs, drug addiction, sexual abuse and otherwise, but in the backdrop of recent national events, gun violence should rank high in that listing, too.

“Being close to young people who are living amid great poverty and hardship, violence, war, disease, disability and suffering is a special gift of the Spirit that can truly manifest a proper manner of acting by a church that is going out,” as Pope Francis says in that same document.

In preparation for the next synod, the U.S. church would do well to ponder what that “going out” might look like in the case of gun violence.

It should entail special initiatives like Cardinal Blase J. Cupich’s anti-gun violence program in Chicago, which involves parishes getting involved in the fight to get guns off the street and greater attention to prison ministry. Or talking openly about the wounds and the healing experienced from tragedy like Jennifer Hubbard, who contributes reflections to “Magnificat” about losing her daughter at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

The church should also consider the ways in which it can harness the energy of the thousands of young people who are motivated by recent tragedies who have grown up with such violence but refuse to accept this as simply “normal.” Perhaps they could find practical ways to work together with legislators to reintstate the assault weapons ban, which the bishops have long supported.

There’s a lot of goodwill and much momentum coming from young people working to build a culture of life, as is evidenced by the remarkable crowds that gather in Washington every January for the March for Life.

This moral energy isn’t finite. Perhaps the lesson in all of this, looking both ahead to this synod, but also, beyond, is that it’s time we maximize its potential.

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Join the conversation. Submit a proposal for a guest column to inlightoffaith@catholicnews.com. White is national correspondent for Crux. Follow him on Twitter @CWhite212.

Harassment: Has anything changed?

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

Many years ago, I was a young history teacher in a small Catholic school. It was, in most respects, a wonderful place, graced by a bevy of Urusline sisters.

The superintendent was a large, strong-willed priest who dominated the force of his personality and the power of his position and collar.

I was dismayed to discover that the young man who had recently been hired along with me had been given a contract with a significantly higher rate of pay than mine. Why? I inquired.

The answer was simple: He was a married man. I was a single gal.

It didn’t seem to matter that he had no children and his wife was also employed. It was simply the way things were.

It may seem strange to young women today to hear that story. Why didn’t I speak out against pay discrimination?

But maybe my story is not so implausible. In the past few weeks, we’ve been deluged with tales of women (and sometimes men) being sexually harassed or assaulted in workplaces controlled by powerful men.

These stories are often horrifying, the details salacious at their worst or icy at the least. And for years, whispers and silence accompanied this mistreatment.

Sexual harassment and pay discrimination are very different things, but they are the common turf on which women still battle in the workplace.

For me, this year’s incident with Sen. Elizabeth Warren, was emblematic. Senate leadership informed Warren she couldn’t read a letter into confirmation testimony for Sen. Jeff Sessions, a nominee for attorney general. The letter was from the late Coretta Scott King, the widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., which she had written opposing his appointment.

“Whiteness, class advantage and male privilege intertwined to teach me that I am special and stand above others.”

Those of us who are parents of sons need to talk with them about their attitudes toward women. We need to teach them respect for women’s bodies as well as their brains, and the conviction to speak out if they suspect abuse.

We should question our own attitudes, too. Do we judge women by physical attributes? Do we defer to men simply because they’re male?

Do we respect the competence and leadership of females? Do we hold the powerful accountable for sexual misconduct?

Things have changed since I was young. Or have they?
Catholic liturgies in Advent avoid carols, decorations

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- During the weeks before Christmas, Catholic churches stand out for what they are missing.

Unlike stores, malls, public buildings and homes that start gearing up for Christmas at least by Thanksgiving, churches appear almost stark save for advent wreaths and maybe some greenery or white lights.

"The chance for us to be a little out of sync or a little countercultural is not a bad thing," said Paulist Father Larry Rice, director of the University Catholic Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

By the same token, he is not about to complain about a lack of Christmas music until Dec. 24 either. The key is to experience "being out of sync feeling in a way that is helpful and teaches us something about our faith," he told Catholic News Service.

Others find with the frenetic pace of the Christmas season it is calming to go into an undecorated church and sing more somber hymns like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

But that shouldn't be the only draw, noted Jesuit Father Bruce Morrill, who is the Edward A. Malloy professor of Catholic studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee.

He said the dissonance between how the church and society at large celebrate Christmas is that the church celebration begins, not ends, Dec. 25. The shopping season and Christian church calendar overlap, but don't connect, he added.

And even though Catholic churches -- in liturgies at least -- steer clear of Christmas carols during Advent and keep their decorations to a minimum, Father Morrill said he isn't about to advise Catholic families to do the same.

"It's hard to tell people what do to with their rituals and symbols," he said, adding, "that horse is out of the barn."

He remembers a family on the street in Maine where he grew up who didn't put their Christmas decorations up until Dec. 24 and didn't take them down until Candlemas, commemorating the presentation of Jesus in the temple, which is celebrated Feb. 2 -- the 40th day of the Christmas season.

He is pretty sure that family's children or grandchildren aren't keeping up that tradition.

Father Rice similarly doesn't give families a lot of advice on when to do Christmas decorating, but when he has been pressed on it, he said, he has advised families to do it in stages -- such as put up the tree and have simple decorations on it and then add to this on Christmas Eve.

It's a joyful time, he said, which Catholics should tap into.

Celebrating Advent is a little tricky in campus ministry, he noted, since the church's quiet, reflective period comes at the same time as students are frantic over exams, papers and Christmas preparations.

This year, the day before the start of Advent, he said students planned to gather to decorate the Catholic center with purple altar cloths, pine garlands and some white lights.

As Father Morrill described Advent, "the church is different churches with white lights or greenery almost bridges the secular and religious celebrations of Christmas and that's OK by him. It uses blue instead of purple for Advent wreaths or liturgical vestments, which he said some parishes did in the '80s, until church leaders came down on it."

"The way the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops -- http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-year/advent -- points out that the liturgical color for Advent is purple, just like Lent -- as both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days."

It says Advent "includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. This penitential dimension is expressed through the color purple, but also through the restrained manner of decorating the church and altar."

It also points out that floral decorations should be "marked by a moderation" as should the use of the organ and other musical instruments during Advent Masses.

The way the church celebrates Advent is nothing new. Timothy Brunk, a Villanova University associate professor in theology and religious studies, said it began in the fourth century in Europe but has never had the history or significance of Easter for the church.

But even though Advent doesn't have the penitential pull of Lent -- where people give something up for 40 days or do something extra -- that doesn't mean the season should slip by without opportunities for spiritual growth.

Father Rice said it's important for Catholics to engage in spiritual preparation for Christmas than in the middle of all the other preparations.

His advice: When you write a Christmas card, say a prayer for that person; while shopping, try to go about it in a slow and thoughtful way not frantically running around and let someone take that parking space you were eyeing.

Those actions, he said, are modern works of mercy on a simple and immediate level. They also don't require batteries or store coupons.

PATTERSON

(From 2)

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

It is with a deep sense of loss that we say goodbye to the editor of the West Texas Angelus, Jimmy Patterson. As he and his wife Karen prepare to move away from West Texas, the Diocese of San Angelo owes both of them a debt of gratitude for their dedicated service to the Church.

For twelve years Jimmy served as the capable editor of this newspaper. He also served with distinction as Director of Communications, then as Director of Media Relations. It was truly a blessing to work with him.

I am happy to announce that Brian Bodiford will take over as Director of Communications for the Diocese of San Angelo in January 2018. He will be the editor of the West Texas Angelus, and he will integrate that role with our other forms of communication, including the diocesan website. Brian’s office is located at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in San Angelo. He can be reached at bbadford@sanangelodioecese.org.

Jimmy can be reached at jimmyleepatterson@gmail.com.

Changing of the guard at West Texas Angelus

We’ll bring you those stories through a blog, and later, with God’s help, a book. We want everyone to know how great this country’s people still are.

Thank you all for your kind words along the way. It has been a privilege to serve you in this role.

To Bishop Sis, thank you for your shepherding, your leadership and your unending joyful spirit. I will never again work for someone like you. You have given so many of us in this diocese that great gift of joy-filled living. I for one will carry it with me, as though it was handed to me by my father.
El Evangelio de Mateo nos dice que "... cuando vemos a un niño que necesita, cuidemos de estos amados hijos. Siga el ejemplo de José para convertirse en padre adoptivo..."

Mientras los niños de Texas que requieren crianza temporal esperan, debemos tener el valor de prestar atención al mismo mensaje: "No tengan miedo". Efectivamente, las necesidades de estos niños son muchas y es posible que usted no sienta que tiene la suficiente capacidad. Siendo honestos, probablemente no la tenga, pero su Iglesia y su comunidad tienen recursos para ayudarlo. Al igual que los magos que trajeron regalos a la Sagrada Familia, hay ministerios y organizaciones sin fines de lucro que están listos para ayudarlo a satisfacer las necesidades de estos niños. Si bien es posible que no experimentemos sueños angélicos que nos llamen a la acción, los niños que requieren crianza temporal en Texas necesitan que estemos atentos a la guía del Espíritu Santo, que nos dice que nos levantemos y cuidemos de estos amados hijos.

¿Considerará usted la llamada?

Niños anhelan hogar este Adviento
Por Jennifer Carr Allmon
Directora Ejecutiva
Conferencia Católica de Obispos de Texas

Incluso después de presentarse noticias sobre niños durmiendo en el piso en oficinas, o peor aún, sobre sus trágicas muertes, la crisis de crianza infantil temporal de Texas continúa. Necesitamos más padres sustitutos listos para servir a los hijos de Dios que están atrapados en el asediado sistema de bienestar infantil del estado. Sería muy simple si los cristianos escucharan el llamado de la Escritura a “dejar que los niños vengan a mí” y abrieran sus hogares a los miles de pequeños que necesitan familias seguras. Pero a muchos de nosotros el miedo y las circunstancias nos impiden responder a este llamado.

Durante el Adviento esperamos a nuestro Salvador, mientras estos preciosos niños esperan a sus salvadores todos los días del año. Las Escrituras que leemos en Adviento nos dan un claro ejemplo a seguir cuando vemos a un niño que necesita un padre y nos muestran qué hacer cuando estamos paralizados y no podemos responder.

El Evangelio de Mateo nos dice que cuando José se enteró del embarazo de María, tenía la intención de divorciarse de ella en secreto y dejar al niño sin padre. Pero a pesar de ser un hombre justo, cuidar de un niño que no era "suyo" era más de lo que podía soportar. El ángel del Señor se le aparece en sueños diciéndole: "No temas". Gracias a su valentía, José se convirtió en el padre adoptivo de nuestro Señor, que nos dice que nos levantemos y cuidemos de estos amados hijos. ¿Considerará usted la llamada?

Jennifer Carr Allmon es Directora Ejecutiva de la Conferencia Católica de Obispos de Texas (TCCB), la asociación de obispos católicos de Texas que representa a 15 diócesis y 19 obispos activos. A través de la TCCB, los obispos ofrecen una voz en materia moral y social sobre políticas públicas, acreditan a las escuelas católicas del estado y mantienen archivos que reflejan el trabajo y la historia de la Iglesia Católica en Texas.

Siga el ejemplo de José para convertirse en padre adoptivo

Para encontrar un proveedor local de crianza infantil temporal cerca de usted, visite Texas Alliance of Children & Family Services en www.tacfs.org. O bien, siga el ejemplo de los magos y haga un donativo a Rainbow Room (http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protec tion/Rainbow_Rooms/), un centro de recursos para niños que requieren crianza temporal.

El llamado no es el de separarnos en una camarilla elitista. Tampoco se trata de conformarnos a la cultura que nos rodea. Debemos permitir que Cristo transforme nuestra cultura a través de nosotros. Esto implica ser claro acerca de lo que representamos, y hablar la verdad con amor en nuestra voz, no con superioridad o amargura. Se nos llama a vivir una consistencia y coherencia entre nuestras creencias y nuestras acciones, participando en el intercambio de ideas de una manera que va a sembrar semillas del Reino de Dios.
CASEY

(From 3)

Cardinal Amato was the main celebrant and homilist for the beatification Mass, joined by Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron; Cardinal Adam J. Maida, retired archbishop of Detroit; Boston Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, himself a Capuchin Franciscan; Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, who is a Detroit native; and Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, among others.

About 35 bishops, 400 priests and deacons and more than 200 Capuchins joined 300 members of the Casey family, members of the Father Solanus Guild and thousands of faithful during the Mass.

The altar, placed at midfield, was created originally for St. John Paul II’s visit to the Pontiac Silverdome in 1987. To the right of the altar was a large painting of Blessed Solanus. It was unveiled to thundery applause after the beatification rite, which took place at the beginning of the Mass.

The music was provided by a 25-member orchestra and a choir of 300 directed by Capuchin Franciscan Father Ed Foley. The singers were members of parish choirs from across the Detroit metro area. The Casey family’s Irish roots were reflected in the Irish hymns chosen as part of the music for the liturgy.

Reflecting the diversity of the Catholic Church in which Blessed Solanus served, readings and prayers of the faithful were proclaimed in several languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chaldean, Polish and Tagalog.

"His favorite sons were the poor, the sick, the emarginated and the homeless," Cardinal Amato said of Blessed Solanus, the Wisconsin-born priest with Irish roots and a whipsaw voice who served as a monastery doorkeeper in New York, Detroit and Huntington, Indiana, over his 60 years as a Capuchin friar.

"He always fasted in order to give them their own lunch. He spent hours upon hours patiently receiving, listening to, and counseling the ever-growing number of people who came to him," he added.

Once, the cardinal recounted, when the Capuchin Soup Kitchen -- which Blessed Solanus helped start during the Great Depression -- ran out of food, the friar simply prayed an Our Father, and a truckload of bread showed up.

"When the people saw this they began to cry with emotion. Father Solanus simply stated: 'See, God provides. No one will suffer want if we put our trust in Divine Providence,'" Cardinal Amato said.

"Witnesses affirmed that love, faith and trust were the three points that he always preached to people," Cardinal Amato continued. "Faith, hope and charity were for him the seal of the Trinity in our souls."

Born Nov. 25, 1870, to a family of 16 children, Blessed Solanus spent his early years as a lumberjack, street car operator and prison guard before entering the seminary. After witnessing a violent attack in Superior, Wisconsin, he resolved to devote his life to God.

"Despite language barriers slowing his studies toward the priesthood, he was eventually ordained a "simplex priest," and spent the next 60 years greeting people at the monastery doors in New York, Indiana and Detroit, where he became a warm and familiar face to thousands seeking his counsel and prayers.

Cardinal Amato garnered cheers when he acknowledged that Blessed Solanus had "one little defect in his life: In the judgment of his fellow friars, Father Solanus was a bad musician."

"For this reason, after his first failure in the community, with simplicity and humility, in order not to disturb his neighbor, on Sunday evening he went to the chapel with his violin and played Irish religious songs in front of the tabernacle. The Lord listened to him patiently because our blessed was lacking in music, but not in virtue," Cardinal Amato said with a smile.

"By virtue of his beatification, Blessed Solanus can now be publicly venerated worldwide. Beatification is the last step in the miracle process, after which the candidate can be named "Blessed.""

"Among the hundreds, if not thousands, of healings attributed to Blessed Solanus during and after his lifetime, Pope Francis recognized the authenticity of a miracle necessary for the friar to be elevated from venerable to blessed after a review by the Vatican's Congregation for Saints' Causes was completed earlier this year.

The miracle involved the healing -- unexplained by medicine or science -- of a woman with an incurable genetic skin disease, Paula Medina Zarate of Panama. She was only recently identified publicly and she was at the Mass. As it began, she walked up to the altar with a reliquary holding a relic of Blessed Solanus -- a small piece of bone taken from the friar's arm.

Zarate was visiting friends in Detroit and stopped at Father Casey's tomb to pray for others' intentions. After her prayer, she felt the strong urging to ask for the friar's intercession for herself, too, and received an instant and visible healing.

The miraculous nature of her cure in 2012 was verified by doctors in her home country, in Detroit and in Rome, all of whom confirmed there was no scientific explanation. Father Casey himself died of a skin disease July 31, 1957.

During the presentation of the gifts, baskets of food were brought to the altar along with bread and wine, symbolizing Blessed Solanus' ministry to the hungry through the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and the Capuchins' continuing ministry today.

After Communion, the congregation was invited to sing "God, Be Praised for Humble Service," a hymn commissioned in honor of Blessed Solanus written by Benedictine Sister Delores Dufner.

In thanking Cardinal Amato and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints "for your devoted attention to the cause of Father Solanus' beatification," Archbishop Vigneron garnered loud cheers when he assured the cardinal that "the field hospital of mercy is open here in Detroit."

"Your Eminence, when next you speak with our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis, please let him know that we are grateful beyond measure that he has judged our beloved Father. Solanus worthy of the rank of blessed," Archbishop Vigneron said. "Assure His Holiness of our filial affection and loyalty and tell him that we are committed anew to imitate Blessed Solanus by witnessing to the good news of Christ's mercy."

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Steichschulte is managing editor of The Michigan Catholic, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

BISHOP

(From 3)

This is why, in the liturgy of the Church in the Eucharistic Prayer II for Reconciliation, we pray, "By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is resolved to devote our life to God.

Similarly, in the Fifth Eucharistic Prayer for the Church on the Path of Unity, we pray, "that in a world torn by strife your people may shine forth as a prophetic sign of unity and concord."
cose immediately moved on to a deeper exploration of faith in Why Catholic? Many of the small groups established through these efforts are continuing with other RENEW resources. Throughout the years, RENEW was aided by Mary Ann McLaughlin and Ann Cussen from the archdiocesan Office of Spiritual Life who attended all of the hundreds of workshops held in the archdiocese throughout the years.

Bishop DiMarzio, a native of RENEW’s home archdiocese of Newark, was instrumental in bringing ARISE/LEVÁNTATE into the ethnically diverse Diocese of Brooklyn. The diocese asked RENEW to provide workshops in three languages—English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole. Small groups in the diocese are also working in Chinese, and Braille editions have been provided. Theodore Musco, the Secretary for Evangelization and Catechesis, who works closely with RENEW in the diocese said, “Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio’s energetic promotion and sincere support of RENEW’s ARISE/LEVÁNTATE small faith-sharing groups in Brooklyn and Queens has made all the difference in its success. The people of the diocese have been renewed and evangelized thanks to his stellar leadership.”

Bishop Pfeifer introduced small groups into the Diocese of San Angelo with RENEW for the 21st Century. After the success of that program, Why Catholic?/¿Por que ser católico? brought a deeper understanding of the faith to parishioners throughout the diocese. They then moved forward with the ARISE/LEVÁNTATE process. After Bishop Pfeifer’s retirement, Bishop Sis, seeing the success of the programs, decided to make the diocese one of the first to adopt RENEW’s newest process, Be My Witness/Sean mis testimonios, which was inspired by Pope Francis’ landmark document, The Joy of the Gospel. Both bishops give credit for the success of the programs to Sister Hilda Marotta and Sister Adelina Garcia who head the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Bishop Sis commented, “While I do not consider myself to merit such a claim, I will be happy to receive the award on behalf of our diocese, along with Bishop Michael Pfeifer. In reality, the ones who deserve to be considered as RENEW Champions for Evangelization in our diocese would be Sister Hilda Marotta and Sister Adelina Garcia.”

The reception at the bishops’ assembly was the first in a series of events celebrating RENEW International’s 40th anniversary of fostering renewal within the Catholic Church world-wide. On April 19, 2018, in partnership with the Center for Catholic Studies at Seton Hall University and America Media, RENEW will host the Monsignors Thomas Kleissler and Thomas Ivory Symposium on Parish Renewal at Seton Hall in South Orange, N.J. The event is named after the co-founders of RENEW.

Father Matthew Malone, SJ of America Media will moderate the symposium which will feature William Simon of Parish Catalyst as the main speaker. Panelists will include best-selling author Chris Lowney; Leisa Anslinger of Catholic Life and Faith; Father Bismark Chau, pastor of St. Patrick’s Pro-Cathedral in Newark; and Sister Terry Rickard of RENEW.

RENEW International will continue the celebrations with its 40th Anniversary Gala on June 7, 2018 at which several key figures in the founding of RENEW will be honored. In September, a group of RENEW supporters will make a pilgrimage to the spiritual capitals of Italy guided by Sister Terry and Father Anthony Randazzo of The Church of the Holy Trinity in Westfield, N.J. The year will end with a celebration of a Mass of Thanksgiving followed by a reception on November 4 at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Park Ridge, N.J., the first parish assignment for RENEW co-founder Father Tom Kleissler.

To learn more about RENEW’s 40th anniversary celebrations visit www.renewintl.org/celebrate40.

RENEW International is a Catholic organization based in Plainfield, N.J., which fosters spiritual renewal in the Catholic tradition by empowering individuals and communities to encounter God in everyday life, deepen and share faith, and connect faith with action. For almost four decades, RENEW International has revitalized parish life in over 150 dioceses in the United States, touching the lives of 25 million people through its renewal processes. RENEW International also reaches many thousands outside the United States, having served people in 25 countries, across six continents, and in 44 languages. It can be found online at www.renewintl.org and at facebook.com/renewintl.
Pope: Build peace by welcoming migrants, refugees

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Exploiting a fear of migrants and refugees for political gain increases the possibility of violence and discrimination and does nothing to build a culture of peace, Pope Francis said in his message for World Peace Day 2018.

"Those who, for what may be political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are matters of great concern for all those concerned for the safety of every human being," the pope said in the message, which was released by the Vatican Nov. 24.

The pope chose "Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace" as the theme for the celebration Jan. 1, 2018. The message is delivered by Vatican nuncios to heads of state and government around the world.

Presenting the message to the media, Father Bruno Marie Duffe, secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said, "It is clear peace begins with saving lives and taking care of people who are trying to escape wars, discrimination, persecution, poverty and climate disasters."

As work continues on the U.N. Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Pope Francis urged the international community not to surrender to "cynicism and to the globalization of indifference."

Countries at the U.N. General Assembly voted in September 2016 to develop the compacts; after meetings around the world, a draft of each compact is scheduled to be released in February and a final vote is scheduled for September 2018.

In his message, which was signed Nov. 13, the feast of St. Frances Cabrini, patron of migrants, Pope Francis said thinking about peace naturally meant thinking about "those who most keenly suffer its absence."

International organizations estimate there are some 250 million international migrants around the globe and that about 22.5 million of them are refugees, who have fled war, violence or persecution.

In their search for a place where they can live in peace, the pope said, many are "willing to risk their lives on a journey that is often long and perilous, to endure hardships and suffering, and to encounter fences and walls built to keep them far from their goal."

Pope Francis acknowledged the right and obligation of countries to protect their borders and wisely allocate their resources, including those dedicated to resettling migrants and refugees. But the pope also insisted that basic human decency requires sheltering those whose dignity is at risk.

Jesuit Father Michael Czerny, undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugee Section of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told reporters the "prudence" Pope Francis is calling for involves discernment and wise direction. He compared it to the responsibility parents exercise in running a household.

"Prudent parents respond and allocate resources wisely," he told reporters.

Contributing to this story was Rhina Guidos, Dennis Sadowski, Mark Pattison and Julie Asher.

USCCB

(From 11)

Lakota people to the Catholic faith.

As part of the business side of the meeting, the bishops elected Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit as the next secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He'll take office next November. Votes also were cast for a new chairman of the bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty and chairmen-elect for the committees on Communications, Cultural Diversity in the Church, Doctrine, National Collections and Pro-Life Activities.

They highlighted past events such as the Convocation of Catholic Leaders in Orlando, Florida, this summer and spoke about tapping into the energy that came from that national gathering at diocesan and parish levels.

They also previewed upcoming events such as the U.S. Catholic Church's Fifth National Encuentro, or "V Encuentro," next September in Grapevine, Texas, and World Youth Day Jan. 22-27, 2019, in Panama City.

The bishops identified key issues they are addressing with Congress, including health care, the federal budget and tax reform, and concluded their assembly by mentioning the impact of recent disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires.

Bishop Curtis J. Guillory of Beaumont, a region hard hit by Hurricane Harvey, said often when tragedies occur, "you just feel very much alone and wonder how you are going to move forward."

He thanked the bishops for their support, in prayers, phone calls and donations, which he described as a "wonderful sign of solidarity" and sign of unity of our faith. This will be a long and costly recovery, he noted, but added that "people have deep, deep faith."

Contributing to this story was Rhina Guidos, Dennis Sadowski, Mark Pattison and Julie Asher.

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