Parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Robert Lee gathered outside the church as Bishop Michael Sis blessed a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe and dedicated the church’s new prayer garden on Dec. 14, 2019.
Youth from diocese attend national conference

By Joel Rivero

NCYC is the National Catholic Youth Conference, which happens every two years. This year about 20,000 young Catholics attended. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend this wonderful conference which allowed me to grow in my faith and get closer to my friends in the youth group.

The beginning of the adventure my youth group embarked on included a 24-hour drive from Midland, Texas, to Indianapolis, Indiana. I did not know what to expect as this conference was a national conference, and up until this point I had only attended regional conferences such as RCYC and Steubenville. The conference began and we quickly found seats.

The first thing that was shown was an amazing video message that Pope Francis made for the young people attending NCYC; this meant a lot to me because he kept the young people in his prayers. The conference then continued with a procession of candle bearers and a stained-glass window with a depiction of Jesus carried around the stadium up to the altar. This brought tears to my eyes because it was so beautiful and an amazing setup. The first day had ended and I felt more emotion than any other conference I had ever attended.

The second day was filled with much more fun and worship. The day began with the emcees Father Augustine and Katie McGrady. They began the day and informed us of the schedule for the day. We went on with fun activities and sessions that brought us closer to our faith and encouraged us to be better Catholics — not just in the church, but outside of the church. When the sessions ended and we moved forward with the conference, we went back to the Lucas Oil Stadium where adoration for the weekend began. This was a very powerful adoration and it was an amazing encounter with Jesus. This encounter brought me to tears, touched my heart, and drew me closer to God.

The next day, the final day, was fun-filled and went by way too fast. I did not want NCYC to come to an end. This day concluded with Mass, which was an amazing experience because there were hundreds of priests in the Mass and a couple of bishops present. Overall this was an unforgettable encounter with Christ and I would recommend other young Catholics to join their youth groups to hopefully one day attend a conference of this magnitude.

Participants from the Diocese of San Angelo gathered for a photo outside Lucas Oil Stadium during the National Catholic Youth Conference, held Nov. 21–23, 2019, in Indianapolis. Parishes in the Diocese of San Angelo represented included San Miguel Arcángel in Midland, Holy Redeemer in Odessa, St. Joseph in San Angelo, and St. Ambrose in Wall. A total of 47 people from the diocese made the journey to the conference.

COURTESY

By Joel Rivero

REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for our children and vulnerable adults. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you need a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church, we are here to help you. To report incidents, call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609 (cell), or write Diocese of San Angelo, Victim Assistance Ministry, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the incident occurred outside this diocese, our Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate diocese. Please keep in mind that one always has the right to report abuse to civil authorities, and civil law requires that any abuse of a minor must be reported.

REPORTAR ABUSO SEXUAL

La Diócesis Católica de San Ángelo está firmemente comprometida a crear y mantener el ambiente más seguro posible para nuestros niños y adultos vulnerables. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por cualquier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de traición o herido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarle. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Ángelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. Un intérprete de español está disponible. Si el incidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a trazar su preocupación a la atención de la diócesis correspondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de reportar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, y la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado.
From the Bishop’s Desk

Spiritual but not religious

In our conversations with friends, acquaintances, and relatives, the subject of religion sometimes comes up. Occasionally someone will say, “I am spiritual but not religious.” In this article I will seek to explore the approach of that life stance, and I will seek to address it from my own perspective as a Catholic Christian.

Those who claim to be spiritual but not religious are generally not interested in formal religious institutions. They tend to value individual freedom, autonomy, and an experimental approach to spiritual practices. They often speak about the value in being open-minded and inclusive. They try to make sense of their lives outside the teachings or practices of any particular religion.

While they are open to a higher realm and the divine, acknowledging that there is “something out there,” they are usually not concerned with doctrine, organizational rules, or established religious rituals. In general, they do not see a need to participate in any organized religion. Some are actively exploring spirituality, and some are actually seeking a new religious home. Some have explicitly rejected the Christian Church, and some have rejected organized religion in general. Some have said that they find religious people to be intolerant, judgmental, bureaucratic, superficial, self-righteous, and hypocritical.

There are many different reasons why a person might say that they are spiritual but not religious. Some have been turned off by negative personal experiences with organized religion. Some have simply drifted away. Some have never been introduced to an active religious faith, for some reason. They have not felt comfortable exploring spirituality, and some are actually seeking a new religious home. Some have explicitly rejected the Christian Church, and some have rejected organized religion in general. Some have said that they find religious people to be intolerant, judgmental, bureaucratic, superficial, self-righteous, and hypocritical.

In my own life experience as a Catholic Christian, I have arrived at spirituality through my religion. Rather than being an obstacle, I have found my Catholic religion to be an inspiration to a deeper spirituality. I believe that religion gives flesh to the spiritual. Religion informs the spiritual. Religion puts the spiritual into concrete, constructive action. Religion connects the spiritual to others. Religion keeps the spiritual from going in harmful, selfish, or destructive, liturgical form of communal worship. Any spiritual practices that they adopt are usually more informal and individual.

There are many different reasons why a person might say that they are spiritual but not religious. Some have been turned off by negative personal experiences with organized religion. Some have simply drifted away. Some have never been introduced to an active religious faith, for some reason. They have not felt comfortable exploring spirituality, and some are actually seeking a new religious home. Some have explicitly rejected the Christian Church, and some have rejected organized religion in general. Some have said that they find religious people to be intolerant, judgmental, bureaucratic, superficial, self-righteous, and hypocritical.

Espirital pero no religioso

En nuestras conversaciones con amigos, conocidos y familiares, el tema de la religión a veces aparece. De vez en cuando alguien va a decir: “Soy espiritual pero no religioso.” En este artículo voy a tratar de explorar el enfoque de esa filosofía de la vida, y voy a tratar de abordarla desde mi propia perspectiva como cristiano católico.

Los que pretenden ser espirituales pero no religiosos en general no están interesados en las instituciones religiosas formales. Ellos tienden a valorar la libertad individual, la autonomía y un enfoque experimental para las prácticas espirituales. A menudo hablan sobre el valor de tener la mente abierta e inclusiva. Ellos tratan de dar sentido a sus vidas fuera de las enseñanzas o prácticas de cualquier religión en particular.

Mientras están abiertos a la realidad divina, reconocen que hay “algo por ahí”, generalmente no se preocupan por la doctrina, las normas de organización, o rituales religiosos establecidos. En general, no ven la necesidad de participar en cualquier forma organizada de culto litúrgico comunitario. Cualquieras prácticas espirituales que adoptan suelen ser más informales e individuales.

Hay muchas razones por las cuales una persona puede decir que es espiritual, pero no religiosa. Algunos se han desacostumbrado por las experiencias personales negativas con la religión organizada. Algunos simplemente se han alejado. Algunos nunca fueron introducidos a una comunidad activa de la fe religiosa. Algunos están explorando activamente la espiritualidad, y algunos están efectivamente en busca de un nuevo hogar religioso. Algunos han rechazado explícitamente la Iglesia cristiana, y algunos han rechazado la espiritualidad en general. Algunos han dicho que encuentran en las personas religiosas a ser intolerantes, críticos, burocráticos, superficiales, muy creidos, e hipócritas.

En mi propia experiencia de vida como cristiano católico, he llegado a la espiritualidad a través de mi relación con Dios a través de la fe, y he encontrado que la religión me desafía a crecer. Me envuelvo en la vida de los demás de una manera que da vida. Proporciona una sensación de raíces y un vocabulario común que lleva a la discusión significativa y una espiritualidad más profunda. He descubierto que la comunidad de fe en mi religión católica ofrece oportunidades de servicio que me mueven más allá de mi mismo, para comprender con más compasión y responder más eficazmente a las necesidades y sufrimientos de los demás.

También he descubierto que mi religión me desafía a crecer. Me responsabiliza a ser una persona más responsable. Me envuelvo en la vida de los demás de una manera que da vida. Proporciona una sensación de raíces y un vocabulario común que lleva a la discusión significativa y una espiritualidad más profunda. Creo que la religión da carne a lo espiritual. La religión informa a lo espiritual. La religión pone lo espiritual en una acción concreta y constructiva. La religión une lo espiritual a otros. La religión impide lo espiritual de ir en una dirección perjudicial, egoísta, o destructiva.

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Call to mind the following:
- Failures
- Frustrations
- Broken Hearts
- Deaths
- Suffering
- Sin

[PAUSE]

Pray to God the Father:
“God our Father, source of all that is good, I thank you and praise you for all these gifts. All that I have, all that I am, is a gift from your loving hand. I am very grateful to you.”

B. We think back on the problems of the past year, directing our prayer to God the Son, Jesus Christ, whose Death and Resurrection is the source of healing and mercy. In this movement, we examine our conscience, and ask for forgiveness.

Call to mind the following:
- Treasures
- Memories
- Successes
- Accomplishments
- Joys
- Graces

[PAUSE]

Remember that the name Jesus means “God saves.”

Prayerfully ask Jesus Christ to save you:
“Lord Jesus, source of all redemption, bring healing to all that is broken and hurting in my life, bring forgiveness to all that is sinful in me. Be my savior again.”

C. We think of the year to come, directing our prayer to God the Holy Spirit. We call to mind the challenges that we will face in the upcoming months, and ask for guidance and strength, so that we can be the people that God wants us to be.

Call to mind the following:
- Challenges you will face.
- Your hopes and dreams and vision.
- New projects you will take on.
- What needs to change in your life.

[PAUSE]

Pray to the Holy Spirit:
“Come, Holy Spirit, show me the way. Guide me in this new year. I trust that you will not leave me to face my future alone. Help me to trust that, in my unknown future, you are already there waiting for me. I entrust this new year to your direction and care. Abide in me, and grant that forever I may abide in you.”

Mira OBISPO, Página 22
Cathedral Choir News

CHILDRENS CHORAL PROGRAM

We would like to invite parents of children between the ages of 7 and 16 to have their children try out our children’s choir program. This activity has just been awarded a second Tucker Foundation grant (now totaling $70,000), independently confirming it as an outstanding cultural organization in the region. The program is in two sections—a training choir for ages 7–8 that meets Tuesday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. during school term and sings at the 10:00 a.m. Mass the second Sunday of the month, and our Cathedral Choristers for students age 9–16 that meet Wednesday from 4:45 to 5:45 p.m. and sings at the 10:00 a.m. Mass on the second and fourth Sunday of the month. Our timing allows students and families to continue participating fully in their own parish churches while also contributing and benefiting from this outstanding music program. Cathedral Choristers in their second year and above also optionally participate in a musicanship class each Friday from 4:45 to 5:45 p.m. Each child in the program is offered free individual piano lessons. The start of the new year is a great time to come and try it out.

PROFESSIONAL SINGERS

Our overall program needs trained adult singers—especially men. While mostly focused on Sunday evening and supplying singers for the professional Schola Cantorum (a group that produces the finest cathedral-style music) other opportunities are also available, such as section leaders for the adult volunteer choirs and cantors. We provide competitive financial compensation typical for cathedrals and major churches.

For more information or to schedule an interview/audition for our program, please contact Mr. John Webber, the Director of Cathedral Music Ministries, at jwebber@sanangeloocese.org or call at 325-949-1747.

CALENDARS

Bishop’s Calendar

January 2020

1 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Day Mass at 10:00 a.m.
2 MIDLAND, Holy Cross Catholic High School basketball games
3 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Diocesan Liturgical Commission meeting at 11:30 a.m.
4 MIDLAND, St. Stephen, Diocesan Homeschool Mass at 5:00 p.m.
5–6–10 SAN ANTONIO, Region X Bishops’ Retreat
11 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Sepulchre Mass at 5:00 p.m.

February 2020

1 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 11:00 a.m.
16 ROME, Ad Limina Pilgrimage for Bishops of Region X
28 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, TCCB-EC diocesan directors, Mass at 5:00 p.m.
31 SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret, Anversary of Eucharistic Adoration Chapel, Mass at 6:00 p.m.

Calendar

Christ the King Retreat Center

January 2020

1 CKRC Offices closed for New Year’s Day
5–10 Holy Trinity Seminarians’ Silent Retreat
10–12 Deacon Formation
13 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
15 DOSA Staff Mass & Lunch
19 Confirmation Retreat
20 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
24–26 Encaged & Natural Family Planning
27–29 TCCB-EC Directors Meeting
30–Feb 2 Men’s Small Town ACTS Retreat

February 2020

1–2 Men’s Small Town ACTS Retreat
3 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
7–9 Deacon Formation
10 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
15 Diocesan Pastoral Plan Retreat
16 Confirmation Retreat
17 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
18–19 DOSA Spring Convocation
21–22 Lenten Retreat
24 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
27 DOSA Staff Lenten Day of Reflection
28–Mar 1 Engaged & Natural Family Planning

Necrology of Priests and Deacons

Please pray for our departed clergy

January

10 Rev. Francis Beazley, OMI (1992)
11 Deacon Paul Klein (2015)
18 Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (1975)
22 Deacon Jose Esparza (2011)
24 Bishop Thomas Tschoeppe (2009)
26 Deacon D.J. Goetz (2003)
26 Rev. Cyril Lange (1971)
26 Deacon Jack Peterson (1987)
27 Deacon Horacio Yanez (2015)

February

2 Deacon Pedro Sanchez (2013)
5 Deacon David King (2006)
6 Deacon Ignacio Cisneros (2016)
9 Rev. Albert Fuytinck, CSSR (1997)
10 Rev. Leo E. Lavoie (1978)
11 Deacon Ray Smith (2014)
20 Deacon Mark Reeh (2005)
21 Rev. Tom Kelley (2005)
Youth Ministry: More than youth group

I think most adults could agree that we want vibrant, effective youth ministry programs at our parish. Our reasoning behind the why of the program may vary—we want a safe place for young people to hang out, we want opportunities for young people to grow in faith, we don’t want our children to make the same mistakes we did when we were teens—but we all recognize that quality youth ministry is important for our young people and for the larger Church community.

Some may ask, “What makes effective, quality youth ministry?” Again, the answers here are varied based on the community and the needs of the young people in that community. However, there are a few things that can help us to move towards better youth ministry in general.

Now, the disclaimer: there is no magic bullet or a single program or resource that will give us the results we want. It will depend on our community, the needs of the young people, and the congregational culture.

First, we must consider the words we use. Words have power and make an impact. At times, that impact may be different than we intend. One case where this is true that many do not realize is when we use the term “youth group.”

The word “group” is exclusive, even by its definition. A group only contains those people or things that are already classified or considered together. When we use the term “youth group,” we are already excluding those who are not currently part of the established group. This can make young people feel like they are not welcome or that they do not belong. I would presume that is not the message anybody involved in youth ministry wants to send to the young people in our communities.

One simple way to be more welcoming is to simply change some of the language we use. Instead of using the term youth group, you could simply call it youth ministry. Some parishes even choose to come up with a name or acronym to identify the group. It is a simple change that can make an impact on the teens searching for a place to belong.

Another downfall of the “youth group” model is that it often only focuses on the social aspect of ministry and is not comprehensive. If we look at the document from the USCCB, "Renewing the Vision," it tells us that youth ministry should be comprised of eight components: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship. Comprehensive youth ministry makes sure that we are somehow incorporating all these components in our ministry over the year.

In order to have an effective and comprehensive youth ministry program, we must have youth ministry leaders that exhibit certain qualities. Some of those desired qualities include: provides competent leadership, models faith, mentors faith life, develops teams, knows youth and youth culture, and establishes effective relationships.

How do we know if our youth ministry is effective? Some will simply point to numbers and how many young people attend an event. That is not always the best indication, especially in ministry. Rather, we should be looking at how well it invites participation and helps grow the faith of those involved. Some qualities to look for in an effective vibrant youth ministry program include: establishes a caring environment, develops quality relationships, focuses on Jesus and the Catholic faith, considers life issues of the young people, uses many approaches, and is well-organized and planned.

No need to hear from the resources we use or program we implement, we must remember that what is important is listening to the young people. Not so we can give them advice or direction, but simply to hear about their joys, struggles, doubts, dreams, and needs. We must seek to simply see the youth as they are, not as the culture judges them or as we wish them to be. Our job is not to put Jesus in their hearts, it is to help them realize he is already there.

Alison Pope is an associate director of the Diocese of San Angelo’s Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

An invitation to join in prayer for those affected by abortion

By Sharla Ynostrosa

The 47th anniversary of Roe v Wade is Wednesday, January 22, 2020.

Please join us on that day as we gather for a time of silent prayer and reflection.

We will gather at the Tom Green County Courthouse in San Angelo from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. We are inviting people of all faiths to join us as we remember the almost 62 million unborn babies that have been aborted in the United States since January 22, 1973. This is also a time to pray for all those who have been hurt and those who need healing from a past abortion. This will be a peaceful gathering. Come and stay the whole hour or drop by during your lunch hour and pray for a few minutes.

Those who cannot join are encouraged to gather where they can and take the time to stop for a brief time and be united with us in praying for the sacredness of life.

As of 9:23 a.m. on December 11, 2019, the following are the number of abortions (data from www.infotrebirth.org):

In the United States today — 1,001.1
In the United States since 1973 (Roe v Wade) — 61,824,408.8
By Planned Parenthood since 1970 — 8,613,788.4
By Planned Parenthood this year — 325,542.9
United States this year — 882,375.8
US this Year after 6 weeks gestation — 42,354.0
Planned or unplanned, a baby is a unique and precious gift from God.

Please mark your calendars and join us as we remember the innocent victims of abortion.

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Sharla Ynostrosa is the San Angelo-area pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo.

Life ... at what cost?

When I was four, I remember my mom saying to me, “This is your Uncle Frankie, say goodbye to him.” That is the only memory I have of him … standing by a door in his Army uniform. Twenty-year-old Frank left Hamontaut, New Jersey, not long after that and was sent halfway around the world to Korea. We never saw him again.

Seven years later, as I walked to school each day, I stopped by a granite memorial that had my name engraved on it with “Iwo Jima” next to it. A line above that one was Frank’s name with POW/MIA beside it. My father lost two brothers in wars, one after whom I was named. I didn’t understand the letters after Frank’s name and my mother explained that he had been captured and no one knew exactly what had happened to him and where he was … until February 1999. It was then that I received a call from “Jim,” an official with the Department of Defense, who informed me that after 68 years, Uncle Frankie was finally “coming home.” Because of an agreement President Trump had made with Kim Jong Un, 55 bodies had been removed from what had left “hostile territory” and had arrived in Hawaii. With the help of DNA that I provided a decade or more ago, he was one of three positive identifications.

I cried for him … though I knew him not. Most people do not know how much our country values lives that have been lost in its defense. The remains of 203 individuals were identified in 2018 through the efforts of a vast array of professional members of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). They include analysts, linguists, researchers, interviewers, surveyors, an underwater team, a mountaineering team, medics, forensic anthropologists, medical examiners, explosive ordinance disposal technicians, forensic photographers, life support technical support personnel and many others throughout the world who have dedicated their lives to bringing home the bodies of those lost in war. The time, effort, and sacrifices that our government and Congress has invested in this work is truly remarkable.

The budget for the DPAA in 2018 was $146.3 million. While we might think of a perfectly formed skeleton in a casket, this is seldom the case. For Frank, all that remained was a femur, a single bone perhaps 16” long. If we divide the budget by the number of identifications made last year, it averages $720,689 per individual identified. What a country we have that values life so much that one bone from a man who died 68 years ago is valued so highly, not to mention the thousands spent on his funeral.

Just across the river from where “Frank” landed in Newark, there is another extremely hostile territory that is a much more immediate threat to life. About the time we were overjoyed by Frank’s identification, the governor of New York and members of the New York state legislative branch were overjoyed and celebrating the passage of a law that allowed women to murder their children up to the time of their birth. Countless children denied the right to life that our Declaration of Independence proclaims.

I cried for them … though I knew them not. What kind of a nation reveres and honors its dead and celebrates the murder of its children? A nation without a very long future… - - -

James R. Sulliman, PhD

Dr. James Sulliman, a graduate of Rutgers University and Florida State University, has over 40 years’ experience in individual, family, and marital therapy. He is also the Abilene-area pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo.
Christmas dreams come true thanks to Holy Angels parishioners

By CASA

Santa Claus received some valuable help for Christmas this year from the families of Holy Angels Church in San Angelo, Texas. The parishioners and their families have “adopted” children in the foster care system in Tom Green County through Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

The foster families of the children, as well as the children, compile a wish list for Christmas. That wish list is then “adopted” by the parishioners to help the wishes come true.

The ages of the foster children range from newborn to high school age. Many have been in the foster care system for an extended length of time. Most of these children were placed in foster care due to issues with their living environment with their parents or relatives. These children have little to no possessions of their own, so these wish lists become extra special. Sometimes the wishes are as simple as a pair of socks or shoes or as extravagant as a PlayStation 4. The parishioners of Holy Angels have always come through and make sure that these wish lists, and some unexpected gifts, are included.

This is the third year that Holy Angels Church has helped these special children in Tom Green County. It is a testament to the giving and generous hearts of the parishioners. This has been an amazing time for all of us. It brings joy to the children and to the parishioners alike. There are heartwarming stories of the joy that the shopping for these children brought to all of our amazing parishioners.

Thank you, Holy Angels Church, for your generosity and help in making Christmas brighter for some very special children in Tom Green County.

Faith in Action

High school students from Holy Angels Church in San Angelo recently prepared 430 snack bags for the homeless as part of the Sack Lunch Ministry.
Parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Ozona and Father Hilary Ihedioha gathered at 6:00 a.m on Dec. 12, 2019, for Mass and to sing Las Mañanitas to Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day.

Several men who serve the Diocese of San Angelo were on hand for a Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Midland after Mass on Dec. 12, 2019, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Pictured are (left to right): Seminarian Upton Sewell, Father Freddy Perez, Father Reggie Odima, Deacon Jesse Gusjardo, Father David Herrera, Bishop Michael Sis, Deacon Tommy Flores, Deacon Ricardo Torres, Father Ryan Rojo, Deacon Ignacio Villa, and Father Michael Rodriguez.
Every child is a gift

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Genesis 1:27

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."

Jeremiah 1:5

Aborting a baby with Down syndrome "has not only become justified but is almost considered a duty," according to Dr. Elizabeth Schiltz, law professor, who contributed to the book The Cost of 'Choice': Women Evaluate the Impact of Abortion.

Roe v. Wade was a landmark decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in January 1973 in which the Court ruled that the Constitution of the United States protects a pregnant woman's right to choose to have an abortion without excessive government restriction. It is estimated that nearly 50 million abortions have been performed in the United States since that decision legalized abortion.

What about the right of a baby to live, to be fully the person God created them to be when they were conceived in their mother's womb? Does this right to life extend to babies with disabilities? Although accurate statistics are hard to find, pro-life sources estimate 75% of all Down syndrome babies are aborted, primarily due to the availability of non-invasive prenatal testing for this syndrome. Results of prenatal tests that reveal any abnormality or undesirable characteristic are a temptation to the mother to abort.

An article in the American Journal of American Genetics states that 99% of persons with Down syndrome are overwhelmingly happy with their lives, 97% like who they are, and 96% like how they look (“Self-perceptions from People with Down Syndrome”). Clearly, the issue is not about the value of the child's life to God or to themselves. The issue is our twisted notion of what constitutes "happiness" for parents and family and a "positive" contribution to society vs. parents' perception of difficulty, inconvenience, embarrassment, or economic burden for them, their family, and society.

After prenatal screening tests are performed, descriptions and pictures of babies and adults with disabilities are readily available to expectant parents: Down syndrome, Treacher Collins syndrome, cleft palate, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, and dozens of other conditions. Imagine yourself presented with the reality of a child with disabilities — or, perhaps, you are a parent who has experienced this. The testimony of parents reveals shock and disbelief. Why did God allow this? What did I do wrong in my pregnancy? What will our family and friends think? How can we possibly care for and support a disabled child all our lives? There will be no normalcy ever again.

These descriptions and pictures of persons with disabilities "are so at odds with cultural expectations and classical conceptions of beauty that they form a genuine psychological barrier to accepting the child's humanity." This is a quote from Dr. Theresa Farnan in her paper, "Beauty, the Person, and Disability: Understanding (and Defending) the Intrinsic Beauty and Value of the Person with Disabilities." The Farnans have a Down syndrome child. Dr. Arnie Stringfellow, a physician who was born with Treacher Collins, a deformity of the face and ears, says if she were given the chance to live her life all over again without Treacher Collins, she would decline. "I believe the experiences in my life have molded me into the person that I am today. Treacher Collins syndrome, or any other medical condition, does not make someone 'abnormal,' it only makes him human."

All of this is not to deny the difficulties experi-
2019: Catholic Year in Review

Bishops take new actions to hold themselves accountable for abuse in 2019

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The clergy sexual abuse crisis continued to command a large amount of attention and action from the U.S. bishops throughout 2019.

The year was headlined by actions during the bishops' spring general assembly during which they approved a plan to implement Pope Francis' "motu proprio" on addressing abuse.

The pope issued his document, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi (You are the light of the world),* in May to help the Catholic Church safeguard its members from abuse and hold its leaders accountable.

The "motu proprio" was one of the measures that came out of a February Vatican summit on clergy sexual abuse attended by the presidents of the world's bishops' conferences.

The U.S. bishops' implementation plan passed 281-1 with two abstentions. *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* established procedures for reporting allegations of sexual abuse of minors or of vulnerable person by clerics, including bishops, or members of religious orders. The document also holds church leaders accountable for actions or omissions relating to the handling of abuse reports.

In line with the plan, the bishops in June approved a third-party reporting system to field sexual misconduct allegations against bishops. Such a system could be in place by the end of February, Anthony Picarello, associate general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, reported during the bishops' fall general assembly in November.

The company awarded the contract to implement the system, Denver-based Converged, was working quickly to get it in place well before the May 31, 2020, deadline set by Pope Francis, Picarello said.

The precise date a toll-free hotline will be activated and links on diocesan and eparchial websites and the USCCB website will go live will depend on how quickly each diocese or eparchy can implement the program, he said.

In another action in June, the bishops approved the document "Affirming Our Episcopal Commitments" and promised to hold themselves accountable to the commitments of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, including a zero-tolerance policy for abuse. The document said any codes of conduct in their respective dioceses regarding clergy apply to bishops as well.

In addition, the bishops approved a "protocol regarding available nonpenal restrictions on bishops," which outlines what canonical options are available to bishops when a retired bishop resigns or is removed "due to sexual misconduct with adults or grave negligence of office, or where subsequent to his resignation he was found to have so acted or failed to act."

That protocol was cited in October by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, then-USCCB president, who disinvited Bishop Michael J. Bransfield, former bishop of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, to the fall general assembly.


After consulting with Vatican officials Bishop Mark E. Brennan, of Wheeling-Charleston Nov. 26 announced that he asked his predecessor to pay back more than $792,000 to cover the "inappropriate expenditure of diocesan funds to support a luxurious lifestyle."

Bishop Brennan outlined a series of other actions in a nine-point "plan of amends" he proposed that the retired bishop take including issuing apologies to the people he is alleged to have sexually abused, to the faithful of the diocese for "the grievous harm he caused," and to diocesan employees "who suffered from a culture of intimidation and retribution which the former bishop created."

Elsewhere, the bishop of Buffalo, New York, retired because of questions surrounding his handling of clergy sexual abuse reports.

Bishop Richard J. Malone, 73, told Catholics Dec. 4 he asked Pope Francis to allow him to retire early so the people of the diocese "will be better served" by a new bishop who is "perhaps better able" to bring about "reconciliation, healing and renewal" in addressing the abuse crisis.

Bishop Malone is two years shy of the age at which bishops are required by canon law to send their resignation to the pope.

For more than a year, Bishop Malone's response to reports of sexual abuse by clergy has been under fire, particularly a situation involving two priests' relationship with a seminarian that he has called "a very complex, convoluted matter."

Throughout the year, the situation surrounding former U.S. Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick continued to linger over the U.S. church. Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston reported to the bishops during their fall general assembly in November that the Vatican may publish what it knows about the ascent to power of now-disgraced former prelate by Christmas, or perhaps the New Year.

McCarrick was dismissed by the Vatican from the clerical state in February following an investigation of accusations that he had abused children early on in his career of more than 60 years as a cleric, and that he also had abused seminarians as a bishop.

Cardinal O'Malley's brief presentation about his visit with Vatican officials, including Cardinal Pietro Parolin, secretary of state, in early November was short on details. He noted that officials had showed him a "hefty document that has been assembled."

"We made it clear to Cardinal Parolin at the leadership of the Curia that the priests and the people of our country are anxious to receive the Holy See's explanation of this tragic situation, how he could become an archbishop and cardinal, who knew what and when," Cardinal O'Malley said. "The long wait has resulted in great frustration on the part of bishops and our people and indeed a very harsh and even cynical interpretation of the seeming silence."

A day after a New Jersey victims' rights law went into effect, a 37-year-old man filed a lawsuit against McCarrick, who was Newark's archbishop from 1986 to 2000.

The suit also names the Archdiocese of Newark as a defendant and alleges Vatican officials were aware of McCarrick's behavior during his more than 60 years as a cleric and yet continued to promote him as a church leader.

In all, 15 states have enacted rules that extend or suspend the statute of limitations to allow claims to be filed by abuse survivors against dioceses, the Associated Press reported.

With the rules in place, dioceses in those states were expecting a surge in new lawsuits that may cost billions of dollars in payouts.

The Diocese of Rochester, New York, sought protection under federal bankruptcy laws in response to that state's new Child Victims Act lifting the statute of limitations. Bishop Salvatore R. Matano took the step in the wake of nearly 50 lawsuits filed against the diocese in the weeks after the law took effect Aug. 14.

Bishop Matano called the filing "a very difficult and painful decision," in a video and letter to parishes released Sept. 12.

"But after assessing all reasonable possibilities to satisfy the claims, reorganization is considered the best and fairest course of action for the victims and for the well-being of the diocese, its parishes, agencies and institutions," he said. "We believe this is the only way we can provide just compensation for all who suffered the egregious sin of sexual abuse while ensuring the continued commitment of the diocese to the mission of Christ."
The court also agreed this term to next year review a Louisiana abortion law requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals and a school choice program in Montana that excludes religious schools.

In rulings issued in June, at the end of its previous term, the court permitted a religious symbol on public property, blocked the Trump administration from adding a citizenship question to the 2020 census and overturned an inmate’s death sentence, citing racial bias in the prosecutor’s jury selection.

In the religious symbol case, the justices in a 7-2 vote favored preserving a historic cross-shaped memorial in Maryland, saying it did not endorse religion.

The majority opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, said the memorial, which pays tribute to soldiers who died in World War I, should be seen in the same “historical context” as the white crosses marking the overseas graves of soldiers who lost their lives in that war. He also said removing the memorial “would be seen by many not as a neutral act but as the manifestation of a hostility toward religion that has no place in our Establishment Clause traditions.”

As they wrapped up their term in June, the justices also blocked an added citizenship question to the census and overturned an inmate’s death sentence, citing racial bias in the prosecutor’s jury selection.

The 5-4 ruling — written by Chief Justice John Roberts and joined in part by the justices also blocked an added citizenship question to the 2020 census and overturned an inmate’s death sentence, citing racial bias in the prosecutor’s jury selection.

In briefs objecting to the added question, immigrant advocacy groups, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens in New York said it would prevent noncitizens from filling out the census and would cause a reduction in funding and impact social service agencies.

A statement issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on the day of oral arguments stressed the importance of an accurate count, noting that the Catholic Church and other service providers rely on the national census to provide an accurate count to effectively serve those in need.

Before the new term began, the court issued unsigned orders backing President Donald Trump’s immigration policies.

In late July, it said the Trump administration could use $2.5 billion in Pentagon funds to pay for construction and repairs of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. In mid-September, it allowed the Trump administration to enforce its new rule preventing many Central Americans and other migrants seeking asylum in the United States to apply for asylum at the border, while the legal battle over the issue continues to work its way through the courts.

This rule basically bars asylum-seekers from applying for protection at the U.S. southern border if they went through another country en route to the United States without first applying for asylum in that country.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, in her five-page dissent, said the administration’s ban on asylum-seekers “topples decades of settled asylum practices and affects some of the most vulnerable people in the Western Hemisphere” and comes at a time when the stakes for asylum-seekers “could not be higher.”

The nonprofit group Hope Border Institute, based in El Paso, Texas, said the court’s decision reflects “a disturbing pattern that emerges when the Supreme Court wields its power, however temporarily, to greenlight Trump’s anti-immigrant agenda.” It also said the “human impact of this decision will be devastating to thousands of refugees who see the possibility of safety, security and freedom at our nation’s border.”

The administration’s rule: “Asylum Eligibility and Procedural Modifications” was published July 15. In a public comment filed Aug. 15 with the Executive Office for Immigration Review, a group of more than 250 faith leaders and organizations, including several Catholic groups, called the rule a “backdoor asylum ban” and urged the administration to end it.

This fall, all eyes were on the court for how it would respond in the high-stakes immigration case on DACA.

On Nov. 12, the court heard oral arguments on the Trump administration’s appellate court rulings that have blocked Trump’s 2017 order to end DACA, established in 2012 by President Barack Obama through an executive order. The program has enabled about 700,000 qualifying young adults, who arrived in the U.S. as children without legal documentation, to work, get health insurance, a driver’s license and above all, not face deportation.

At issue before the court — while DACA supporters including Catholic activists rallied outside — was how the Trump administration went about trying to end DACA.

Catholic leaders joined more than 35 other groups in filing friend-of-the-court briefs urging the court to uphold DACA. This view was reiterated in a Nov. 12 statement by Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, then chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration.

“Ending DACA,” he said, “would disrupt DACA recipients’ continued contributions to our country and could needlessly separate them from their families. Not allowing these young people to continue to utilize DACA to reach their God-given potential is against the common good and our nation’s history of welcoming the immigrant.”

A decision is expected next June. At the end of its last term and as the new term began, the court once again examined death penalty cases.

In a June decision, the court overturned the death sentence of a Mississippi African American man who had been tried six times for a quadruple murder charge.

Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille, who is a longtime opponent of the death penalty, said the case “pulled the curtain back on racism that persists in jury selection in Mississippi and across the country. This form of discrimination costs people their freedom and, in capital cases, their lives.”

On Dec. 6, the court issued an order which left in place a preliminary injunction prohibiting the government from carrying out the first federal executions in 16 years. A federal judge in November temporarily blocked upcoming executions of four federal death-row inmates, who had challenged the constitutionality of the lethal injection protocol to be used in their executions.

The day before the court’s order, Catholic Mobilizing Network, the national Catholic organization working to end the death penalty, delivered a petition to President Donald Trump and Attorney General William Barr opposing the planned restart of federal executions. The petition was signed by nearly 3,000 Catholics including retired Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, Auxiliary Bishop William J. Justice of San Francisco and Sister Helen Prejean.

The court was to hear another death penalty case Dec. 11: the appeal of an Arizona death-row inmate who claims the state courts failed to give him a new sentencing hearing based on current law.

On Dec. 9, the court declined to take up a challenge to a Kentucky ultrasound law that requires a physician or qualified technician to perform an ultrasound on a woman seeking an abortion and show the screen images to her. The Kentucky Ultrasound Informed Consent Act law can take effect immediately.

In early December, the court heard its first gun rights case in almost a decade, brought by New York City licensed gun owners challenging a regulation that puts limits the ability to transport firearms outside the home. The suit was first filed in 2013 and the New York state has since made some modifications to the regulation.

Gun rights advocates hoped the court was prepared to extend its previous rulings on gun laws to further strengthen gun rights self-defense and home security.

Catholic leaders did not weigh in on this, but the USCCB has supported measures addressing gun violence that include regulations and limitations on the purchase of handguns.

On the second day of the court’s new term, the justices heard oral arguments from three cases examining accommodations for gay, lesbian and transgender employees under Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts.

The federal law prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin and religion. At issue in the case is whether the section barring discrimination based on sex applies to sexual orientation.

A number of religious groups, including the USCCB, weighed in with friend-of-the-court briefs in favor of the employers. The USCCB brief said the added employee protection could impact faith-based schools, health care providers and homeless shelters that operate by “religious and moral convictions.” Dozens of companies and advocacy groups filed briefs in support of the employees.

Currently, more than 20 states and the district of Columbia have laws in place to protect against employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity with exceptions for religious employers. Lael Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel of Becket, a nonprofit religious liberty law firm, told reporters that if the court views these employee cases as discrimination, there will likely be new lawsuits and “massive liabilities with churches, schools and religious organizations” that expect their employees to follow certain standards.

He said there are exceptions for those in ministerial roles with a religious function, but he noted that no matter how these exemptions are interpreted, there is likely to be a lot of confusion.

A ruling on that case also is expected in June.
2019: Catholic Year in Review

Amid year's violence, Catholic leaders decry shootings, urge policy changes
By Carol Zimmerman
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Amid the multiple mass shootings that took place in the U.S. during 2019, Catholic leaders spoke out against them, urged legislators to make changes to put a stop to these actions and asked Catholics to pray and work toward possible solutions.

Some of the year's major shootings included:
— A May 31 shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, which killed 22 people and wounded at least 24.
— An Aug. 4 shooting in Dayton, Ohio, which left nine people dead and another 27 injured.
— An Aug. 31 drive-by shooting spree in Odessa and Midland, Texas, killing seven people and wounding 24.
— A May 31 shooting in a municipal building in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where a former city employee killed 12 people and wounded four.

During the summer, Bishop Edward K. Braxton of Belleville, Illinois, decried “a crisis of gun violence” in the United States and asked Catholics in his diocese to come together and think of ideas to stop these tragedies from recurring.

“The crisis is caused, in part, by a small number of gun owners who abuse the firearms that are readily available to them and by the lack of consensus on the part of the American people and their elected representatives,” Bishop Braxton said in a message, issued Aug. 6, days after the mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton.

In his reflection, “A National Crisis: A Pastoral Reflection on the Deadly Epidemic of Gun Violence in the United States,” he asked Catholic leaders — and clergy and lay — to establish opportunities to pray for an end to gun violence and to search for solutions. He also acknowledged that answers have been hard to come by, noting that many Catholics have told him they “feel helpless, even paralyzed,” to respond to the ongoing violence, a frustration that he said he equally shares.

Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, similarly addressed not only the gun violence but its racist undertones in a pastoral letter “Night Will Be No More” issued Oct. 13.

The letter began and ended with a focus on the Aug. 3 shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, where authorities believe the gunman targeted Latinos.

He wrote: “Hatred visited our community and Latino blood was spilled in sacrifice to the false god of white supremacy” and said the shooting rampage was an example of the racism toward Latinos that has reached “a dangerous fever pitch” in the nation.

The bishop also urged authorities to spare the life of accused shooter Patrick Crusius, 21, who is said to have left messages on social media saying he was carrying out the shooting because of the “Hispanic invasion of Texas.” Texas prosecutors have said they will ask for the death penalty if he's convicted.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, then president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, then chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, spoke out against many of the shootings during the year.

After the shootings in El Paso and Ohio, they said in a statement: “We can never again believe that mass shootings are an isolated occurrence. They are an epidemic against life that we must, in justice, face.”

After the Aug. 31 shooting in Texas, which occurred as a gunman sped along highways in Odessa and Midland, Bishop Michael J. Sis of San Angelo committed diocesan parishes to assisting the community in its healing.

“There are no easy answers as to how to end this epidemic of gun violence in our state and in our country. I ask the Lord to enlighten all of our hearts and minds, especially our government leaders, so that we can have the insight and the courage to move from a culture of death to a culture of life,” the bishop wrote.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago said the Chicago Archdiocese “mourns and prays” for the victims of the shootings in El Paso and Dayton, but it also stands “with their loved ones demanding an end to this deadly status quo.”

The archbishop, who lives in a city that has seen its share of gun violence in recent years, emphasized that an end to tragedies that occurred in Dayton and El Paso “begins with holding accountable our elected officials who have done nothing to address gun violence.”

He also said it requires holding others accountable, “including social leaders who have given the violent acts by dividing humanity through hateful rhetoric. This must stop — along with the silence of our elected officials who have failed to condemn hate speech, for they are the very ones who have sworn to keep our nation safe.”

Pope Francis joined U.S. Catholic leaders in expressing sorrow for back-to-back mass shootings in Texas and Ohio Aug. 3 and 4. After the Aug. 4 Angelus in St. Peter’s Square, he said he wanted to convey his spiritual closeness to the victims, the wounded and the families affected by the attacks. He also included those who died a weekend earlier during a shooting at a festival in Gilroy, California.

“I am spiritually close to the victims of the episodes of violence that these days have bloodied Texas, California and Ohio, in the United States, affecting defenseless people,” he said.

Cardinal DiNardo and Bishop Dewane said in their Aug. 4 statement that the bishops’ conference has long advocated for responsible gun laws and increased resources for addressing the root causes of violence and called upon the president and congress to set aside political interests “and find ways to better protect innocent life.”

At a Nov. 11 presentation to the U.S. bishops at their annual fall assembly in Baltimore, Bishop Dewane said Catholic clergy and lay leaders can play a role in bringing together people along the rural-urban divide to build understanding of the need for sensible policies that can end the scourge of gun violence. He also outlined the USCCB’s long-held stance of the need for “common sense” legislation that governs the availability of guns.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, the bishop said the USCCB’s work on the legislative front was important, but that a pastoral response to gun violence was needed.

Over the years, he said, the bishops have supported “common sense” actions such as an assault weapon ban, limits on large capacity magazines, a federal law to criminalize gun trafficking, mandatory gun lock and safe storage requirements, improved access to mental health services and assessment of the impact of the portrayal of violence in various media on society.

“Such regulations are helpful,” he remarked, but said they should go along with societal efforts to look at the “danger signs in others that can lead to the loss of empathy.”

The bishop also raised the possibility of utilizing the USCCB socially responsible investment guidelines to encompass the gun industry. Divestment from gun manufacturers “would send a strong signal,” he said.

Dominican Sister Judy Byron, director of the Seattle-based Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, has seen action on this very front.

“ICCR members did some initial work on guns in the early 2000s, and it’s been over the past couple of years that we picked up the issue again,” said Sister Byron, referring to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, to which the Northwest Coalition belongs.

The current tactic, she said, is to urge firearms makers and sellers to adopt human rights policies.

After many of the year’s shootings took place, Catholic parishes provided places for prayer and priests were at the scene, particularly in El Paso, to comfort family members as they learned of the deaths of their loved ones.

Father Fabian Marquez, pastor of El Buen Pastor Catholic Mission (Church of the Good Shepherd), in Sparks, Texas, was with 17 families when they heard the news that their loved ones died in the El Paso gunfire.

In the days after the shooting, he met with families and helped plan funerals and memorials.

He spoke to CNS by phone from the memorial at the El Paso shopping center where he said there was “a lot of pain, hurt, tears from early in the morning until night.” He said people have left rosaries and prayer cards and are ministering to others and crying with each other.

“Our community needs to be strong together,” he said before adding: “We will be strong because God is with us.”

A similar sentiment was expressed Aug. 6 at the Knights of Columbus Convention in Minneapolis when the Knights honored Kendrick Castillo, a teen who died in May trying to save the lives of his classmates during a shooting at his suburban Denver high school.

The group posthumously named the teen a Knight and presented his parents, John and Maria Castillo, the Caritas Medal on his behalf. The award, created in 2013 to recognize extraordinary acts of charity and service, is the second-highest honor of the Knights of Columbus.

“Kendrick wanted to be a Knight of Columbus because he wanted to help not only people, but his community. And in his last moments, Kendrick Castillo did both,” Supreme Knight Carl Anderson told more than 2,000 convention attendees.

People gather for a Sept. 1, 2019, vigil following an Aug. 31 mass shooting in Odessa, Texas. Amid the multiple mass shootings that took place in the U.S. during 2019, Catholic leaders spoke out against them, urged legislators to make changes to put a stop to these actions and asked Catholics to pray and work toward possible solutions.

CNS PHOTO | CALLAGHAN O’HARE, REUTERS
Advent 2019 - St. Mary, Star of the Sea Church, Ballinger

The faithful of St. Mary, Star of the Sea Church in Ballinger commemorated Advent with a candle light Mass and gathering in December 2019.

Christmas 2019

St. Patrick Church, Brady

Holy Redeemer Church, Odessa

“For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.”

Luke 2:11
Every January and February, the Guadalupe Radio Network sells raffle tickets for a stylish car at $25 each, or if you like a good deal, you can get five tickets for $100. This year, the GRN celebrates 20 years of being on the air, therefore they’ll be raffling off a luxurious 2020 Cadillac CT5.

With every purchase you make, you’re making it possible to share the truth and treasure of our faith and impact many families through the powerful means of Catholic Radio on our local listening areas on 91.7 FM Abilene, 1180 AM San Angelo, and 90.9 FM Midland/Odessa (Español).

Please contact the general manager at faustino@grnonline.com or 432-638-1150 to purchase your tickets or to help sell tickets at your parish and give your parishioners an opportunity to win.

The final day to purchase tickets for you, your loved ones and even your priests and deacons will be on Friday, February 28. You can even purchase online at: www.GRNonline.com.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, Jan. 20, 2020

As a part of its series of celebrations of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s life, the Martin Luther King Jr. Association of San Angelo presents its annual birthday celebration:

Date: Monday, Jan. 20, 2020
Time: 12:00 noon till 1:15 pm
Place: Stephens Central Library Third Floor Meeting Room
San Angelo, TX 76903
Theme: 1963: Turning the Corner

The event will contain music, an award-winning video depicting the major events of 1963, and a challenge to all of us.

Free of charge.
No food is involved.
Everyone is invited.

For more information, please contact Rev. Craig Meyers, 325-949-1515.

‘Find your greatness’ at Odessa event

The Odessa Marriott Hotel and Conference Center will be the site of an upcoming workshop promising to help participants become the best versions of themselves.

Presented by Dynamic Catholic on Jan. 19, 2020, the event, “Find Your Greatness,” will cover “four habits that will transform your life.” Speaker Allen Hunt will lead participants in a discussion of how changing habits can change lives.

According to promotional material for the event, “our lives change when our habits change. Based on Matthew Kelly’s book The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic, this half-day event will introduce you to four simple habits that will help you reach your full potential.”

The event will be held on Jan. 19, 2020, from 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Odessa Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, 305 E. 5th Street in Odessa, Texas.

Tickets are $25 and can be purchased at DynamicCatholic.com or by calling 859-980-7900.

Lay Carmelite ‘Come and See’

The Lay Carmelite Community invites you to a “Come and See” every first Saturday at St. Joseph Catholic Church (301 W 17th, San Angelo) after the 8:00 a.m. Mass. Come and learn about Carmelite spirituality. See if you have a calling to the Lay Carmelite Community. All are welcome. Phone Fran Havlak at 432-349-6852 if you have questions.
Many Paths to Discipleship
Diocesan Day of Reflection

February 29, 2020

St. Mary Parish
11 W. Avenue N
San Angelo, TX 76903

8:30am Registration – 9:00am- 5:00pm

Keynote Speakers
Emme and Cara Hickman – Founders of Del Rey Collective

What Path is GOD Calling You To?

Register: Call Kristie at 325-651-7500 or kgarcia@sanangelodiocese.org

High School – Juniors and Seniors, College, Young Adults, Married Couples, Singles

God’s Justice, Our Mission

February 21-23, 2020
At the Oblate Renewal Center
San Antonio

Join us for a weekend of reflection on our poor and oppressed sisters and brothers and our call to bring God’s justice to bear on our troubled world.

with keynote speaker Father Fred Kammer, S.J.
Director of the Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University, New Orleans

Join Father Fred and other great speakers, along with new and veteran missionaries for a weekend of thoughtful discussions, camaraderie with like-minded people, and even a little fun.

Register at www.txmissioncouncil.org
For information call 214.686.4454

The Texas Mission Council exists to create mission awareness and support through the collaborative efforts of diocesan mission coordinators, representatives of mission organizations serving in Texas, and individuals and groups interested in mission.

Nativity Pilgrimage

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish: Eldorado, TX
St. Peter Mission: Meridian, TX
Immaculate Conception Mission: Knickerbocker, TX

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What constitutes fidelity?

It’s becoming increasing difficult in today’s world to trust anything or anybody, for good reason. There’s little that’s stable, safe to lean on, trustworthy. We live in a world where everything is in flux, is flux, where everywhere we see distrust, abandoned values, debuffed creeds, people moving on from where they used to be, contradictory information, and dishonesty and lying as socially and morally acceptable. There is little left of trust in our world. What does this call us to? We’re called to many things, but perhaps nothing more important than fidelity, to be honest and persevering in who we are and what we stand for. Here’s an illustration.

One of our Oblate missionaries shares this story. He was sent to minister to a cluster of small Indigenous communities in Northern Canada. The people were very nice to him but it didn’t take him long to notice something. Basically every time he scheduled an appointment the person wouldn’t show up. At first, he attributed this to something else but he realized the pattern was too consistent for this to be an accident and so he approached an Elder in the community for some counsel. “Every time I make an appointment with someone,” he told the Elder, “they don’t show up.” The Elder smiled, knowingly, and replied: “Of course, they won’t show up, the last thing they need is to have an outsider like you organ-izing their lives for them!” So the mission-ary asked: “What do I do?” The Elder replied: “Well, don’t make an appointment, just show up and talk to them! They’ll be nice to you. More importantly though, this is what you need to do: Stay here for a long time and then they will trust you. They want to see whether you’re a missionary or a tourist. Why should they trust you? They’ve been betrayed and lied to by most everyone who’s come through here. Stay for a long time and then they’ll trust you.”

Stay for a long time and then they’ll trust you. What does it mean to stay for a long time? We can hang around and not necessarily inspire trust, just as we can move on to other places and still inspire trust. In its essence, staying around for the duration, being faithful, has less to do with never moving from a given location than it has to do with staying worthy of trust, with staying faithful to who we are, to the creed we profess, to the commitments and prom-ises we have made, and to what’s truest inside us so that our private lives do not belie our public persona.

The gift of fidelity is the gift of a life lived honestly. Our private honesty blesses the whole community, just as our private dishonesty hurts the whole community. “If you are here faithfully,” writes Parker Palmer, “you bring great blessing.” Conversely, writes Rumi, “If you are here unfaithfully, you bring great harm.” To the degree that we are true to the creed we profess, to the promises we’ve made to others, and to the honesty inside in our own soul, we are being faithful, moving away from others, being the tourist — not the missionary.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul tells us what it means to be with each other, to live with each other, beyond geographical distance and other contingencies in life that separate us. We are with each, faith-fully, as brothers and sisters, when we are living in charity, joy, peace, patience, good-ness, long-suffering, mildness, persever-ance, and chastity. When we are living inside these, then we are “staying with each other” and not moving away, no matter any geographical distance between us. Con-versely, when we are living outside of these we are not “staying with each other,” even when there is no geographical distance between us. Home, as poets have always told us, is a place inside the heart, not a place on a map. And home, as St. Paul tells us, is liv-ing inside the Spirit.

And it is this, I believe, that ultimately defines fidelity and perseverance, separates a moral missionary from a moral tourist, and indicates who’s staying and who’s moving away.

For each of us to stay faithful, we need each other. It takes more than a village, it takes all of us. One person’s fidelity makes everyone’s fidelity easier, just as one person’s infidelity makes everyone’s fidelity more difficult. So, inside a world that’s so highly individualistic and bewilderingly transient, when it can feel as if everyone is forever moving away from you, perhaps the greatest gift we can give each other is the gift of our own fidelity, to stay for a long time.

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‘The Crown’ and the primacy of grace

Like, I daresay, most of the English-speaking world, these past couple of years I’ve been watching episodes of The Crown, the beautifully filmed, marvelously written program on the life and times of Queen Eliza-beth II. The series deals with the psychologi-cal dynamics within the royal family as well as with the cultural changes and political chal-lenges that the Queen has faced in the course of her long reign. But what has been, at least to me, most surprising has been the heartfelt and sympathetic way in which it has ad-dressed issues of faith. Especially in the first season, we saw the fairly frequent conflicts between Elizabeth’s devotion to her family and her role as head of the Church of England. In season two, there was a deeply affecting episode on the visit of Billy Graham to the UK in the mid-fifties. We were given some insight regarding the American evangelist on the part of some in the British establishment, the Queen found his preaching illuminating and uplifting.

But in season three, the religious theme has emerged with particular and surprising clarity, especially in connection with the figure of Prince Philip and the role of using a supporting character in the series — namely, Prince Philip’s mother, Princess Alice. An heiress related to most of the royal families of Europe, a first-class eccentric (possibly schizophrenic), a mystic, and toward the end of her life, a Greek Orthodox nun dedicated to the poor, Alice could certainly be the star of her own feature film. After political unrest in Greece, the princess-nun is spirited to Buck-ingham Palace for her own safety, and there she bequeals and confounds most of those around her.

They strike Philip, himself an accomplished pilot, as models of healthy activity, scientific ingenuity, and courage. He begins to feel that somehow associating himself with them and their kind of heroism will restore him to psy-chological health, peace of soul. As the Apollo 11 mission is underway, Philip is invited to visit a group of Anglican clergymen, who are experiencing burnout and depression in their ministry. Joining their circle of discussion, he hears stories of who helped and who harmed them. Here we see an unexpected story of camaraderie and support — Philip’s reaction is one of empathy, a sign of his own pain and struggle. And it is this, I believe, that ultimately forges the primacy of grace, that which can give us strength in the face of our own losses and sufferings, that is why the Crown is as much a religious series as anything else. And it is this that gives it such a rare quality, a rare quality of authentic religious belief. Though it’s everything.” I cannot think of a better way to describe the kind of faith we are called to profess, to the commitments and promises we’ve made to each other, to the creed we profess, to the promises we’ve made to others, and to the honesty inside in our own soul, we are being faithful, moving away from others, being the tourist — not the missionary.

What does this call us to? We’re called to the commitments and promises we’ve made to each other, to the creed we profess, to the promises we’ve made to others, and to the honesty inside in our own soul, we are being faithful, moving away from others, being the tourist — not the missionary.

And it is this, I believe, that ultimately defines fidelity and perseverance, separates a moral missionary from a moral tourist, and indicates who’s staying and who’s moving away.

For each of us to stay faithful, we need each other. It takes more than a village, it takes all of us. One person’s fidelity makes everyone’s fidelity easier, just as one per-son’s infidelity makes everyone’s fidelity more difficult. So, inside a world that’s so highly individualistic and bewilderingly transient, when it can feel as if everyone is forever moving away from you, perhaps the greatest gift we can give each other is the gift of our own fidelity, to stay for a long time.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website: www.ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Ministries.
La esperanza de un niño para el 2020

Sentado a la mesa con mis hijos de 6 y 8 años hablamos sobre el colegio, juegos, amigos y libros. Recientemente nuestra conversación se centró en el nuevo año.

Mi hija preguntó, "¿qué significa comenzar un nuevo año?" Mi hijo respondió rápidamente que un nuevo año es una ocasión para pensar en la esperanza y soñar, una oportunidad para ser mejores. Con toda seguridad escuché esto de alguna de sus maestras en la escuela católica en donde estudian.

"¿Qué es esperanza?", preguntó mi hija. Como teólogo asumi que está en mi oportunidad para enseñarles a mis hijos una lección, quizás retomando lo que le enseño a mis estudiantes de postgrado y algunas ideas de los grandes pensadores que han escrito sobre el tema.

Mi hijo me ganó una vez en este asunto. "Bueno… esperanza es saber que el mundo puede ser mejor para ti y para los demás. Aun cuando las cosas no estén bien, no tiene que ser así. Yo quiero vivir 100 años para hacer que el mundo sea un mejor lugar", dijo.

¡Perfecto! Sus palabras resumen la esencia de la esperanza cristiana de manera simple y profunda. Al escucharlo, mi hija respondió, "¡Yo también! Quiero vivir 100 años para hacer que el mundo sea un mejor lugar".

En las palabras sencillas de un niño escuché con voz decisiva tres convicciones cristianas que vale la pena recordar al comenzar un nuevo año.

Primero, siempre hay espacio para un mañana resplandeciente. Esto es lo que Dios reveló por medio de Jesucristo. La muerte incide con lo que leo en las noticias. Los Estados Unidos de América comienzan el año 2020 con aflicción; una sociedad tristemente dividida que parece haber perdido el sentido del bien común; un presidente formalmente acusado de conductas que le pueden llevar a la destitución; instituciones que pierden su credibilidad; líderes mezquinos que legislan casi que impunemente bajo el manto de la democracia contra grupos y comunidades a las que debiessen estar sirviendo; niños encarcelados en prisones que hacen cada vez más ricos a unos cuantos; los pobres perdiendo los pocos beneficios sociales que hacen que sus vidas sean llevadas; nuevas revelaciones de casos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del clero y el lamenable manejo administrativo asociado con estos casos, etc.

Decidí parar. Lo que escuché en la mesa mientras cenó no coincidía con lo que leo en las noticias. ¿Son estos universos alternativos? Quizás de eso es lo que se trata la esperanza cristiana. Una alternativa. La alternativa de Dios. No solo una posibilidad, sino también una vocación.

Como católicos y ciudadanos de esta nación necesitamos aceptar el desafío de soñar con esperanza. Sí, soñar una y otra vez. No podemos dejar de soñar. Tenemos que soñar inspirados en la verdad y la belleza del Evangelio. Tenemos que hacer esto siguiendo los pasos de nuestros niños.

Porque la esperanza es contagiosa, quiero soñar con mis hijos y decir, "Yo también! Quiero vivir 100 años para hacer que el mundo sea un mejor lugar". Feliz 2020.

Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.

¿Qué constituye la fidelidad?

En el mundo de hoy, se está poniendo más difícil confiar en algo o alguien, por alguna buena razón. Hay poco que sea estable, seguro en que apoyarse, digno de confianza. Vivimos en un mundo donde todo está en cambio, es cambio, donde por todas partes vemos recelo, valores abandonados, credos desbaratados, gente trasladándose de donde solía estar, información contradictoria, y falta de honradez y mentira como social y moralmente aceptables. Queda poca confianza en nuestro mundo.

A qué nos llama esto? Nos llama a muchas cosas, pero quizás nada más importante que la fidelidad, ser honrados y perseverantes en quienes somos y en lo que representamos. He aquí una ilustración.

Uno de nuestros Misioneros Oblatos cuenta esta historia. Fue enviado a ejercer el ministerio en un grupo de pequeñas comunidades independientes en el norte de Canadá. La gente era muy buena con el pero no pasó mucho tiempo hasta que se dio cuenta de algo. Básicamente, cada vez que se dirigía a una ciudad, siempre le preguntaban la misma pregunta: "¿Qué es lo que hay aquí que es mejor que aquí?"

"No sé, pero soy misionero oblat... me llamo...", respondía. En el tiempo, fueron confiando más en él y en sus palabras. Entonces el misionero preguntó: "¿Qué hago?" El anciano respondió: "Mejor, no hagas una cita, simplemente presentate y habla con ellos. Ellos serán amables contigo. Aunque, más importante, esto es lo que necesitas hacer: Quédete aquí durante largo tiempo y entonces confiarán en ti. Quieren comprobar si tú eres un misionero o un turista. ¿Por qué deberían confiar en ti? Han sido traidores y engañados por la mayoría de los que han venido por aquí. Quédate durante largo tiempo y entonces confiarán en ti".

Quédate durante largo tiempo y entonces confiarán en ti. ¿Qué significa quedarte durante largo tiempo? Podemos estar dando vueltas y no necesariamente inspirar confianza, así como podemos marcharnos a otros lugares y aún inspirar confianza. En su esencia, quedarse durante tiempo, siendo fiel, tiene menos que ver con no marcharse nunca de un lugar determinado que lo que tiene que ver con quedarse siendo digno de confianza, con permanecer fiel a quienes somos, al credo que profesamos, a los compromisos y promesas que hemos hecho y a lo que es más verdadero en nosotros, de modo que nuestras vidas privadas no desmientan nuestra persona pública.

El don de la fidelidad es el don de una vida vivida honradamente. Nuestra honradez privada es una bendición para la comunidad entera, de igual modo que nuestra falta de honradez privada
The foxes and the henhouse

Probably the biggest bioethics story of 2019 involved Dr. Jankui He (known to his associates as “JK”), a Chinese scientist who employed a new technology called CRISPR/Cas9 to produce the world’s first gene-edited babies. JK made genetic changes to two little girls, Lulu and Nana, when they were early-stage embryos, attempting to modify a receptor for HIV to confer resistance to a possible future infection from the virus. He publicly announced the birth of the girls at an international scientific conference near the end of 2018, and as the news rapidly spread, trepidation and commentators expressed shock and dismay over his “designer baby” experiments.

Chinese provincial authorities quickly became aware of his activities as well, and he was placed under house arrest upon his return from the conference. In the closing days of 2019, a secret trial was held, and he was sentenced to three years in prison for producing the CRISPR babies. The trial proceedings concluded that JK had “ rashly applied gene editing technology to human assisted reproductive medicine.”

The verdict reached by the Chinese court raises complex questions that we cannot address. What do you mean by “rashly apply” a new technology like human gene editing? Who should determine if a particular use is “rash” or “reasonable”? Dr. Rita Vassena, a member of the Executive Committee of the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology, framed the ethical concerns around JK’s case this way: “As the current scientific consensus indicates, the use of CRISPR/Cas9 in human embryos destined to give rise to a pregnancy is, at this stage, unjustified.”

She couches her ethical analysis, as many scientists do, in terms of the “current scientific consensus.” But such “consensus” is an extremely malleable concept. It also conveniently implies that scientists themselves can set up their own ethical rules and provide regulatory oversight for scientific research, so that they, in effect, become the foxes guarding the henhouse. The saga of CRISPR/Cas9 has unfolded during the last year surrounding the gene-editing experiments of JK has demonstrated, if nothing else, how self-serving and ineffective a community of scientists can be as they try to exercise the role of lawyer, judge and jury of their own ethical standards.

Even though we should be justifiably alarmed at Chinese courts meting out jail time in secret to scientific researchers, the fact remains that it was a government-controlled court that finally put some teeth into ethical regulations. In the West, to have governments, courts or major institutions take any action whatsoever in a case like JK’s seems at present inconceivable. Instead, in American and European universities and industrial settings, we often encounter feeble, meandering discussions about research ethics, along with a proliferation of rubber-stamping “ethics review panels.” These often consist of hand-picked members devoid of strong ethical or religious training and viewpoints. Such panels give increasingly systematic cover for an ever-expanding range of unethical research practices.

The dollars and sense of our Catholic tithing

Sitting at the dinner table with my children, 6 and 8, we talk about school, games, friends and books. Recently, the conversation focused on the new year.

My daughter asked, "What does it mean to start a new year?" My son quickly replied that a new year is an opportunity to hope and dream, a chance to be better. I bet he heard that from one of his teachers at the Catholic school they attend.

"What's hope?" my daughter asked. As a theologian, I felt that this was my opportunity to teach my children a lesson, perhaps drawing from what I teach my graduate students in the classroom and the general public, I captured the essence of Christian hope in simple, yet profound words. After listening, my daughter responded, "Me too! I want to live more than 100 years to make the world better."

In the simple words of a child, I hear echoes of three core Christian convictions that are worth remembering as we start a new year.

One, there is always room for a bright tomorrow. This is what God revealed in Jesus Christ. Death does not have the last word; evil will be unmasked; despair is the lot of those unable to acknowledge that truth and justice in the end will shine.

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

My kids find it hilarious when my wife pulls out her checkbook — banking’s equivalent of a typewriter.

But we still write checks every week to put in our offering envelope for church. I know this is old school. More and more people are going direct deposit, which churches like because it guarantees a dependable flow of revenue, whether the faithful skip that week or month or visit another parish.

Out of sight, out of mind may not always be a good thing, however. Our habit of putting the envelope in the basket was confirmed when we had children. We wanted them to see our offering gift every week. We got kids’ envelopes for them, of course, but they were left at home as often as not. So we always made sure that one of them got to put their Mom and Dad’s envelope in the basket when the ushers came round.

It was a visual lesson in stewardship, a visible sign of our commitment to support the church.

I was thinking about all of this for two reasons. The first is the feast of Epiphany and the story of the Magi bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child. In some communities today, it is a tradition to slip dollar bills under the manger in the church’s nativity set, a literal gift to the Christ Child.

A child’s hope for 2020

Two, sin is not the status quo of human existence. We were not created to live in a world of lies, or crass materialism, or subsumed in ideologies that make us less human. When confronting the suffering of our neighbor, especially those most vulnerable, we must not remain unmoved.

Three, we all have a shared responsibility to make the world a good place for us and for others. Knowing ourselves part of a larger whole is the antidote to greedy individualism that ignores the cries of others and the cries of the created order being pillaged for immediate gain while risking the future of the next generations.

After the conversation with my children, I browse the news. The United States of America begins the year 2020 in pain: a democracy, against the good of groups and others and the cries of the created order being pillaged for immediate gain while risking the future of the next generations.

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Journeying Together

Greg Erlandson Catholic News Service

Gorl Erlandson Catholic News Service

Amid the Fray

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The arena was perfectly silent. Twenty thousand young people knelt at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis as the Eucharist was exposed in a monstrance on the altar in the center of a stage on the 50-yard line of an NFL football field during the National Catholic Youth Conference.

A magnetic energy pulsed through the quiet. It was a silence filled with expectant hope, as if the quiet in that place would lead to a vibrant and vocal renewal in a noisy world.

It was a joyful silence, prompted by the encouraging words of Pope Francis spoken via video the night before. It was a healing silence, inspired by the challenging words of Immaculee Ilibagiza's powerful testimony shared that morning. It was a contemplative silence, as the young people pondered the insightful words of Mark Hart. It was a silence building to worship, as Village Lights began leading the crowd in song and praise.

It took everything in me to not to cry as I listened to the deafening silence and then heard voices begin to raise in praise as we knelt before the Eucharist and sang, "Lord, I Need You."

A few verses in, I saw her. A young girl was kneeling on the floor, close to the stage, her arms lifted as she started up in prayer. Then I saw him, a young man, walking to the other side of the stage, kneeling down and staring straight at the monstrance.

Then they all came: The floodgates opened and hundreds of teenagers poured from their seats and began filling the floor of the stadium, kneeling as close as they could get, to be a little bit closer to the altar ... closer to Jesus ... closer to the one they desperately need.

That joyful, healing, contemplative silence became a joyful, healing, contemplative and vibrant worship, as 20,000 voices continued to sing, "Lord, I Need You," and then began softly singing, "Here I am, Lord ... Is it I, Lord? I have heard you, calling in the night."

For all the problems we face in the church — the stats showing us that more than 34% of Generation Z has no religious affiliation and that teenagers are twice as likely as baby boomers to say they're atheists — what I witnessed at that stadium on a Friday night in November wasn't a problem.

No, it was a solution. It was a visible witness to the power of the on-fire, faith-filled, passionate, zealously well-formed, in-love-with-Jesus young people who are unafraid to run to the altar to be close to the Lord because they hear his voice and want to hear it more clearly.

I didn't see the disaffiliation crisis we worry about during NCYC: I saw, firsthand, hope for the future of our church.

The young people at NCYC, the ones I saw fill workshop rooms, share meals, dance, sing and fervently pray — they are the ones who will solve the problem of disaffiliation, not because they have a slick film with glitzy editing or because they have a well-produced podcast with thousands of downloads, but because they're simply being themselves: young people who have big questions, are searching for big answers, and who are unafraid to rush forward to be close to Jesus and bring their friends along too.

The weary world rejoices as Christmas approaches; Jesus' birth gives us the thrill of hope and worth to our world.

But my weary soul, worried mind and heavy heart was thrilled in late November when I saw the hope of our church rush to the 50-yard line to be close to Jesus in the Eucharist. Those young people were my thrill of hope, the ones who will help this weary world soon rejoice.

Katie Prejean McGrady is an international Catholic speaker and author. She is project manager of Ave Explores from Ave Maria Press and logs over 100,000 travel miles a year speaking to audiences of all ages and sizes. She has her degree in theology from the University of Dallas and lives with her husband and daughter in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

As we trudge into 2020, a year that promises to be just as rancorous politically as the year we are ending, I find myself thinking about forgiveness.

Not forgiveness as a meek act of acquiescing to evil, which is what our national climate might persuade us to believe. But forgiveness as a deep spiritual practice that does not stand in the way of a continuing pursuit of justice.

Two extraordinary examples of forgiveness in the past decade in the U.S. both come to us from the African American community.

The first occurred in 2015, when young white supremacist Dylan Roof walked casually into a prayer meeting in the basement of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The church, referred to as Mother Emanuel, was a landmark in Charleston, South Carolina.

Roof was welcomed and sat with the group as they examined Scripture. Then he took out a gun and murdered nine people, tearing families apart and terrorizing survivors.

Two days later, members of the congregation attending a court hearing offered him forgiveness. Not everyone could go that far. Not everyone was ready. But the consensus was that forgiveness was the path that Jesus would walk. It was a remarkable display of grace.

Fast forward to 2019 and a similar courtroom drama unfolded when Brandt Jean, the 18-year-old brother of murder victim Botham Jean, forgave and asked to hug his brother's killer. Amber Guyger was the off-duty white police officer who testified she mistakenly thought she was walking into her apartment when she confronted the African American Jean, sitting in his own apartment.

Trained to shoot for the heart, she killed him on the spot. It was revealed that she had racist social media posts, and many criticized the 10-year sentence she received as too short.

Nevertheless, Brandt Jean said, "If you are truly sorry ... I forgive you." With the judge's permission, the two embraced in the courtroom. Like many, I was in tears as I watched the scene on television.

Both examples of forgiveness drew criticism. Some felt that the mercy displayed undercut the fact that so much injustice and prejudice still pervades America's treatment of black Americans.

It was easy for whites to be touched by the gestures, easy for those who enjoy white privilege, with a patronizing air, to admire those who were magnanimous even as they suffer. Justice and failures of the criminal justice system should be the focus, they said, not the compassion evinced by these victims.

I have enjoyed white privilege all my life, so I say with humility and a little trepidation that I believe the example set in these two instances is not just one we should admire, but one that we are called to emulate.

It strikes me that the mercy displayed here is an example of true and radical Christianity, and that whatever is going on in the churches in which these people of forgiveness worship is something we may sometimes miss in our own. How forgiving, I wonder, would I be in such circumstances?

During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the Catholic Church was at the forefront. Today, we seem to have a more cautious and insular view of political life. Sometimes, in our churches, we show little fervor for justice, for little kids brutally separated from their parents at our border, for a criminal justice system inclined to inequity.

On the cross, Jesus, unjustly condemned to capital punishment by the authorities, forgave. The pursuit of justice, the practice of forgiving our enemies, these aren't opposing forces. They are an integral part of the radical faith to which Jesus calls us.
All Christians are called to discipleship

By Robert V. Rodriguez
Pilgrim Center of Hope

Writer and philosopher G.K. Chesterton once said, “We men and women are all in the same boat, upon a stormy sea. We owe to each other a terrible and tragic loyalty.”

As the Chairperson for the upcoming 2020 Catholic Men's Conference (presented by Pilgrim Center of Hope), which takes place on Saturday, March 28 in San Antonio, not only do I agree with Chesterton, but I believe we are all called to do something about it. Too many of us as Christians have forgotten that our primary call is to discipleship, but instead we have settled into doing the bare minimum with no call, risk, or challenge.

We need to support one another! Pope Francis tells us, “We should not simply remain in our own secure world, that of the 99 sheep who never strayed from the fold, but we should go out, with Christ, in search of the one lost sheep, however far it may have wandered.”

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Catholic Men’s Conference (CMC) of San Antonio, I am challenging every man across the great state of Texas and the city of San Antonio on March 28 for what will be a practical, inspiring, and powerful day of spiritual renewal.

The bible tells us that, “as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prv 27: 17).

Combine that with the two Great Commandments of loving God above all else and loving your neighbor and you see why I believe that it is imperative for us to lift each other up and do everything possible to be a light to those who are struggling with life’s pressures, who have lost their way, and who have lost all hope.

Each year, the Catholic Men's Conference (CMC) of San Antonio features dynamic speakers who educate and challenge men to be better husbands, fathers, leaders and friends. Our presenters for 2020 include Father Cedric Pisegna, C.P. — Internationally known author, TV & Radio Host, and presenter of over 475 parish missions across the U.S.; Father Clay Hunt III — the Motorcycle Priest who ministers to all the incarcerated of Central Texas; Apologist Ken Hensley — frequent presenter on EWTN; and Archbishop of San Antonio Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSPs, who will begin the day by celebrating Mass.

By coming together as a band of Christian brothers we will encourage and inspire one another to grow spiritually and go from good to great in our faith lives.

If you are reading this, take this as an invitation to attend and a plea for you to bring other men who, like the Prodigal Son, are wanting to return to God and have an encounter with Jesus Christ. Early-bird registration has just opened! Groups, Fathers & Sons, ACTS Teams & Retreatants, Cursillistas, KOC Councils, and parish men’s groups are encouraged to wear your t-shirts as a show of unity and support for one another.

CMC is open to men of all faiths. Whatever your state in life, it is never too late to begin anew in Christ.

Fourteen years ago, when CMC was established, we chose as our theme Mark 10: 51: “Master, I want to see,” because it resonated with lots of men who found themselves feeling dissatisfied with life despite having achieved the dreams of national experiences, his faith is deepened, and he develops a stronger commitment to Christ. This is when a man is able to touch others in profound ways and do what St. Francis of Assisi encouraged: “Preach Christ at all times, if necessary use words.”

Register now at CMCSanAntonio.com or call 210-521-3377.
KNICKERBOCKERS

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ended by a disabled individual and their family; the personal cost of being "different;" complex and ongoing health issues that require surgery and other interventions, including life-long therapies; a shorter life expectancy; emotional and financial burdens; education and availability of work; finding a suitable mate, marriage, and children; among many other concerns.

The USCCB, in their Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities, encourages pastors and their parishes to work "for a deeper understanding of both the pain and the potential" of persons with disabilities, "realizing the unique gifts individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church, [addressing] the need for their integration into the Christian community and their fuller participation in its life," and defending their rights, while meeting their needs. The statement includes this reference to Pope John XXIII's encyclical Pacem in Terris, in which he writes of the innate dignity of each person: "In an ordered and productive community, it is a fundamental principle that every human being is a 'person' … with rights and duties … flowing directly and spontaneously from [one's] very nature. These rights are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable." Our Declaration of Independence guarantees "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as "unalienable rights" given to all humans by their Creator and which governments should protect.

"Every child is a gift. A child is not something to choose or reject. There is no 'perfect family.' Persons with disabilities are part of the ordinary fabric of life. They have their own meaning. They have a mission to their families, friends, and parish," as Dr. Farnan declared in a Franciscan University Faith and Reason Forum aired on EWTN (7-7-19).

No one personifies this truth more completely than Mattie T. T. Stepanek (1990-2004), a devout Catholic. He was born with a rare disorder, dysautonomic mitochondrial myopathy, from which his three siblings died and from which his mother also suffers. In his thirteen short years, he advocated for peace. He wanted to be remembered not as someone disabled who was dependent on a breathing tube and confined to a wheelchair but as "a poet, a peace-maker, and a philosopher who played." He published seven best-selling books of poetry and peace essays and was a motivational speaker. He was the lyricist for Music Through Heartstrings, a Sony album.

Fullness of life is not determined by disability or length of years. The focus should be on the generous sharing of gifts in the midst of hardship and struggle — a sign to all of the power of God's mercy, grace, and love. Seeing and relating to persons with disabilities should reflect to us our disabilities as fallen creatures. We avail ourselves of the sacraments of the Church, especially frequent Eucharist, so we can take [our] share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God" (2 Tm 1:8). Nourished by Christ's Body and Blood, we are renewed in spirit, soul, and body and strengthened to live faithfully in hope.

Each child in the womb and out of the womb is a gift from God, not a "choice." We rejoice that our mother/parents honored God's gift of life!

Note: The Diocese of San Angelo is an Affiliate Diocese of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability.

Father Knick Knickerbocker is a retired priest of the Diocese of San Angelo. He and his wife, Sandie, write a monthly column for the West Texas Angelus.

'Violence in the name of God is blasphemy,' USCCB president says

By Catholic News Service

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Decrying the acts of religious violence that have taken place during the Christmas season, the president of the U.S. bishops declared: "Violence in the name of God is blasphemy."

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, chosen in November as president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said: "The rise of anti-Semitic violence in this country and around the world must be condemned along with the ongoing persecution of Christians. Protecting religious freedom and freedom of conscience should be among the highest priorities of every government."

Archbishop Gomez's remarks, in a Dec. 31 statement, were prepared with the Jan. 1 observance of the World Day of Peace in mind.

He cited three incidents in particular: the Dec. 29 assault on worshippers in a Texas church by a gunman, which killed four congregants and the shooter dead; the Dec. 27 stabbing rampage in a Hanukkah celebration in a rabbi's home in New York; and the Dec. 26 posting of a video by an Islamic State affiliate in Nigeria that showed the beheading of 11 Christians.

"In our neighborhoods and communities, violence and cruelty are a sad and ordinary reality of daily life," Archbishop Gomez said. "Children in our country are killed each day in the womb and many of our neighbors do not have what they need to lead a dignified life. Our politics and cultural discourse are often marked by anger and a merciless and unforgiving contempt for others."

Despite the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus as the Prince Peace, "our world and our lives are far from peaceful," he added. "So many of our brothers and sisters are living in countries torn by war and injustice, terrorism and persecution; many suffer violence because of race, religion, ideology or nationality. Many of our brothers and sisters, even children, are being bought and sold and living in slavery; millions in our world have no place to call home because of poverty and instability."

The archbishop added: "Jesus Christ came as a child on Christmas to show us that every person is a child of God, made in his image. He came to show us that all humanity is one family, that we are all brothers and sisters no matter the more we are made of our skin or the language that we speak."

He also noted that on the World Day of Peace, the Catholic Church in the United States joins Pope Francis and the church around the world in praying for peace. "We pray for peace in our hearts and peace in our world. We pray for the conversion of every heart that hates and we pray for the courage to overcome evil with good and respond to hatred with love," he said.

New College of Consultants

In order to promote the pastoral good of the people of God, the bishop of every diocese appoints some priests from among the members of the Presbyteral Council who constitute a College of Consultants. The consultative role of the College of Consultants is not intended to supplant that of the Presbyteral Council, but there are certain functions of the college as defined by Canon Law. These include, for example, electing a diocesan administrator within 8 days of a vacant see and being consulted by the bishop prior to naming a finance officer, prior to important acts of administration, prior to acts of extraordinary administration, and prior to significant acts of alienation of diocesan property.

A priest appointed to the College of Consultants continues as a member of the college for a five-year term, even if his term as a member of the Presbyteral Council comes to an end before the end of the five-year term of the college.

Bishop Michael Sis has appointed the following members of the newly constituted college of consultants for a five-year term beginning on January 1, 2020: Very Rev. Santiago Udayar (chairman); Rev. Patrick Akpanobong; Rev. Felix Archibong; Rev. Albert Ezeanya; Rev. Anthony Franco; Rev. Bala Anthony Govindu; Rev. Msgr. Fred Nawarskas; Rev. Reggie Odima; Rev. Ryan Rojo; and Rev. Emilio Sosa.

Work for the Diocese of San Angelo

Secretary — Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis currently has a position available for a Secretary. Qualifications include a high school diploma and prior office experience; good communication skills, command of the English language, proficiency with Microsoft Office including Word, Publisher, Excel, Access. Applicant must have excellent time management skills, organizational skills, and the ability to maintain and create databases. Knowledge of Spanish is helpful. Hours are Monday – Friday, 9:00AM – 5:00PM with benefits, with occasional weekend work required. Applicants should email resume with references to Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocease.org.

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Bishop Michael Sis on Twitter:
@SABishopMike

On the Web

www.sanangelodiocease.org
BARRON

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religión en absoluto. Es todo, o es una pérdida de tiempo.

Ahora, dos episodios más tarde, la serie se adelanta unos años, hasta 1969. La princesa Alicia acaba de morir, y su hijo, el príncipe, se encuentra en una depresión de mediana edad: deprimido, convencido de que sus actividades perdieron su sentido a causa de la pérdida de la religión. Al mismo tiempo, está preocupado por las hazañas de los astronautas estadounidenses de la misión Apolo —Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin y Michael Collins— que viajan a la luna ese verano. Su presencia golpea a Felipe, un piloto consumado, como modelos de acierto, de valentía, de ingenio y corazón.

Comienza a sentir que de alguna manera al asociarse con ellos y su tipo de heroísmo le devolverá la salud psicológica, la paz del alma. Mientras la misión Apolo 11 está en marcha, Felipe es invitado a visitar a un grupo de clérigos anglicanos, que están experimentando algo tan profundo y depresión en su ministerio. Al unirse a su círculo de discusión, escucha historias de aflicción, desesperanza y sueños no realizados. Sin mostrar una pizca de simpatía, se lanza a una exhortación puramente peligrosa, instando a estos tristes hombres a ser como “Armstrong, Aldrin y Collins”, a encontrar su propósito a través del logro y la autodeterminación y a dejar de perder el tiempo con una introspección morbosamente lamentable. La consecuencia de estos clérigos que sufren, el príncipe abandona su compañía con indignación y condescendencia despiadada.

Después del alunizaje, los astronautas del Apolo realizan una visita formal al Palacio de Buckingham y, más que un poco sorprendido, el Príncipe pide verlos en privado. Cara a cara con sus héroes, pregunta no sobre los tecnicismos del vuelo, sino sobre el significado, la visión y lo que aprendieron en el sentido más profundo de ese término—cuando estaban en la luna. Seguramente estos ejemplos de éxito le brindarán lo que él quiere. En vez de eso, le dicen a Felipe que no tuvieron tiempo para reflexionar sobre tales asuntos, y que en ese momento comenzaron, con un entusiasmo infatigable, a enseñarle beneficios y privilegios de la vida en la realidad británica. Con eso, algo cambió en el príncipe, algo cedió. Parecía darse cuenta de que su programa de actividad vigorosa y autoafirmación, que había defendido audazmente ante los clérigos que sufrian, nunca respondiera de hecho a las preces que habían surgido en su propia alma. En una escena notablemente conmovedora, el príncipe regresa posteriormente al círculo de sacerdotes en crisis, de quienes antes se había burlado y había castigado, y hace una especie de confesión, y luego pide humildemente su ayuda.

Aquí está ocurriendo mucho más que una mera percepción o desarrollo psicológico, y Dios bendiga a los escritores de The Crown por presentarla. A lo largo de este episodio, el príncipe Felipe estaba de pie en una de las grandes líneas de falla del cristianismo, a saber, la división entre la auto-salvación y la salvación por medio de la gracia. Al referirse más arriba a la calidad “pelagiana” de su discurso a los sacerdotes, me refería a Pelagio, teólogo del siglo V, que opinaba que podemos salvarnos a través de un ejercicio heroico del libre albedrío. San Agustín pasó los últimos años de su vida oponiéndose al pelagianismo e insistiendo en que la paz del alma, la felicidad, la salvación—lleva como quien—afraga a través de la fe: una rendición a lo que sólo puede llamarse gracia. La prueba de la fe, se ha argumentado, es la enseñanza central de la Biblia. Qué maravilloso que también sea una lección clave en un episodio de uno de los programas de televisión más populares de nuestro tiempo.

BISHOP

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of my own particular culture. There is a wealth of accumulated wisdom in our Church that comes from grappling with spiritual and ethical questions over the course of many centuries. To ignore that body of spiritual wisdom would be like trying to reinvent the wheel.

Over the years, I have come to be convinced of the fundamental truth that God is love. I did not arrive at that conclusion by merely searching within myself or by observing the world of nature. I learned it from a religion—the Catholic Christian one. The love of God is the central joy of my life. God, who is love, has enabled me to live a fuller life through personal commitment and self-sacrifice.

Most importantly, it is through religion that I have come to know the love of Jesus Christ. I never would have met him if it were not for the Catholic, Christian religion. Without the organized institution of the Church through the centuries, he would have been lost to human history. The sins and failures of some members and leaders of the Church have caused grave harm, yet the Church has still managed effectively to put people in touch with the love of Jesus Christ. There is a spiritual depth in the writings of the Catholic tradition that goes deeper than any other. I have seen the power of God at work through the Catholic faith in so many large and small miracles that I am convinced of spiritual reality at the core of this religion.

The Christian religion is not just something I dabble in to see if some of its practices might be appealing to me. Christianity is who I am. It is at the core of my very identity. I am spiritual because I am religious.

OBISPO

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de sabiduría espiritual sería como tratar de reinventar la rueda.

Con los años, me he convencido de la verdad fundamental de que Dios es amor. Yo no llegó a esta conclusión por medio de simplemente buscar dentro de mí mismo o mediante la observación del mundo de la naturaleza. Lo aprendí de una religión —la de la católica cristiana. El amor de Dios es la alegría central de mi vida. Dios, que es amor, me llama a una vida más plena a través del compromiso personal y el sacrificio de mí mismo.

Lo más importante es que a través de la religión he llegado a conocer el amor de Jesucristo. Nunca lo hubiera encontrado si no fuera por la religión católica, cristiana. Sin la institución organizada de la Iglesia a través de los siglos, él se hubiera perdido en la historia humana. Los pecados y fracasos de algunos líderes y miembros de la Iglesia han dañado sus enseñanzas; sin embargo, la Iglesia aun ha logrado eficazmente poner a la gente en contacto con el amor de Jesucristo por 2,000 años. Yo nunca hubiera llegado a conocer su amor simplemente leyendo sobre él. Lo he encontrado a través de la vida de fe que he practicado, a través de las escrituras y de los sacramentos, en el compañerismo y el servicio. Es una experiencia universal y de la vida en Cristo que trasciende culturas particulares. Yo no cambie esto por nada.

El hablado de Jesús y él era los dos, espiritual y religioso; no dividió sus dos. En sus treinta y tres años en la tierra, practicó las tradiciones de la fe judía, incluyendo el Sabatt, la Pascua, los mandamientos, la liturgia judía, y las escrituras hebreas. Oro en los rituales religiosos de la sinagoga y el Templo, así como solo al aire libre en las montañas y en el desierto. Utilizó el vocabulario religioso de su tradición religiosa. Transformó su tradición religiosa desde el intelectual; no lo dejó pasar al ser un culto a un regimen de los científicos. Una persona se convierte en un gran músico, aprendiendo de otros músicos y por la disciplina de la práctica constante. Para un principiante en la espiritualidad, una tradición religiosa proporciona un vocabulario y una comunidad para una vida de apren- didanza y crecimiento.

Si una planta va a crecer fuerte y sana y producir buenos frutos, necesita raíces. La religión da raíces a los anhelos espirituales internos del alma humana. Un barco sin timón no puede ir a ninguna parte. Va vagando sin rumbo fijo, de aquí para allá, sin una dirección clara. La religión ofrece un timón probable y verdadero para la búsqueda espiritual.

He dedicado mi vida a servir en la Iglesia católica porque no hay otra organización en la historia que ha puesto a más personas en contacto con la fe durante más de 2,000 años. Hay una profundidad espiritual en los escritos de la tradición católica que va más allá de cualquier otra. He visto el poder de Dios en acción a través de la fe católica en tanto grandes y pequeños milagros que estoy convencido de la realidad espiritual al trascender la fe religiosa. La religión cristiana no es solamente algo con que me entretengo para ver si algunas de sus prácticas podrían ser atractivas para mí. El cristianismo es lo que soy. Estoy en el centro de mi propia identidad. Soy espiritual porque soy religioso.
ERLANDSON

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Which brings me to the second reason I’ve been thinking about church giving. There has been in the past few years a willingness on the part of some to punish the church and its leadership by withholding funds.

Much of this has been connected to the sexual abuse crisis. Frustration fueled by headlines has led to various calls to boycott bishop appeals and fundraising of Catholic charitable organizations as well as the local parish.

Some of this is done out of anger. Some of it is done to express dissatisfaction for the church’s own financial practices. Some of it is fueled by ideological opposition to the pope or the local bishop.

The people being hurt, however, are not holding a crosier. The people being hurt are the recipients of the vast network of Catholic charitable efforts. It also hurts the people who do so much of the work of the church — the people in the chanceries, the parish offices, the schools, the charities, the communications offices and more.

We are in a new age of accountability for the church, and this is a good thing. Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have sought to reform the Vatican’s financial structure, and the church will only grow stronger and more trusted as it becomes more accountable from top to bottom.

But let’s not forget who we support when we bring our gifts to the church each Sunday, be they cash, check or direct deposit.

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

ROLHEISER

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HOPE

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communities they are supposed to serve; children in prisons that make a few rich; the poor losing the few social benefits that make their lives bearable; new revelations of sexual abuse of children by clergy and the mismanagement associated with them, etc.

I stop. What I hear at the dinner table does not match what I read in the news. Are these alternative universes? Perhaps this is what Christian hope is all about. An alternative. God’s alternative. Not only a possibility, but also a calling.

We need to allow ourselves as Catholics and as citizens of this nation the chance to dream with hope. Yes, dream … again … and again. We cannot stop dreaming. We must dream informed by the truth and beauty of the Gospel. We may need to follow our children’s lead.

Because hope is contagious, I want to dream with my children and say, “Me too! I want to live more than 100 years to make the world better.” Happy 2020.

Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.
The seminarians of the Diocese of San Angelo received a surprise visit as part of their gathering on Dec. 15, 2019. Back row, left to right: David Garcia, Francisco Camacho, Mauricio Romero, Humberto Diaz, vocation office secretary Kristie Garcia, Kevin Lenius, Mike Elsner, and Upton Sewell. Seated: Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus.

Pope begins New Year with apology, prayers for peace

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis began the New Year with an apology for losing his patience the night before with a woman who grabbed his hand and yanked him closer to her while he was greeting people in St. Peter's Square.

To get away, the pope had slapped her hand and gave her a very serious scowl. A video of the incident went viral on Twitter.

Reciting the midday Angelus prayer Jan. 1, Pope Francis was talking about how God's offer of salvation in Jesus is "not magic, but patient, that is, it involves the patience of love, which takes on inequity and destroys its power."

Then, briefly departing from his prepared text, the pope said that "love makes us patient. We often lose our patience; me, too, and I apologize for my bad example last night."

Returning to his text, Pope Francis said that in gazing upon the Nativity scene with the eyes of faith, "we see the world renewed, freed from the dominion of evil and placed under the regal lordship of Christ, the baby lying in the manger."

The church marks Jan. 1 as both the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day, he said, urging Catholics to pray for peace and to recognize their responsibility to work for peace.

For the 2020 celebration of World Peace Day, he said, the focus was on peace as a "journey of hope, a journey which proceeds through dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion."

"Jesus is the blessing of those oppressed by the yoke of slavery, both moral and material," he said. "He frees with love."

To those who are enslaved by vice and addiction, the pope said, Jesus bears the message that "the Father loves you, he will not abandon you, with unshakable patience he awaits your return."

Jesus opens the doors of fraternity, welcome and love to those who are victims of injustice or exploitation; pours "the oil of consolation" on the sick and the discouraged; and opens windows of light for prisoners who feel they have no future, he said.

"Dear brothers and sisters," he told the people in the square, "let's get down from the pedestals of our pride and ask for the blessing of the holy Mother of God. She will show us Jesus. Let's let ourselves be blessed, let's open our hearts to goodness and that way the year that is beginning will be a journey of hope and peace, not through words, but through daily gestures of dialogue, reconciliation and care for creation."

Pope Francis used his midday address to thank and encourage all the initiatives Catholics, their parishes and dioceses around the world undertake to promote peace.

"My thoughts also go to the many volunteers who, in places where peace and justice are threatened, courageously choose to be present in a nonviolence and unarmed way, as well as to the military who carry out peacekeeping missions in many areas of conflict," the pope said.

Addressing everyone, "believers and non-believers because we are all brothers and sisters," Pope Francis urged people to "never stop hoping in a world of peace," which must be built together, day by day.