As far as the east is from the west

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Father Lawrence Cyr, C.P.P.S., 99, died December 4, 2017, during his 80th anniversary as a Missionary of the Precious Blood and was completing his 73rd year as a priest in service to his community and the Church.

Fr. Larry was born March 10, 1918, in Fowler, Indiana, to Stephen and Melanese Cyr. He attended grade school at the parish school in Mishawaka, Indiana. Following his freshmen year of high school, in the middle of the Depression in 1933, he entered Brunnerdale Seminary in Canton, Ohio. Following high school seminary, he attended St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, Indiana where he was professed on December 8, 1937. In 1940, he made Definitive Incorporation and then on December 10, 1944, he was ordained, both at St. Charles Seminary in Carthagena, Ohio.

Following several months of substitute work, Fr. Larry was assigned to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Church in Detroit, Michigan, as an assistant pastor. At the time, there were about 25 Precious Blood priests, including five of his classmates, serving in the city—in Fr. Larry’s words, “in the toughest places that there were; none of the diocesan assistants wanted to go there.” In a 2007 interview, he spoke of those early days of ministry: “We did the parish newsletter. We had a Catholic grade school and high school. There were eight hosp-

Editor’s Note: Following is Bishop Michael J. Sis’ homily, presented at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Millersview on December 12, 2017.

What language did Mary speak?

When Mary raised her son Jesus in her humble home in Nazareth, she spoke the language of that time and that place. She spoke the Aramaic language, which is similar to Hebrew.

After her Assumption into Heaven, the Virgin Mary has appeared to different people over the centuries in various countries of the world.

What language did Mary speak?

The Virgin Mary, in her life in Heaven after her Assumption, no longer has language barriers. Because she is Mother of God, she is also mother to all God’s people.

She has a special gift for bringing people together from different cultures and languages.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is not only the Queen of Mexico. Pope Pius XII named her “The Empress of all the Americas.”

And because Mary is the mother of all God’s people, our U.S. Catholic Bishops have declared this day, December 12, 2017, as a day of solidarity and prayer for migrants and refugees. This is a moment to recognize that migrants have needs and human rights, and we all should be aware of them.

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Former Precious Blood priest in Coleman dies at 99

Father Lawrence Cyr, C.P.P.S., March 10, 1918 – December 4, 2017

And the beautiful thing is that every time she appears and speaks, she speaks the language of the people she meets:

- In Lourdes, she spoke, not French, but Occitan.
- In Fatima, she spoke Portuguese.
- In Mexico, with Juan Diego, she didn’t speak Spanish. She spoke Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, because that was the language of the Indian Juan Diego.

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Here in this church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Millersview, you recall how Deacon Leroy Beach reached out to migrant families for many years. He taught catechism to the children of migrant workers right here in this church. He did an exemplary job of making people feel welcome.

Jesus Christ personally knew the experience of migration. When Mary gave birth to Jesus, they were far from home, in a town where they had no relatives or friends to receive them. Jesus was born outside in a barn with animals, because nobody opened the doors to Joseph and Mary in their time of need.

And Jesus had the experience of being an immigrant in a foreign country, when Joseph and Mary had to escape the violence of King Herod’s government and live for a time as refugees exiled in Egypt.

Jesus Christ understands and supports the immigrant, because He himself had the experience of emigrating.

He teaches us in the Gospel of Matthew that, in welcoming the stranger, we are actually welcoming Christ himself, who will say in the Last Judgment, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35).

Sometimes Christ visits us in the disguise of the immigrant in need. In the end, we will be judged according to how we have responded to him.

We believe that Christ is the King. He is the King, not just of one country. He is King of the Universe. Faith in Jesus Christ transcends borders. That is why we Christians need to live in a spirit of solidarity with all of humanity.

The Catholic Church has welcomed immigrants to the United States since our nation’s founding. Our Church has been vitally important in helping new-comers to integrate into American culture.

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I am very grateful for our permanent deacons and their wives. My own father is a deacon, and I have served alongside wonderful deacons in every place where I have been assigned as a priest. As the bishop of this diocese, I see firsthand the tremendous good that is done by our deacons.

There are seventy-two deacons in the Diocese of San Angelo, sixty-two of whom are in active ministry in the diocese. Twenty-two of our active deacons are age seventy or older. While some parishes have two or more deacons, we actually have twenty-one parishes and missions with no assigned deacon.

In the Catholic Church, deacons are entrusted with a threefold ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity. A man becomes a deacon by receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders from the local bishop. He is not a layperson or a priest, but he is an ordained cleric. The permanent deacon is distinct from a transitional deacon in that a transitional deacon is a seminarian preparing for the priesthood. The permanent diaconate is a ministry in its own right.

Deacons function in a variety of ministries. They can preside at baptisms, quinceañeras, weddings, anderals without the Mass. They can lead Communion services and Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest. They can bless houses. They help prepare couples for marriage. Some are field advocates for the marriage tribunal, assisting those who are seeking a declaration of nullity. Among other things, they are involved in evangelization, catechesis, sacramental preparation, RCIA, youth and adult ministry, adult faith formation, prison ministry, works of charity, pro-life ministry, and visitation of the sick.

Diocesan ministry is understood to be volunteer service, and it typically involves about ten to fifteen hours per week. Permanent deacons must be gainfully employed in their own profession in order to take care of their own financial needs. In a few rare cases, deacons may have full-time employment in a parish.

Bless these, our beloved students, as they complete papers and prepare for their final exams.

When you created the world, you brought order out of chaos.

Bless their hearts with a hunger to learn.

Calm their fears with your peace.

Give them serenity and confidence in the midst of stress.

Bless their brains, so that they may give glory and honor to you by performing to the best of their ability.

Keep them mindful of your calling to use their education for the benefit of all.

And may Almighty God bless you all, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of Love and Wisdom, you created us with intelligence and a desire to learn: about ourselves, about our world, and about you.

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From The Bishop’s Desk

A new group of permanent deacons

By Bishop Michael Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

This is an important historical moment in the life of the permanent diaconate in the Diocese of San Angelo. We have fifteen candidates in formation for ordination on June 23, 2018, and we are preparing to form a new group that will start classes in September of 2018. Now is the time for us to call forward those men whom God might be calling to enter formation for our next deacon class – the class of 2022.

Those who are interested in being considered to join this next class should speak first with their pastor as soon as possible. The inquiry period consists of monthly meetings to assist in discernment. It began in September 2017 and will continue until May 2018. Applications will be processed beginning in May 2018.

I am very grateful for our permanent deacons and their wives. My own father is a deacon, and I have served alongside wonderful deacons in every place where I have been assigned as a priest. As the bishop of this diocese, I see firsthand the tremendous good that is done by our deacons.

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Blessing of the Brains

A blessing of students at exam time

Editor’s Note: The following prayer was offered for students at the Angelo State University Newman Center prior to fall finals, but is presented here as classes begin again and students throughout the diocese return for a new semester.

God of Love and Wisdom,
you created us with intelligence and a desire to learn: about ourselves, about our world, and about you.

Bless these, our beloved students, as they complete papers and prepare for their final exams.

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And may Almighty God bless you all, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grupo nuevo de diáconos permanentes

Obispo Michael Sis

Este es un momento histórico importante en la vida del diaconado permanente en la Diócesis de San Angelo. Tenemos quince candidatos en formación para la ordenación el 23 de junio de 2018, y nos estamos preparando para formar un nuevo grupo que comenzará las clases en septiembre de 2018. Ahora es el momento en el cual debemos de invitar a aquellos hombres a quienes Dios podría estar llamando a entrar en formación para nuestra próxima clase diocesana – la clase de 2022.


Estoy muy agradecido por nuestra próxima clase diaconal – la clase de 2022. Aquellos que estén interesados en ser considerados para formar un nuevo grupo que comenzará las clases en septiembre de 2018. Ahora es el momento en el cual debemos de invitar a aquellos hombres a quienes Dios podría estar llamando a entrar en formación para nuestra próxima clase diocesana – la clase de 2022.

En la Iglesia Católica, el diaconado se le ha confiado un triple ministerio en la liturgia, de la palabra, y de la caridad. Un hombre se convierte en un diácono al recibir el Sacrament of Holy Orders de parte del obispo local. El diácono no es un laico ni un sacerdote, pero es un hombre que es un clérigo ordenado. El diácono permanente es distinto de un diácono transitorio en que el diácono transitorio es un seminarista que se prepara para el sacerdocio. El diácono permanente es un ministerio en sí mismo.

Los diáconos funcionan en una variedad de ministerios. Ellos pueden presidir bautismos, quinceañeras, bodas, y funerales sin la Misa. Pueden dirigir los servicios de Comunión y las Celebraciones Domicales en ausencia de un Sacerdote. Ellos pueden bendecir casas. Ellos ayudan a preparar parejas para el matrimonio. Algunos son procuradores regionales para el tribunal matrimonial, ayudando a aquellos que están buscando una declaratoria de nulidad. Entre otras cosas, los diáconos están envueltos en la evangelización, catequesis, preparación sacramental, RCIA, ministerio juvenil y de jóvenes adultos, la formación de fe de adultos, ministerio de la prisión, los obras de caridad, el ministerio pro-vida, y la visita a los enfermos.

El ministerio diocesano se entiende que es servicio voluntario, y que por lo general implica unos diez a quince horas a la semana. Los diáconos permanentes no están empleados en su propia profesión de manera que puedan cuidar de sus necesidades financieras. En algunos casos raros, los diáconos pueden tener empleo a tiempo completo en un matrimonio o la parroquia.

Un diácono se le asigna al ministerio y a la parroquia donde la necesidad sea más critica. Mientras que la mayoría de los diáconos sirven a nivel parroquial, hay algunos que también funcionan en otros ministerios fuera de la parroquia según señalado por el obispo. La asignación de un diácono puede ser cambiada en cualquier momento de acuerdo a las necesidades cambiantes de la
Pope calls for unity, understanding to begin ‘18

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis spent much of 2017 preaching and teaching about the need to value differences rather than fear them, and he adopted legislation that would allow more room for diversity within the Catholic Church.

In his frequent comments about migration and on most of his foreign trips, the pope also tried to convince political, civic and religious leaders that being willing to listen to one another’s point of view and experience actually enrich a society.

From his trips to Egypt, where anti-Christian violence has sorely tried Christian-Muslim relations, to Colombia, which is recovering from a civil war, and to Myanmar and Bangladesh, Pope Francis tried to convince people that peaceful coexistence and even unity do not require the erasing of all differences. In fact, during his trip to the two Asian nations, he defined as "ideological and cultural colonization" the political and social pressures to homogenize society.

"The unity we share and celebrate is born of diversity," he told the bishops of Myanmar Nov. 29. "Never forget this -- it is born of diversity! It values people's differences as a source of mutual enrichment and growth. It invites people to come together in a culture of encounter and solidarity."

Pope Francis gave legislative weight to that view in October when he created two new eparchies, or dioceses, for the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in India and extended the boundaries of two others. In a letter to all of the country's bishops, Latin- and Eastern-rite, he said the presence of two Catholic rites each with their own bishop in the same territory should not be seen as a sign of disunity, but of the richness of the one faith.

The other legislative decision that potentially could lead to greater diversity in the church was contained in Pope Francis' document, "Magnum Principium" ("The Great Principle"). It included changes to the Code of Canon Law to give national bishops' conferences greater responsibility in the process of translating liturgical texts into local languages. The document was published Sept. 9 and went into effect Oct. 1.

In a letter giving further explanation three weeks later, Pope Francis said that while in the past "the judgment regarding the fidelity to the Latin and the eventual correctness necessary was the task of the Congregation (for Divine Worship)," the new norms give "episcopal conferences the faculty of judging the worth and coherence of one or another term in translations from the original, even if in dialogue with the Holy See."

Pope Francis also grabbed headlines late in the year for two statements indicating further developments in Catholic social teaching, specifically regarding the death penalty and nuclear deterrence. Marking the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church at the Vatican Oct. 11, Pope Francis said the catechism's discussion of the death penalty, already formally amended by St. John Paul II, needs to be even more nuanced.

(See UNITY/22)

Pope Francis venerates a figurine of the baby Jesus as he celebrates Mass marking the feast of Mary, Mother of God, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 1. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)
St. Anthony’s Church, in Odessa, at left, received a gift of pews from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The donation was made when St. Elizabeth took delivery of new pews, a part of a major capital improvement project.

At right, young people stage a performance as part of the 75th anniversary of the dedication of the St. Ambrose Church in Wall, December 7, 2016.
2017 Diocesan Year in Photos

World Marriage Day was celebrated during weekend Masses at St. Joseph, Rowena, at left, February 11-12, 2017. The occasion was held to honor and salute the beauty of every couple for their faithfulness, commitment to love and sacrifice in the joy of daily married life. Scrapbooks featuring pictures of couples married at St. Joseph’s Church since the first Mass held in the then new parish in November 1907, were on display. (Courtesy photo)

Students from Angelo State University descended on Austin, January 28, for the Rally and March for Life held to coincide with the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion. (Courtesy photo)

At left, attendees at a January 31, 2017, Interfaith Prayer Vigil on the steps of the Tom Green County Courthouse in San Angelo display signs with Scripture passages showing how we have been instructed to love our neighbor. (Photo by Karen J. Patterson)

Bishop Michael J. Sis, below right, celebrates the Rite of Election at San Miguel Catholic Church in Midland, in April 2017. (Photo by Karen J. Patterson)
2017 Diocesan Year in Photos

Bishop Michael J. Sis, of the Diocese of San Angelo, delivers the invocation at a session of the Texas House of Representatives, Thursday, March 9, 2017. (Photo courtesy Office of District 72 Rep. Drew Darby, San Angelo)

Seminarians from throughout the region gather for a photo at Steubenville Lone Star, in Dallas, June 24, 2017. Many teenagers from the Diocese of San Angelo were also in attendance at the gathering. (Courtesy photo)

Construction work at a new church building at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in July. The dedication of the new church will be celebrated on January 14, 2018, at 9 a.m. (Photo by Alan P. Torre)
2017 Diocesan Year in Photos

Fr. Timothy Hayter, at left, and Fr. Joshua Gray, far right, embrace their mothers before their ordination on June 10, 2017. (Photo by Jimmy Patterson)

Parishioners say farewell to Sister Malachy, at left, following her retirement from the diocese after a 33 years of ministry here. A reception was celebrated in her honor on July 16, 2017, at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo.

A group of more than 30 attended a “Convent Curious” gathering designed to help people understand Religious Life and Women Religious in particular, July 8, 2017, at Holy Trinity Church in Big Spring.

Teenagers from throughout the diocese of San Angelo enjoyed the Steubenville Lone Star Conference in Dallas, June 24, 2017.
2017 Diocesan Year in Photos

Fr. Stefano Cecchin visited the diocese in August to investigate the cause for sainthood of Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda, the Lady in Blue. Fr. Cecchin is photographed here at the Mt. Carmel Hermitage, near Christoval, one of many stops he made on his visit to West Texas. He also visited Midland, Paint Rock and San Angelo. (Courtesy photo)

Top row, left to right, acolytes (except where noted) Bobby Wright, Orlando Mendoza, Ronald Stegenga, Dcn. Freddy Medina, Bishop Michael Sis, Dcn. David Workman, Andrew Davis, José Gallegos, Thomas Collier; center row, from left, Edward Gonzalez, Jesse Martinez; bottom row, left to right, Joel Gutierrez, Tommy Flores, José Villagran, John Rangel, David Mendez, Alan Pelzel, Floyd Schwartz. The Acolytes were installed on August 19, 2017, at St. Lawrence Church, near Garden City. (Courtesy photo)

Fr. Rodney White, right, with Bishop Michael Sis during Fr. Rodney’s installation as pastor of St Stephen’s in Midland, August 19, 2017.

With plans to open in the first quarter of 2018, progress is continuing at The Way Retreat Center, in Midland. The multi-denominational Christian retreat center will accommodate 80 overnight guests when it is fully opened. In this aerial photo, taken July 14, 2017, the chapel is seen, center right in the photo. The area in white is the concrete foundation for the retreat center itself, which will house the dining hall, presentation room, and administrative offices. In the lower left area and the upper center, the area of graded land shows where The Way’s seven casitas, each of which will sleep 10, will be located. The center has seen significant construction progress since this early photo. (Courtesy photo)
2017 Diocesan Year in Photos

Brother Augustine Mary, left, with his father, Ronald Stegenga. Bro. Augustine’s Mass of First Vows was celebrated Sunday, October 1, 2017, at the Mount Carmel Hermitage in Christoval.

Bishop Michael Sis, center, with newly ordained deacons Freddie Perez, left, and Reggie Odima, right. The two were ordained into the transitional diaconate May 22 at St. Mary Church in San Angelo.

St. Vincent Pallotti Ballet Folklorico, above, at the International Share the Journey Rosary at Abilene’s Holy Family Church, September 27, 2017. (Photo by Loretta Fulton for the Angelus)

College students gather for a photo at the first-ever Ram Awakening, held in December at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo.
2017 Catholic Year in Review

Counties seen as key to ongoing death penalty struggle

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — While much of the focus has been on the Supreme Court, state legislatures, governors and juries in the ongoing fight to abolish capital punishment in the United States, the head of the Death Penalty Information Center suggested that counties may be key.

It's county prosecutors, most of them elected by voters, who decide whether to pursue a death sentence for murders and other crimes, said Robert Dunham, the center's executive director.

"Riverside County (California), Clark County, Nevada, and Maricopa County in Arizona, imposed 12 (death) sentences, 31 percent of the entire national total," Dunham said. "But for those three outlier counties, 2017 would have been the second consecutive low for death penalties in the United States."

Harris County, Texas, which includes America's fourth-largest city, Houston, neither imposed a death sentence nor executed anyone this year for the first time since 1974. This made native Houstonian Karen Clifton, executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network, another anti-death penalty group, quite happy.

Clifton credited the change to a newly elected district attorney who has "found other means to handle the cases," including sentences of life without parole. "Clifton said she and retired Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston paid a visit to the new D.A. over Thanksgiving to see what support they could provide.

"And Philadelphia, which in 2013 ranked third in its death row (cases), imposing an average of one death sentence every other year, just elected a prosecutor who won't use it," Dunham told Catholic News Service.

These changes show the death penalty is "not driven by the severity of the crime, it's driven by the arbitrary lottery of where a homicide occurs. And who the local prosecutor is," he added.

"Even if the death penalty is imposed less and less, it is not being imposed in a more focused way against crimes that are the worst of the worst. The cases are still as arbitrary as they were in the past."

The Catholic Mobilizing Network launched the National Catholic Pledge to End the Death Penalty. Clifton said it has garnered 15,000 signatures. Those who sign the pledge are then invited to join the network's Mercy in Action campaign. "If they do that, they get a monthly email that tells them who's going to be executed, and an action plan (to prevent the death sentence from being carried out): letters to the warden, to the board of parole, to the governor."

"We can metrically count 20 of the stays" to the interventions of pledge signers," Clifton said — more than half the 39 stays granted in 2017. "It's saving lives, it's helping people, it's calling attention that Catholics are against this."

Pope Francis reiterated the church's stance against capital punishment in October. "The death penalty is an inhuman measure that humilates, in any way it is pursued, human dignity. It is, of itself, contrary to the Gospel because it is freely decided to suppress a human life that is always sacred," he said.

The pope spoke at a forum commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which itself was modified in 1999 to include stronger language against the death penalty. That year during a visit to St. Louis, St. John Paul II said modern society has the means of protecting itself without imposing the death penalty.

Nationwide, 39 death sentences were issued in 2017, the second lowest number since 1972, and 23 executions were carried out, up from 20 last year but still the second-lowest number since 1991, according to the Death Penalty Information Center's 2017 report, issued Dec. 14.

Four people who had been on death row were exonerated, bringing the number to 160 since 1973. "The many exonerates, and realizing who we are executing, has helped put a face on the death penalty," Clifton said in a Dec. 13 email to CNS.

"Juries are going for life (in prison) when given the option," Clifton added. Florida changed its law to require a unanimous jury recommendation for the death penalty; previously, only a majority of the jury had to recommend a death sentence. Alabama lawmakers also repealed a bill that allowed for judges to override a jury's life sentence and order capital punishment instead.

"As the drugs have resulted in so many botched executions, people are coming to realize there is just not a good way to kill people," Clifton said. The Death Penalty Information Center's report noted how Nevada and Nebraska this year permitted the use of the opioid prescription drug fentanyl to be used in executions.

"It's certainly ironic that at the same time that states are saying that fentanyl is dangerous and unsafe and poses a significant public health hazard, that we're seeing states arguing that it is safe and effective for use in executions," Dunham said.

Regardless of the toll opioid abuse has taken in American society, "companies don't their drugs used for executions," Dunham added, "and as long as there is unified pharmaceutical opposition to their medicines use to kill prisoners, we will be in a situation where states are looking for drugs anywhere they can and come up with experimental drug cocktails to carry out executions."

Episcopal appeals to spare the lives of condemned prisoners met with mixed success in 2017.

Saying "justice needs to be tamed by mercy," Bishop Felipe J. Estevez of St. Augustine, Florida, and two Georgia bishops called Jan. 31 for Georgia to drop the death penalty in the case of Steven Murray, who was convicted of killing a priest.

"We have great respect for the legal system and we believe Murray deserves punishment for the brutal murder, but the sentence of death only perpetuates the cycle of violence," the bishops said. In October, Murray's sentence was committing to life without parole.

Florida's bishops appealed to Gov. Rick Scott to commute the sentence of condemned murderer Mark Asay, but Asay was executed Aug. 25, one day after their appeal. Similarly, a plea from Virginia's bishops to Gov. Terry McAuliffe was ignored as William Morva, 35, was put to death for the murder of a hospital security guard and a sheriff's deputy, despite claims of the man's severe mental illness.

After the January execution of Ricky Gray, who confessed to killing a family of four in 2006, the Virginia bishops condemned the execution, saying: "Knowing that the state can protect itself in ways other than through the death penalty, we have repeatedly asked that the practice be abandoned. Our broken world cries out for justice, not the additional violence or vengeance the death penalty will exact."

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Nuclear threat raises tensions in U.S., Asia, worldwide

By Mark Pattison

The Angelus

WASHINGTON — The ratcheting up of North Korea’s missile testing, and fears it could soon be able to launch a nuclear weapon, has raised the specter of whether each time a country launches a nuclear weapon, the number of countries人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人人
Pope to hear from indigenous about ministry, land rights in Chile, Peru

By Barbara J. Fraser
Catholic News Service

TEMUCO, Chile — Sergio Catrila’s son was just 3 days old when police arrested the Mapuche Indian leader, accusing him of terrorism. He and 10 other Mapuche leaders spent 14 months in preventive detention before being acquitted in October of setting fire to a farmhouse in which an elderly couple died.

Sitting in his simple wooden house, cradling the child on his lap as a light rain fell outside, Catrilaf said he and others have been targeted unjustly because they are defending their people’s right to their ancestral territory.

He would like Pope Francis to speak out about that when the pontiff visits Temuco Jan. 17.

Pope Francis’ weeklong trip to Chile and Peru in January will take him to two regions that are among those countries’ poorest, where environmental issues and development efforts for forests and land rights have led to sometimes-violent conflict.

In the Araucania region of southern Chile, Mapuche communities have been stripped of their land repeatedly — first by Spanish colonists, then by settlers who moved to the region to farm, and more recently by timber plantations.

The pope will celebrate Mass here and share lunch with a small group of “simple people, ordinary people from the region,” according to Bishop Hector Vargas Bastidas of Temuco.

Bishop Vargas said he expects the pope to bring a message “of hope, that hearts may be opened to peace, justice and dialogue.”

Pope Francis is slated to meet with Amazonian indigenous people in Peru’s southeastern Madre de Dios region Jan. 19. His visit comes at a time when Dembs had people in Peru’s northern Amazon region, as well as groups in other parts of the country, are seeking greater autonomy and territorial rights.

Those rights are at the heart of conflicts in southern Chile, where protests have been marked by violence in recent years. Besides the burning of the home in the case in which Catrilaf was acquitted, protesters have burned evangelical and Catholic churches, although indigenous leaders also have received support from the church.

The construction of hydroelectric dams on the Biobio River displaced indigenous communities and remains contentious, and recent decades have seen the expansion of pine and eucalyptus plantations across vast areas of southern Chile.

The plantations have depleted local water supplies and occupied areas claimed by Mapuche communities. Although they provide some local jobs, a study in 2016 found that plantations have done little to reduce poverty in the Araucania region, which remains one of the poorest in Chile.

Plantations have displaced indigenous people, who traditionally farmed, fished or raised livestock. They also have left little of the native forest that is the center of Mapuche spirituality, said Isolde Reueque Paillalaf, a Mapuche woman and coordinator of indigenous ministry for the Diocese of Temuco.

The Chilean government has been purchasing or allocating state land to be turned over to Mapuche communities that have documents proving rights predating the arrival of settlers. But some communities have received land that is too far from their communities to be of practical use, or that lacks water and electricity, she said.

In other cases, the cost of moving to the new land and building houses is prohibitive.

Nevertheless, Mapuche communities maintain their identity and their traditional religion, particularly the "ngullatun," a communal ritual that strengthens and renews bonds among the community members, Reueque said.

"This is a people of faith, which, despite everything, has not lost its values, its love for the earth and its own identity," she said.

Some bishops and priests are reluctant to support the movement to strengthen indigenous identity and traditional rituals, Reueque said, but others have embraced it.

Just outside the city of Temuco, Father Juan Antonio Gonzalez lives in a simple, wooden house in an area the diocese has designated as a Mapuche parish. Like his neighbors, he tends a flock of chickens in a pen beside his home.

He has no plans to build a church building for people whose traditional place of worship has been the forest. Instead he visits the communities scattered throughout his parish, including more than a dozen that have Christian communities founded more than four decades ago, when Maryknoll missionaries from the United States worked here.

"That network of Christian communities is what most strengthens the Mapuche culture," Father Gonzalez said.

"Our work is to accompany the Mapuche people, supporting the good initiatives that spring from them" and strengthening their cultural identity.

"The Mapuche people’s demands are just," he said, adding that although the Chilean government and the Mapuche people must resolve them, the Catholic Church can help by encouraging dialogue.

Pope Francis will hear similar concerns about territorial rights, environmental damage and the need for indigenous ministry when he travels to Puerto Maldonado, in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, Jan. 19.

Home to some of the world’s most biodiverse parks, that area has been devastated by a gold rush that has left large expanses of barren land pockmarked with mining holes.

(See POPE/23)

El papa escuchará indígenas sobre ministerio, derechos en Chile, Perú

Por Barbara J. Fraser
Catholic News Service

TEMUCO, Chile — El hijo de Sergio Catrila tenía tres días de edad cuando la policía arrestó al líder indio mapuche acusándolo de terrorismo. Él y otros 10 líderes mapuches pasaron 14 meses detenidos hasta que en octubre fueron exonerados.

El papa Francisco visitará el sur de Chile para visitar indígenas de la región. Él quisiera que el papa Francisco escuchara a los indígenas sobre ministerio, derechos y cultura y fortaleciendo su identidad cultural.

"Este es un pueblo de fe que a pesar de todo no ha perdido sus valores, su amor por la tierra ni su propia identidad", ella dijo.

Algunos obispos y sacerdotes no se han animado a apoyar el movimiento para fortalecer la identidad y los rituales tradicionales indígenas, dijo Reueque, pero otros lo han aceptado.

Padre Juan Antonio González vive en una casa sencilla de madera en la afueras de la ciudad de Temuco, en una zona que la diócesis ha asignado como parroquia mapuche. Como sus vecinos, él atiende un galeteros al lado de su casa.

El no tiene planes de construir una iglesia física para gente cuyo lugar tradiicional para reunirse y rendir culto ha sido el bosque. En vez de ello, él visita las comunidades que habitan en la parroquia mapuche. El también visita las comunidades que no tienen documentos que prueben la propiedad de la tierra, incluyendo más de una docena que tienen comunidades indígenas fundadas hace más de cuatro décadas, cuando los misioneros de Maryknoll de Estados Unidos trabajaban en la zona.

"Esa red de comunidades indígenas es lo que más fortalece la cultura mapuche", el dijo, añadiendo que aunque el gobierno chileno y el pueblo mapuche tienen que resolverlas, la Iglesia Católica puede ayudar fomentando estas actividades.
Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

**St. Joseph’s workshop**

By Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

“St. Joseph, Protector of the Church, pray for us.” We prayed this prayer before, during, and after a workshop we attended on Nov. 29 at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo. The workshop, "Protecting Your Flock," sponsored by the Miles Ministerial Alliance, was occasioned by the active shooters that have murdered and wounded people in various churches, most recently in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Both Catholics and Protestants attended the workshop. Seventy-four people were registered, with laity, both men and women, outnumbering clergy.

This was the second workshop we have attended that dealt with this threat. The first was last March, and was sponsored by the Kimble County Sheriff's Department and met in the County Courthouse in Junction. While it was not specifically directed toward churches, pastors in the community were encouraged to attend.

It is a sad thing that workshops such as this are needed. Churches are welcoming places and members should not have to be concerned with whether or not a stranger is a deadly threat. However, this is the reality with which we live, and those of us in America now can better understand the danger that other Christians around the world live with every day.

As Catholics, we are instructed about the right of self-defense in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In the words of the Catechism, “Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life. Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow” (#2264). The Catechism continues with a quote from St. Thomas Aquinas which reads in part: "Nor is it necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's" (#2264). The point is that if I attack you, your life is not less valuable than mine, and if I lose my life when you defend yourself, the fault is mine.

With the emphasis on the family now being proclaimed in the Catholic Church, we should affirm that parents have not only the natural right, but also the duty, to protect each other and their children. As the Catechism teaches: "Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others" (#2265). Moreover, the parish priest's family is his entire parish.

Of course, we hope that our natural right of self-defense does not result in the taking of another's life. In the first presentation at the workshop at Christ the King Retreat Center, it was pointed out that people who attack others in a church are frequently known to people who are members of that church. The first session of the workshop was on how to spot warning signs in the life of a person so that proper action can be taken to minister to that person's needs. This demands awareness on the part of members of the church and a method of sharing information about problems a person may have. This can be understood as part of the pastoral care offered by the church.

The second session of the workshop was concerned with ways of handling an intruder. Strategies for alerting authorities of the danger, preventing the attacker from entering a room, evacuating the area, and countering the attacker were discussed.

(See Please see KNICKERBOCKERS/21)

**Speaking of Saints**

**French saint known for being a ‘worker among the workers’**

By Mary Lou Gibson

You can’t tell the story of St. Léonie Aviat without also mentioning St. Francis de Sales. He had a profound influence on this young French girl. Léonie was born in Séesanne, France in 1844. At the young age of 11, her family sent her as a boarding student to the Monastery of the Visititation in Troyes. It was there that she became a spiritual daughter of St. Francis de Sales.

Léonie came of age during the Industrial Revolution when many women were leaving farms and villages to work in the textile mills at Troyes. Matthew Bunson writes in “John Paul II’s Book of Saints” that Léonie saw the problems of these French working girls who were being exploited and endangered by many in society.

At the Visitation School, Mother Marie de Sales Chappuis and Father Louis Brisson were already at work with these girls. In 1858, Fr. Brisson had opened a center where young girls working in the mills could socialize in a safe environment. Sarah Gallick writes in “The Big Book of Women Saints” that he called it the St. Francis de Sales Project. When he needed a manager, Léonie was recommended to him. She threw herself into the project vowing to be a “worker among the workers,” according to Gallick.

As the club expanded, Fr. Brisson decided to establish a religious congregation to direct this work. At the age of 22, Léonie, together with Mother Chappuis and Fr. Brisson, co-founded the new congregation of the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales. Léonie took her vows in 1871 and a new religious name, Françoise de Sales, although she is still best known by her baptismal name of Léonie. Editor Bernard Bangley writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that the congregation was committed to Salesian spirituality and the evangelization and education of young textile workers. Sister Françoise de Sales worked for the happiness of others and was faithful to her resolution “to forget myself entirely.”

Léonie became the first Superior General of the congregation. The community grew and girls’ schools were opened in Paris. Together with Fr. Brisson, she established worker hostels all over Europe and founded missions and schools in South Africa and South America. The Sisters also conducted retreats as part of their apostolate.

Bunson writes that Léonie (Françoise de Sales) had to leave France in 1903 because of anti-religious legislation. She started again in Perugia, Italy, and directed her sisters from there. She drafted the congregation’s constitution and Pope St. Pius X approved it in 1911. Sister Françoise de Sales died in Perugia on January 10, 1914. Bunson describes her as “one of those hidden souls in Christ’s love.” Gallick writes that Léonie lived according to her own maxim that one must “do everything with God and nothing without him.”

She was beatified in 1992 by Pope John Paul II and canonized by him in 2001. The Oblate Sisters arrived in the United States in 1952, and they work today in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia. They live a life of Salesian spirituality with humility before God and gentleness towards the neighbor. (https://cmsgwr.org/community/oblate-sisters-of-st-francis-de-sales)

Mary Lou Gibson writes about the saints for the West Texas Angelus from her home in Austin.

FAREWELL NIKKI. Blanca Levario, left, with Maria Rodriguez, Gretchen Lara, Sr. Leonila, Kathy Wells, Fr. Rodney White, Madre Gertrudis, Veronica Galindo, Fr. Timothy Hayter and Alejandra Castorena. The staff at St. Stephen's in Midland gathered to celebrate the retirement of Nikki Sanchez, center.
Practicing the fear of God as wisdom and love

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Why don’t we preach hellfire anymore? That’s a question asked frequently today by a lot of sincere religious people who worry that too many churches and too many priests and ministers have gone soft on sin and are over-generous in speaking about God’s mercy. The belief here is that if we let you free, these folks argue, and the truth is that there is real sin and that there are real and eternal consequences for sin. The gate to heaven is narrow and the road to hell is wide. So why aren’t we preaching more about the dangers of hellfire?

What’s valid in this kind of reasoning is that preaching about mortal sin and hellfire can be effective. Threats work. I grew up subjected to this kind of preaching and readily admit that it had a real effect on my behavior. But that effect was ambivalent: On the positive side it left me scared enough before God and life itself to never stray very far morally or religiously. On the negative side, it also left me religiously and emotionally crippled in some deep ways. Simply stated, it’s hard to be intimate friends with a God who frightens you and it’s not good religiously or otherwise to be overly timid and afraid before life’s great energies. Fear of divine punishment and fear of hellfire, admittedly, can be effective as a motivator.

So why not preach fear? Because it’s wrong, pure and simple. Brainwashing and phishing for your emotions is not the way to argue for the use and manipulation. The entire society is turning them indeed into objects for his own equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and compassion, and infinite forgiveness. This kind of fear is essentially proper reverence, that is, when genuinely love someone we will fear being selfish, boorish, and disrespectful in that relationship. We will fear violating the sacred space within which intimacy occurs. Metaphorically we will sense we’re standing on holy ground and that we’d best have our shoes off before that sacred fire.

Scripture also tells us that when God appears in our lives, generally the first words we will hear are: “Don’t be afraid!” That’s because God is not a judgmental tyrant but a loving, creative, joy-filled energy and person. As Leon Bloy reminds us, joy is the most ineffable indication of God’s presence.

The famous psychiatrist, Fritz Perls, was once asked by a young fundamentalist: “Have you been saved?” His answer: “Saved? Hell no! I’m still trying to figure out how to be spent!” We honor God not by living in fear lest we offend him, but in spending the wonderful energy that God gives us to help life flourish. God is not a law to be obeyed, but a joyous energy within which to generatively spend ourselves.

Revisiting a prophetic Paul VI 50 years later

By Most Reverend Robert Barron

Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles

This coming July, we will mark the 50th anniversary of Pope Paul VI’s deeply controversial encyclical letter Humanae vitae. I won’t bore you with the details of the immemorial battles, disagreements, and ecclesiastical crises that followed upon this text. Suffice it to say that this short, pithily argued letter became a watershed in the post-conciliar Catholic Church and one of the most significant points of contention between liberals and conservatives. Its fundamental contention is that the moral integrity of the sexual act is a function of the coming together of its “procreative and unitive” dimensions. That is to say, sexual intercourse is ethically upright only in the measure that it is expressive of love between married partners and remains open to the conception of a child. When, through a conscious choice, the partners introduce an artificial block to procreation—when, in a word, they separate the unitive and procreative finalities of the sexual act—they do something which is contrary to God’s will.

Again, within the context of this brief article I won’t detail the arguments for and against this position. But I would like to draw particular attention to a remarkable passage in Humanae vitae, namely section 17, in which Paul VI plays the prophet and lays out, clearly and succinctly, what he foresees as consequences of turning away from the Church’s classic teaching on sex. Though he is convinced that artificial contraception is morally bad in itself, he’s also persuaded that it would, in the long run, adversely affect general societal attitudes regarding sex. Here is a first observation: “Let them consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings—and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation—need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law.” Does anyone doubt that, in the last fifty years, we have seen a profound attenuation of marital fidelity? Could anyone possibly contest that the last half century has witnessed a significant breakdown of the institution of marriage? Is anyone so blind as not to see that during the last five decades “a lowering of moral standards” has taken place? To be sure, there are multiple causes of these declines, and certainly not all the blame can be ascribed to artificial contraception.

However, Paul VI was intuiting something of great moment, namely, that once we committed to redefine the nature of the sexual act, we placed ourselves on a very steep and slippery slope toward a complete voluntarism, whereby we utterly determine the meaning of sexuality, of marriage, and even of gender. And the rapid rise in pornography use, the sexual exploitation of children, and human trafficking are functions of this same arbitrariness. What was only vaguely envisioned and feared fifty years ago is now accepted more or less as a matter of course.

In that same section, Paul VI continues to prophesy: “Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.” In the post-Weinstein era, we hear practically every day of another celebrity who has treated women with disrespect, turning them indeed into objects for his own use and manipulation. The entire society is rightly outraged at this behavior, but precious few cultural commentators have noted the link between this kind of objectification and the conscious disassociation of the twin ends of the sexual act. When we are permitted casually to separate love from procreation—or as one analyst had it, to sever the link between sex and babies—we place ourselves on a short road to reducing sexual intercourse to a form of self-indulgent recreation.

Section 17 of Humanae vitae concludes with a startling act of prescience regarding the political implications of countenancing artificial contraception: “Finally, careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law. Who will blame a government which in its attempt to resolve the problems affecting an entire country resorts to the same measures as are regarded as lawful by married people in the solution of a particular family difficulty? Who will prevent public authorities from favoring those contraceptive methods which they consider more effective? Should they regard this as necessary, they may even impose their use on everyone.” What might have seemed exaggerated, perhaps even slightly paranoid, in 1968 is now commonplace. The HHS Mandate, which would require even Catholic institutions to provide insurance coverage for contraception and abortifacients, has been so aggressively pursued that even the Little Sisters of the Poor found themselves battling for their rights in court. Pope Francis, an ardent admirer of Paul VI, has picked up on this theme, bemoaning the “ideological colonization” that takes place when the Western powers attempt, through threat of economic sanctions, to impose their sexual program on the underdeveloped world.

This coming 50th anniversary year would be a good time to take another look at Humanae vitae. I might suggest we commence with section 17.
Set resolutions you can keep in the coming year

By Greg Erlandson
Catholic News Service

I think there is no holiday we so look forward to and are so happy when it's over as Christmas.

Christmas, we all know, should be about celebrating God's great gift to us. Too often it becomes instead an endless series of to-do lists: searching for the perfect gift, planning perfect meals, scheduling all sorts of traditions that our families associate with the holiday.

In truth, the many to-do lists leading up to Christmas both provide us with memories and seem tailor-made to distract us from "the reason for the season."

Now as we contemplate when to take down the tree and who will take down the lights, it is time to focus on the year ahead, which of course means another to-do list: creating New Year's resolutions.

If you are casting about for resolutions, or afraid you have too many of them, I have four suggestions that may save you either anxiety, guilt or both.

Resolution No. 1: Make someone think all that Christmas shopping was worth it by writing a thank-you note. It is a lost art, I know, but a thank-you note can be a little gift in itself. In a world that often seems supremely ungrateful for all its blessings, thank-you notes are a tangible expression of gratitude.

A handwritten note sent via snail mail is the Platonic ideal of thank-you, but an email thank-you is good too, even if adorned with heart and smily face emojis. It really is the thought that counts.

Resolution No. 2: Work out a strategy for working out. The vast majority of us usually start the year thinking we need to exercise, diet or both. We set an ambitious goal for ourselves, we fall off the treadmill early, so to speak, and then we throw in the towel and go off in search of a sugar high to cut our disappointment. It's a vicious cycle.

When I had to put myself on an exercise regime, my guide to the workout stations was a bored young woman who clearly had lost her faith in humanity. When I asked her how long people usually lasted before giving up on their plans, she answered with a cynical laugh: "By the middle of February."

So my resolution was to make it to March 1. Whatever you commit to, give yourself a two-month goal. You might find that not only have you created a habit, but you've outlasted those January crowds at your local gym.

Resolution No. 3: The same principle may apply to the sacramental practice of the faith, but there is no such rule prohibiting grandparents. The role of the sponsor is to help the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it, and I assure you would do this well (Canon 872).

(There's only downside that I can see in a grandparent's being a godparent is this: If the parents were to pass on or be incapacitated in some way, a godparent is meant to serve as a "stand-in," mentoring and assuring the continued Christian life of the child -- so I suppose that the younger the godparent/grandparent is, the better!)

Resolution No. 4: Finally, let us all resolve to add a little civility to our texts, emails and social media. Don't say anything to anybody that you wouldn't say to their face. Avoid anonymous messaging. Say a prayer for someone you want to snark bomb. Or wait 24 hours before you hit send.

Social media is becoming a nasty, bitter space. We can't clean it all up, but we can make sure we don't add to it.

And whatever your resolutions for 2018, may it be a year of blessings for you and your family.

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Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.

Follow-up on agoraphobia; Grandparent as baptismal sponsor?

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I enjoy reading your columns in our diocesan newspaper. Recently you responded to a person who is concerned about missing Mass due to agoraphobia. (Editor's note: Agoraphobia is defined as an extreme or irrational fear of crowded spaces or enclosed public places.)

As a psychiatrist, I wish you had added that agoraphobia is a very treatable condition, using medication or a specific kind of therapy called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which can help a person manage anxiety in public settings such as Mass. In addition to discussing the situation with a priest, the person who wrote may seek treatment with a doctor or a therapist with skills in CBT.

(Since the writer is seeking to participate more fully in worship and the sacraments, I have to believe that God will smile on the work he or she does with a medical professional to achieve that!) (Columbus, Ohio)

Q. I was delighted to read your column about agoraphobia. It is nice to know that you are not alone, that others are dealing with similar issues. I have panic/anxiety problems and, when I told a deity that he was unable to attend weekend Masses because of the large number of people present, he suggested that I attend Mass instead on a weekday. (Actually, I now go on more than one weekday!)

It is a great relief to feel comfortable while praying at Mass and not to have to focus on fighting feelings of panic. Thank you for addressing this, and I am sure it will help others as well. (City of origin withheld.)

A. The two letters above are indicative of the responses that are received daily, commenting on this column. Often enough, these comments contain additional information that may be helpful to some readers.

Here, the first letter serves as an important reminder that God works in many ways -- often through the efforts of skilled professionals. When medical help is available, one is wise and well-advised to seek it. The second letter may be of comfort simply by assuring readers that they are never alone in dealing with particular challenges.

Q. Both my daughter and I left the church some years back, although for different reasons. I returned to regular practice about a year and a half ago, and my daughter is thinking of returning as well.

She is a single mom, with two children -- ages 6 and 12 -- and she would like them to be baptized. (I have been trying to teach them about the Catholic faith.)

Our problem is that we have no other family, and our friends are not Catholic. Is it possible that I can be their godmother, even though I am also their grandmother? (Taylorsville, Kentucky)

A. I am delighted to hear of your return to the sacramental practice of the Catholic faith and to the support this offers you in living the Christian life. Note, too, the "multiplier effect" -- I can only believe that your own journey back has served as an example for your daughter, and now her two children will be raised as Catholics as well!

In answer to your question, yes -- you yourself may certainly be the sponsor (godparent) for your grandchildren's baptisms. A father or mother may not serve as a godparent for their own child (Canon 874 of the church's Code of Canon Law), but there is no such rule prohibiting grandparents. The role of the sponsor is to help the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it, and I assure you would do this well (Canon 872).

(There's only downside that I can see in a grandparent's being a godparent is this: If the parents were to pass on or be incapacitated in some way, a godparent is meant to serve as a "stand-in," mentoring and assuring the continued Catholic life of the child -- so I suppose that the younger the godparent/grandparent is, the better!)

Q. My son passed away recently at the age of 35. We held a memorial service for him since we could not have a funeral Mass. (He was not baptized as an infant -- which was my decision, of course, not his.)

You have been a Catholic all my life, have followed Christian principles and have raised my children with those same values. My parish priest is saying that since my son was never baptized, he cannot be buried in our church's Catholic cemetery (where our family has already purchased plots for cremains).

I was very saddened to be told this because now, until my husband or I die, we will hold onto our son's ashes; and we ourselves will now choose to be buried in a non-Catholic cemetery so that our son is not laid to rest alone. We want him to be next to us. I would appreciate whatever information or guidance you might offer. (northeast Texas)

A. First, my condolences and the assurance of my prayers. Losing a child is, I think, the hardest loss of all -- one for which no one is ever really prepared.

You live with the understanding that your parents are likely to predecease you and that your spouse might as well, but you never expect to outlive your own children. So I will pray for you, that God will ease your sorrow -- and for your son, that he may enjoy the peace of God's presence and one day welcome you there.

Meanwhile, please take comfort in the fact that your son's remains can in fact be buried with you in the family plot you have purchased. Family ties are sacred, and the church has no interest in separating loved ones -- either in life or in death.

Nothing in canon law prohibits a non-Catholic from being buried in a Catholic cemetery.

The website of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, for example, says clearly: "Non-Catholics may be buried with their Catholic spouses or other family members ... in a Catholic cemetery." It is true that, in most circumstances, a Catholic funeral Mass may be offered only for those already baptized in a Christian denomination (several of the ritual's prescribed prayers refer directly to the baptism of the deceased), but there is no such limitation regarding the place of burial.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.
The ‘bitter pill’ of false liberation

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

A major study published on December 7 in the New England Journal of Medicine concludes that hormonal contraception increases the risk of breast cancer for women. The research used all of Denmark as its sample, following nearly 1.8 million Danish women of childbearing age for over a decade. The study, as described by the New York Times, “upends widely held assumptions about modern contraceptives for younger generations of women,” especially the view that “newer hormonal contraceptives are much safer than those taken by their mothers or grandmothers.” It also establishes that the risk to women increases with longer periods of use. Major media outlets have done their best to minimize the implications of the study and “soften the blow” for the millions who, for decades, have faithfully embraced a “contraceptive mentality.”

This mentality has promoted contraception, especially the Pill, as a path for women to move toward equality with men by enabling them to reap the “benefits” of the sexual revolution.

But Mary Rice Hasson, J.D., director of the Catholic Women’s Forum at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. notes that the reality for women is very different, and “our lived experience has shown that this is a false promise.” Countless women, she emphasizes, have ended up being vulnerable to, and harmed by, the sexual revolution and its promotion of contraception “as the solution.” They have been given a “bitter pill” in the form of the Pill.

In a remarkably prescient passage dating back to July, 1968, Pope Paul VI foresaw this in his encyclical Humanae Vitae, the momentous and beautiful document explaining not only the moral problems with contraception, but also its devastating effects on men, families and women in particular.

Contraception, he writes, opens a “contraceptive mentality” that enables a woman to choose abstinence before marriage, rather than contraception, and, once married, to choose periodic abstinence in agreement with her husband if their circumstances indicate they ought to avoid a pregnancy.

Hormonal contraceptives, meanwhile, throw a wrench into the works on a number of different levels. Beyond setting up a woman to be “used” by men, the Pill (and hormone-releasing IUD’s) cause significant alterations in her delicately-balanced physiology. These include restricting her ability to ovulate, altering her cycles and secretions, and modifying her uterine lining — in effect, forcing her body into a pseudo-pregnant state to exclude the possibility of a real pregnancy. Whenever a woman takes these kinds of steps to disrupt her natural fertility, it should come as little surprise that her body rebels in one fashion or another, including possible weight gain, headaches, depression, and the height, enned and well-documented risk of thrombotic stroke, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and — as confirmed by the recent study — breast cancer. A woman’s body doesn’t stand in need of being “fixed” by these powerful drugs that wreak havoc on her biology.

The Church’s agesless but countercultural teaching on marital respect and uplifts women. It supports them in an authentic feminism that affirms their uniquely important maternal role in family and society, and exalts their fruitfulness in marriage not as a defect, but as a real gift.

Physically and psychologically, may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.”

Paul VI offers a profound, but unpopular, observation — that contraception is harming women, and is, in fact, anti-woman. The widespread adoption of the “contraceptive mentality” has led inexorably to a new perspective on women, namely, that they should be more like men, and therefore they should, like men, become impregnable, through the ongoing practice of contraception. Very young women, sometimes just entering puberty, are now placed on regimens of hormonal contraception that can continue for years or even decades. From this perspective, their ability to conceive life becomes tantamount to a malady needing to be remedied, a “defect” that renders them “unequal” to men. Strikingly, though, ever greater numbers of women are discovering an authentic and liberating form of feminism as they come to the awareness that, in the words of Hasson, “we don’t have a design flaw. Being a woman is good... it’s a wonderful thing.”

Wonderful, too, is that confident feminism and liberating sense of self-control that enables a woman to choose abstinence before marriage, rather than contraception, and, once married, to choose periodic abstinence in agreement with her husband if their circumstances indicate they ought to avoid a pregnancy.

Hormonal contraceptives, meanwhile, throw a wrench into the works on a number of different levels. Beyond setting up a woman to be “used” by men, the Pill (and hormone-releasing IUD’s) cause significant alterations in her delicately-balanced physiology. These include restricting her ability to ovulate, altering her cycles and secretions, and modifying her uterine lining — in effect, forcing her body into a pseudo-pregnant state to exclude the possibility of a real pregnancy. Whenever a woman takes these kinds of steps to disrupt her natural fertility, it should come as little surprise that her body rebels in one fashion or another, including possible weight gain, headaches, depression, and the heightened risk of thrombotic stroke, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and — as confirmed by the recent study — breast cancer. A woman’s body doesn’t stand in need of being “fixed” by these powerful drugs that wreak havoc on her biology.

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Pioneras católicas hispanas en el año 2017

por Hosffman Osipno

Catholic News Service

Diciembre es la época del año en la cual muchos miramos a los 11 meses anteriores para determinar qué vale la pena recordar — ¿o quizás lo que queremos olvidar?

Durante esta época aparecen distintas listas de personas y eventos que han tenido gran impacto a lo largo del año. Estas listas están presentes en todas partes: periódicos, revistas y organismos. Muchas veces las compilamos: periodistas, expertos y grandes personalidades, entre otros.

Algunos catalogan sus listas como “lo mejor”, “lo más influyente” o “lo más célebre”.

No he conocido todavía a una persona con la que hable sobre estas listas y esté de acuerdo con las selecciones. ¿Quién le da a alguien el derecho de declarar a determinada persona o evento como “el mejor”, “el más influyente” o “el más célebre”?

Si nos preguntaran, con seguridad cada uno de nosotros elaboraríamos una lista distinta para cada categoría que se nos propusiera. Estas listas usualmente reflejan lo que valoramos o lo que nos interesa. El hecho de que no hay una lista oficial no significa eso que no vemos de manera individual. Aquí hay una lista del “lo más influyente” o “lo más célebre” que en un año no significa que todo el mundo debe estar de acuerdo o que tal lista es la última palabra. Esas listas son en realidad oportunidades para aprender algo sobre personas y eventos que pueden ampliar nuestro horizonte.

Como podrá anticipar, compartiré una breve lista, la cual refleja un interés personal en la teología y el liderazgo ministerial en el mundo católico.

Comparto la lista siguiendo el espíritu de esta columna, la cual refleja la obra de Hosffman Osipno en el mundo católico.
Newest tech not the answer to what sets us free

By Brett Robinson
Catholic News Service

November’s XXX release of the iPhone X and the Xbox One X lent new meaning to the greeting, Merry Xmas. Far from its Greek roots as an abbreviation for Christ (chi), X became marketing-speak for technological sophistication.

The spate of new gadgets that arrived just in time for Christmas are awfully similar to last year’s must-have gadgets. The irony is that our experience of tech novelty often feels more like deja vu than something brand new. And there’s a good reason for that.

Technology expresses the recurring human need to be freed from restraint. At every technological turn there is an attempt to transcend some limit. The new iPhone is faster, the new Xbox has better graphics. Electricity frees us to see more at night, antibiotics to fight infection, airplanes to take flight.

These aren’t bad things, but they are not final things either. To what end are all these efforts directed?

The more important question might be what, finally, makes us free?

In the Gospel of John, our Lord tells his interrogators that if they continue in his word, they will know the truth and the truth will set them free.

The theologian Leven Bovee notes that Pope Benedict XVI frequently commented on our need to conform to the pre-ordained order of things and reject absolute self-determination. This is not to say that we are to reject innovation or its fruits. Instead, we are to avoid imposing our subjective version of the truth on nature.

Technology is not to blame here. The root malady is pride, the belief that we are in control and can deliver ourselves rather than relying on the Redeemer.

But absolute self-determination is part of the cultural code. It takes the form of having free access to millions of product choices on Amazon, freely choosing one’s friends on a social network or freely choosing to belong to another church if the current one isn’t providing enough emotional satisfaction.

In his new book, “Why Liberalism Failed,” Notre Dame professor Patrick Deneen makes the case that American culture provides the breeding ground for this absolute self-determination. To put it in technological terms, it’s a bug in the system that was there from the beginning.

Deneen says there are classical liberals (faith in the market) and progressive liberals (faith in the state), and both positions are inadequate because they tend to diminish local cultures, inherited customs and strong communities in the name of radical individual liberty.

Far from the classical conception of liberty as virtuous self-government, the modern version of liberty is about vigorous self-expression. In other words, the iPhone’s ability to spawn a nation of loners who seek affirmation and acceptance in virtual relationships rather than embodied ones is the symptom of a deeper disease. Being “alone together” is the way radical individualism manifests itself in a highly technological culture.

To heal the community life that has been fractured, it is good to call upon the Divine Physician who came first in the form of a newborn babe.

Christ begins his earthly life anything but free. He is born completely dependent on Joseph and Mary for his care and protection. Our Lord did not work miracles from the crib (that we know of) to overcome his human frailty. God lived within a womb, a family, a community and a culture of limits.

G.K. Chesterton was fond of saying that it is impossible to be an artist and not care for laws or limits, “the essence of every picture is the frame.” As we recall the Nativity scene, framed by its rude stable, consider the value of our human limits and thank God that we are not alone.

Robinson is director of communications and Catholic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.

‘A combo burger of absolute hilarity and joy’

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

I blame Jesuit Father Greg Boyle for the fact that people sitting around me on an airplane a few years ago suspected I might be nuts.

I was reading Boyle’s book, “Tattoos on the Heart,” about his ministry with gang members in Los Angeles. Father Boyle is the founder of Homeboy Industries, a project that employs gang members, gives them marketable skills, and loves them and believes in them.

Father Boyle’s book is a memoir of his kinship with his “homies,” the many funerals at which he has officiated -- people he loved killing people he loved -- and the deep friendships he’s made. He speaks tellingly of the incredibly troubled childhoods of the gang members he meets. As I read, I found myself sniffling and wiping tears. Alternately, Father Boyle’s sense of humor, and the humor he finds in his gang members, is hilarious. And his delivery is perfect. Suddenly, midnight, I would burst out laughing, tears still damp on my tissue.

People started to glance at me. I tried to be reserved, but “Tattoos” did me in. Instead of trying to stifle my emotions, I should have held up the book and proclaimed, “Buy this book. It will change you.”

Recently, I heard Krista Tippett’s interview of Father Boyle on her program “On Being,” which airs on National Public Radio. He has a new book out, “Barking to the Choir.” As usual, humor plays a key role in his speaking and writing.

I was delighted to hear how Father Boyle described being attracted to the Jesuits as a young man protesting the Vietnam War.

"They were a combo burger of absolute hilarity and joy," he told Tippett -- and "they were prophetic."

Someone asked me to write a reflection on Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent. "Gaudete" means, literally, rejoice, and so I considered the subject of joy. I realized that like many people, I sometimes think of joy as an "IP" and "when" proposition. Maybe, I wrote, when North Korea comes to the negotiating table, or if our loved one is cured, or we lose that last 10 pounds, we’ll find joy.

But those life goals aren’t the source of joy. Jesus is the source of joy. St. Paul tells us, "The one who calls you is faithful." That's cause for joy.

Pope Francis speaks of the necessity of joy. "There is no Christian without joy," he said in a homily last year. Joy through adversity is what separates the person of faith from those who can’t see beyond this world’s problems and darkness.

I know many activists, people engaged in great work for social justice and good causes. I’ve noticed that the ones who survive the longest, and do the best work, also have the best sense of humor. Not humor that grows from sarcasm or anger, but humor that grows from joy, a delight in others and a faith in the transcendent.

They’re the ones -- the prophetic ones -- who believe that ultimately God’s justice will prevail even if it seems bleak right now.

When we are tempted to let the world’s problems get us down, or when we feel defeated in the work we do, it’s time to pray, but also time to laugh. Laughter, like a meal, is best shared with others.

St. Ignatius, who founded the Jesuits, said we can find God in all things. Tough as it might be, we can also find joy -- and often some humor -- in all situations. Call it a combo burger, if you will, but faith and joy go hand in hand.

Catholic Voices

Cartoon Corner
OSPINO

(para 18)

encía, interrogantes y contribuciones de la presencia católica hispana que es cada vez más notable en los Estados Unidos -- aproximadamente un 43 por ciento de la población católica estadounidense.

En el año 2017 varias mujeres católicas hispanas obtuvieron logros muy importantes en las organizaciones de las que son parte. Si fuese a darle un nombre a mi lista, la llamaría "Pioneras católicas hispanas en el año 2017".

Comienzo con la hermana Teresa Maya, miembro de las Hermanas de la Caridad del Verbo Encarnado, quien asumió la presidencia de la Conferencia de Liderazgo de Religiosas de los Estados Unidos. Ella es la segunda religiosa hispana en servir en tal capacidad.

El porcentaje de religiosas hispanas en los Estados Unidos es pequeño -- menos del 5 por ciento. Sin embargo, entre las generaciones más jóvenes, las religiosas hispanas están mejor representadas (cerca del 20 por ciento).

A medida que la población hispana católica aumenta, existe la gran esperanza de que más mujeres hispanas discernirán la vida religiosa en el futuro no muy lejano. La hermana Teresa Maya encarna ese futuro.

La siguiente pionera en mi lista es María Pilar Aquino, profesora de teología y estudios religiosos en la Universidad de San Diego.

Este año Aquino fue elegida como Vicepresidenta de la Sociedad Teológica Católica de los Estados Unidos. Ella es la primera mujer hispana sirviendo en esta posición.

El próximo año será la presidenta-electa y luego la presidenta de la sociedad teológica profesional más grande del mundo.

Aquino ha sido pionera en muchas áreas a lo largo de una carrera exitosa. Su dedicación a afiramar las voces y las experiencias de las mujeres tanto hispanas estadounidenses como latinoamericanas ha recibido gran reconocimiento nacional e internacionalmente.

Ella sigue siendo un gran ejemplo para la nueva generación de teólogos católicos hispanos estadounidenses, entre los cuales las mujeres ejercen un liderazgo muy importante.

Este me lleva a la tercera entrada en mi lista de pioneras. Esta vez es un grupo de cinco teólogas hispanas: Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Elsie Miranda, María Teresa Dávila, Jacqueline Hidalgo y Neomi De Anda.

Por primera vez en la historia de la Academia de Teólogos Católicos Hispanos en los Estados Unidos, la cual es la tercera asociación de teólogos católicos más grande en Norteamérica, cinco mujeres habrán servido como presidentes de manera consecutiva. Hidalgo y De Anda asumirán la presidencia en el trascursado de los próximos dos años.

Este año 2017 fue una oportunidad única para reconocer la labor de las pioneras católicas hispanas. Ellas representan un giro importante en el campo de la teología católica y el liderazgo ministerial católico en los Estados Unidos. Este es un giro que vale la pena recordar en una iglesia cada vez más hispana.

OBISPO

(para 3)

Iglesia. Él no siempre se le asignará a su propia parroquia.

La formación de diáconos es un proceso de cuatro años después de la aceptación de su aplicación. Implica un promedio de sesenta horas al mes. Los fines de semana menesterio de formación de diáconos se realizan a cabo desde el viernes por la tarde hasta el domingo por la tarde. También se espera que los candidatos hagan tarea, escriban papeles, tomen exámenes, participen en grupos de estudio, y lleven a cabo algún ministerio en la parroquia, mientras se mantiene un equilibrio adecuado con la familia y el trabajo.

Mientras que el programa de formación en la Diócesis de San Ángel se llevará a cabo principalmente en inglés, se tratará de dar cabida a los de habla hispana. Un diácono debe tener al menos un conocimiento práctico de inglés, ya que tendrá que ser capaz de ministrar y predicar en inglés. Las dos lenguas predominantes en la Diócesis de San Ángel son el inglés y el español, por lo que se anima a los candidatos a aprender conversar en ambos idiomas.

Los candidatos deben tener al menos treinta años de edad y no más de sesenta años de edad en el momento de la aceptación en el programa de formación diaconal. El candidato puede ser soltero o casado. Si está casado, tiene que estar en un matrimonio sacramental estable con una vida familiar sana, y no puede estar cansado en la formación sin el consentimiento informado de su esposa. Una vez ordenado, un hombre no puede entrar en un nuevo matrimonio.

Los requisitos para la admisión en el programa de formación incluirán estar en buen estado de salud, tener el apoyo de su pároco, pasar una verificación de antecedentes penales, someterse a un proceso de evaluación psicológica, ser residente documentado o ciudadano de los Estados Unidos, y ser económicamente estable y autosuficiente.

Un candidato debe estar en plena comunión con la Iglesia. Si él es un convertido al Catolicismo, al menos cinco años han de transcurrir desde que se recibió en la plena comunión en la Iglesia Católica antes de ser aceptado en el programa de formación.

El programa de cuatro años de formación de diáconos es un proceso continuo de discernimiento por parte del candidato así como también de la Iglesia. No todos los que comienzan la formación necesariamente serán ordenados. A través de la reflexión, la oración, la evaluación y el diálogo, el proceso le ayudará al obispo de discernir si el candidato es llamado al ministerio ordenado o al apostolado laico. Por favor, rezen por los que están considerando este llamado.

Cualquier persona que quiera más información sobre el ministerio de los diáconos permanentes o la formación de la clase próxima debe ponerse en contacto con el Diácono Freddy Medina, Director de la Oficina del Ministerio Diocesal, al 325-651-7500 o al fmedina@sanangelodiocese.org.

BISHOP

(from 3)

or the diocese.

A deacon is assigned to the ministry and parish where the need is most critical. While most deacons serve at the parish level, there are some who also function in other ministries outside the parish as designated by the bishop. A deacon’s assignment can be changed at any time according to the changing needs of the Church. He will not always be assigned to his home parish.

Deacon formation is a four-year process after an applicant has been accepted. It entails an average of sixty hours per month. The monthly deacon formation weekends will take place from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. Candidates will also be expected to do homework, write papers, take tests, participate in study groups, and carry out some ministry in the parish while maintaining a proper balance with family and job.

While the formation program in the Diocese of San Angelo will be conducted primarily in English, it will seek to accommodate those who are Spanish-dominant. A deacon must have at least a working knowledge of English because he will need to be able to minister and preach in English. The two predominant languages in the Diocese of San Angelo are English and Spanish, so candidates will be encouraged to learn to converse in both of these languages.

Candidates must be at least thirty-one years of age and not more than sixty years of age at the time of acceptance into the deacon formation program.

A candidate may be single or married. If he is married, he must be in a stable sacramental marriage with a sound family life, and he cannot enter formation without the informed consent of his wife. Once a man is ordained, he cannot enter into a new marriage.

Requirements for admission into the formation program include being in good health, having the full support of one’s pastor, passing a criminal background check, undergoing psychological evaluation, being a documented resident or citizen of the United States, and being economically stable and self-sufficient.

A candidate must be in full communion with the Church. If he is a convert to Catholicism, at least five years must have elapsed since he was received into full communion in the Catholic Church prior to acceptance into the formation program.

The four-year program of deacon formation is an ongoing process of discernment on the part of the candidate as well as the Church. Not all who begin formation will necessarily be ordained. Through reflection, prayer, assessment, and dialogue, the process helps the bishop to discern whether the candidate is called to ordained ministry or to the lay apostolate. Please pray for those who are considering this call.

Anyone who would like more information about the ministry of permanent deacons or the upcoming formation class should contact Deacon Freddy Medina, Director of the Office of Diocesan Ministry, at 325-651-7500 or at fmedina@sanangelodiocese.org.

EDITCAL SUMMONS

December 29, 2017

CASE: SALAZAR – ORTEGA

NO.: SO/17/85

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking Jose Angel Nunez Ortega.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 31st day of January 2018, to answer to the Petition of Elizabeth Salazar Gomez Ortega, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “Elizabeth Salazar Gomez and Jose Angel Nunez Ortega, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: SALAZAR – ORTEGA; Protocol No.: SO/17/85 ED. SUMM, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on this 29th day of December 2017.

Reverend Tom Barley, MSW, MBA, M. Div, JCL
Judicial Vicar
KNICKERBOCKERS

(From 15)

The third session of the workshop was concerned with the response of people in a church after the threat has been removed: ministering to family members of victims, communicating with the media, and handling legal issues.

While the first three sessions of the workshop were video presentations, the final session was conducted by a member of the San Angelo Police Department. This was the only part of the workshop in which firearms were discussed.

On Dec. 1, the Presbyteral Council discussed the Firearms Policy of the Diocese of San Angelo. A new policy was adopted and added to the Pastoral Manual. A copy of the new policy was distributed by email to priests in the Diocese on Dec. 7. Parishioners may contact their Pastor about the new policy. Among other things, the policy states that "Parishes are encouraged to provide Active Shooter Workshops to prepare their members to properly respond in the event of a shooting incident" (X.b.).

As we have reflected on all this from the perspective of Catholic families and Catholic parish life, we are convinced that asking St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family and Protector of the Church, for his prayers will become part of our daily prayer in these times in which we live. Also, as we ask St. Joseph for his prayers for our family and our parish, we will ask his prayers for all Christians in the world who are faced with imminent threat of danger.

St. Joseph, please pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters and for our families and parishes.
Vatican needs to strengthen its fight against financial crimes

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican earned praise from Council of Europe experts for its updated legislation against money laundering and for its vigilance in flagging suspected cases, but the committee said the effectiveness of the Vatican efforts could not be proven until Vatican courts actually prosecuted someone for a crime.


The experts said the Vatican Financial Information Authority "seemed to be working efficiently," but although the Vatican court had frozen the assets of several accounts at the Vatican bank, "the Holy See had still not brought a money-laundering case to court. While considerable amounts of money continued to be frozen, no criminal case had yet produced a confiscation order," a Moneyval press statement said.

Moneyval said the Financial Information Authority's 2016 report indicated that the main offenses suspected in Vatican bank accounts it flagged for investigation involved suspected "fraud, serious tax evasion, misappropriation and corruption."

In a statement Dec. 8, the Vatican said it "is committed to taking the necessary actions in the relevant areas to further strengthen its efforts to combat and prevent financial crimes."

The Vatican also highlighted the report's appreciation of "the creation of a specialized Economic Financial Crimes Investigation Unit within the Corps of the Gendarmerie and the appointment of a specialized assistant promoter of justice."

The Moneyval report said the Vatican had hired two full-time officers for the new unit, both of whom are on leave from "the Italian police forces and both fully trained in modern financial investigation techniques," but Moneyval also recommended all of the Vatican gendarmes receive training in fighting financial crimes and suggested that the Vatican City court "needs further professional reinforcement in this regard."

"While this review cannot form a view on the quality of the evidence adduced in financial crime cases that have so far come before the (Vatican City) tribunal," Moneyval said, "the success rate of the promoter (of justice) before the tribunal so far is not encouraging."

UNITY

(From 2)

explicitly against capital punishment. The death penalty "is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel, because a decision is voluntarily made to suppress a human life, which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of whom, in the last analysis, only God can be the true judge and guarantor," the pope said.

Pope Francis' remarks about nuclear deterrence came at a Vatican conference in early November. For decades, the popes had said the policy of nuclear deterrence would be morally acceptable as long as real work was underway on a complete ban of the weapons.

But at the conference, Pope Francis said that today with nuclear weapons, "the threat of their use as well as their very possession is to be firmly condemned."

He later explained to journalists that the increased sophistication of the weapons means "you risk the destruction of humanity, or a great part of humanity."

While Pope Francis used large public Masses, his early morning Mass homilies and his Wednesday general audience talks to reach thousands of Catholics with his message, 2017 gave him an opportunity for face-to-face meetings with many world leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

He welcomed Trump to the Vatican May 24 for a visit described in the official statement as "cordial." Common ground was found on the issues of protecting the unborn and defending religious freedom. But they also discussed their different positions on climate change and on the obligation to assist migrants and refugees.

Just a few days after he met the pope, Trump announced the U.S. was pulling out of the U.N. Paris agreement on climate change, an agreement the Vatican had urged him to uphold.

In recent hours after Pope Francis appealed Dec. 6 for "wisdom and prudence" in protecting the status quo of Jerusalem, Trump publicly announced formal U.S. recognition of the city as Israel's capital and a project to begin moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. The Holy See, like the overwhelming majority of nations, has said political control of the city must be determined by negotiation as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In addition, for decades the Vatican has urged a special status for the city to guarantee Jews, Muslims and Christians access to their faith's holy sites.

Pope Francis also spent months urging the international community to ensure the new U.N. global compacts on migration and on refugees would support programs to help the poor stay in their countries rather than migrate and would open safe and legal immigration pathways for people fleeing extreme poverty and conflict.

Citing U.S. sovereignty, the Trump administration announced Dec. 3 that he was pulling the U.S. out of negotiations on the global compact on migration. Underscoring diversity and care for the poorest and most vulnerable members of society also were on Pope Francis mind in early June when he joined celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Catholic charismatic renewal.

Celebrating Pentecost with tens of thousands of Catholic charismatics from around the world and with dozens of Pentecostal and evangelical leaders, the pope said, "In a way both creative and unexpected," the Holy Spirit "generates diversity, for in every age he causes new and varied charisms to blossom. Then he brings about unity: he joins together, gathers and restores harmony." Christians, he said, must be "united by the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer and in action on behalf of those who are weaker."

"Walk together. Work together. Love each other," Pope Francis told them.

Follow Wooden on Twitter: @Cindy_Wooden.
El papa Francisco escuchará preocupaciones similares sobre los derechos territoriales, los daños ambientales y la necesidad de una pastoral indígena el 19 de enero, durante su visita a Puerto Maldonado, en el Amazonas del sur de Perú.

Siendo el hogar de algunos de los parques de mayor biodiversidad en el mundo, la zona ha sido devastada por una fiebre de oro que ha dejado grandes expansiones de tierra estéril marcada con minas de fosa abierta. La minería salvaje ha llevado a trabajo forzoso, contrabando de madera para venderlos a cambio de leña. Muchos ocultan sus raíces indígenas para evitar la discriminación, dijo Rosa Pacaya, quien dirige una comunidad cristiana en la parroquia La Inmaculada de Iquitos.

Pacaya vive en Masusa, un barrio de casas construidas sobre pilares, que se inunda cada año durante la temporada de lluvia. Las casas no tienen agua corriente, sistemas de alcantarillado, y la basura se acumula en las calles y debajo de los edificios cuando el agua retrocede.

La mayoría de los hombres en Masusa trabajan informalmente, levantando y cargando en los barcos pesqueros o petroleros. Algunos venden madera para vender a cambio de leña. Pacaya cocina y limpia en las casas de otras personas o recoge pedazos de madera para venderlos a cambio de leña. El estrés de la vida cotidiana afecta a las familias y deja a las personas con poca energía para movilizarse y exigir mejores condiciones de vida, dijo. Pacaya espera atraer al resto de la familia a la comunidad católica.

"It would be a church that is tribal, rather than monarchic," he said. "A family church that is not patriarchal… a church that learns to read the word of God in creation, to care for (creation) and respect it. A church that witnesses to the truth, seeking out our neighbors and those who suffer, and serving them."
Filipinos at St Mary’s Parish in Odessa started the annual tradition of Simbáng Gabi at 5 am, December 16, 2017.

Simbáng Gabi (Filipino for "Night Mass") is a devotional nine-day series of Masses practiced by Roman Catholics in the Philippines in anticipation of Christmas and to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mass usually begins at 4 a.m., Mass is before sunrise since it is the harvest season, and the farmers need to be in the fields after the celebration.

A well-known folk belief among the Filipinos is that if a devotee completes all nine days of the Simbáng Gabi, a request made as part of the novena may be granted.