The priests of the Diocese of San Angelo attended the annual Chrism Mass Sept. 10, 2020, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. The concelebrating priests were socially distanced in the pews rather than seated near the altar like most years. The priests of the diocese renew their priestly promises each year at the Chrism Mass, which is also the occasion when the diocesan bishop blesses the oils to be used in sacraments throughout the diocese. See more photos, Pages 12–13.

Inside this issue:
- Bishop Sis: Catholic election guidance (Page 2)
- Carmelite brother makes solemn vows (Page 5)
- Have you considered being a deacon? (Page 15)
- Audit finds diocese in full compliance with Safe Environment policies (Page 21)
Catholic guidance for the November elections

In just a few weeks, we, the citizens of our country, will select governmental leaders, from president to local officials. Each one of us is faced with the challenge of deciding how we will vote. Before the elections on Nov. 3, we should inform ourselves on the candidates and their positions — not just their party or their personality, but also what they stand for and what direction they would take this country.

Either on election day or by early voting, we should plan our schedules to make time to vote. Keep in mind that the presidential race is not the only item on the ballot. There are other races and measures down the ballot that are also important. Even voting in just some of them is better than not voting at all.

To help form your conscience on the important issues at stake in our elections, I recommend reading a brief teaching document entitled Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility. It is published every four years by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and it is available in English and Spanish, in print and online, at www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship. This is the primary resource offered by the church in this country to help Catholics make responsible decisions in the upcoming election.

In this article, I will offer a summary of the main points of that document, with the hope that you will take some time to study it for yourself. In my citations I will refer to the document as FC.

It is not the role of bishops, priests, deacons, religious, or lay representatives of the church to endorse or oppose specific candidates or parties (FC, nos. 7, 15, 58). Each one of us has a right and responsibility to look carefully at the platform of each candidate and compare those positions to the teachings of the church and the church. Our faith teaches us basic moral principles, and each person then applies those moral principles to concrete circumstances to bring about a more just society. “The obligation to teach the moral truths that should shape our lives, including our public lives, is central to the mission given to the church by Jesus Christ” (FC, no. 11). “We bring a consistent moral framework — drawn from basic human reason that is illuminated by Scripture and the teaching of the church — for assessing issues, political platforms, and campaigns” (FC, no. 12).

“We should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths or approve intrinsically evil acts” (FC, no. 14).

When Catholics make choices in the voting booth, they are to use their prudential judgment and follow their well-formed conscience as they apply the teachings of Christ to the issue at hand. “Catholics have a serious and lifelong obligation to form their consciences in accord with human reason and the teachings of the church. … Conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil” (FC, no. 17).

In order to help properly form the conscience, the teachings of the Catholic Church identify “some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. … These are called ‘intrinsically evil’ actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia. … It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the destruction of innocent human life merely as a matter of individual choice” (FC, no. 22).

Other intrinsically evil acts include human cloning, destructive research on human embryos, and other acts that directly violate the sanctity and dignity of innocent human life. Other actions which can never be justified include genocide, torture, the targeting of noncombatants in acts of terror or war, acts of racism, treating workers as mere means to an end, deliberately subjecting workers to subhuman working conditions, treating the poor as disposable, or redefining marriage to deny its essential meaning (FC, no. 23).

All the life issues are connected. “The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed” (FC, no. 28).

However, our fundamental opposition to the intentional taking of innocent human life does not justify dismissing or ignoring other serious moral issues. These include such things as environmental degradation, racism, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger or lack of health care, pornography, redefining civil marriage, compromising religious liberty, and unjust immigration policy. Choices about how best to respond to these issues are matters for principled debate and decision (FC, no. 29).

In the situation where morally flawed laws already exist, such as laws which support abortion, a government official who fully opposes abortion sometimes may need to pursue only partial, incremental improvements in the law as gradual steps toward the full restoration of justice. “However, Catholics must never abandon the moral requirement to seek full protection for all human life from the moment of conception until natural death” (FC, no. 20).

All issues do not carry the same moral weight, and we do not treat all issues as morally equivalent (FC, nos. 37, 40). When as bishops offer guidance and recommendations in the application of moral principles to

The Prayer Square
Prayer before an election

Lord God, as the election approaches, we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our city/state/country, and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community.

We ask for eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters, one and equal in dignity, especially those who are victims of abuse and violence, deceit and poverty. We ask for ears that will hear the cries of children unborn and those abandoned, men and women oppressed because of race or creed, religion or gender.

We ask for minds and hearts that are open to hearing the voice of leaders who will bring us closer to your Kingdom.

We pray for discernment so that we may choose leaders who hear your Word, live your love, and keep in the ways of your truth as they follow in the steps of Jesus and his Apostles and guide us to your Kingdom of justice and peace.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

— from Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

See BISHOP, Page 20
En tan solo unas semanas, nosotros, los ciudadanos de nuestro país, seleccionaremos a los líderes gubernamentales, desde el presidente hasta los funcionarios locales. Cada uno de nosotros enfrenta el desafío de decidir cómo votaremos. Antes de las elecciones del 3 de noviembre, debemos informarnos sobre los candidatos y sus posiciones — no solo su partido o su personalidad, sino también lo que representan y a qué dirección llevarían a este país.

Ya sea el día de las elecciones o mediante votación temprana, debemos planificar nuestros horarios para tener tiempo para votar. Tenga en cuenta que la carrera presidencial no es el único elemento de la boleta. Hay otras carreras y medidas en la boleta que también son importantes. Incluso votar solo en algunas es mejor que no votar en absoluto.

Para ayudar a formar su conciencia sobre los temas importantes que están en juego en nuestras elecciones, le recomiendo leer un breve documento de enseñanza titulado “Formando conciencias para una ciudadanía fiel: un llamado a la responsabilidad política.” La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos lo publica cada cuatro años y está disponible en inglés y español, en forma impresa y en línea, en www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship.

Este es el recurso principal que ofrece la iglesia en este país para ayudar a los católicos a tomar decisiones responsables en las próximas elecciones.

En este artículo, ofreceré un resumen de los puntos principales de ese documento, con la esperanza de que usted se tome un tiempo para estudiarlo por sí mismo. En mis citas me referiré al documento como FC.

No es el papel de los obispos, sacerdotes, diáconos, religiosos, o representantes laicos de la iglesia respaldar u oponerse a candidatos o partidos específicos (FC, núms. 7, 15, 58). Cada uno de nosotros tiene el derecho y la responsabilidad de observar cuidadosamente la plataforma de cada candidato y comparar esas posiciones con la enseñanza de Cristo y la iglesia.

Nuestra fe nos enseña principios morales básicos, y luego cada persona aplica esos principios morales a circunstancias concretas para lograr una sociedad más justa. “La obligación de enseñar acerca de las verdades morales que deberían dar forma a nuestra vida, incluida nuestra vida pública, es un elemento central de la misión que Jesucristo encomendó a la Iglesia” (FC, núm. 11).

“Una conciencia moralmente correcta debe emanar de la razón humana básica iluminada por la Sagrada Escritura y la doctrina de la Iglesia — para analizar las cuestiones, las plataformas políticas y las campañas.” (FC, núm. 12).

“Deberíamos ser guiados más por nuestras convicciones morales que por nuestro apego a un partido político o grupo con intereses especiales. Cuando sea necesario, nuestra participación debería ayudar a transformar el partido al que pertenecemos. No debemos dejar que el partido nos transforme de tal manera que ignoremos o rechacemos las verdades morales fundamentales, o apabrumos actos intrínsecamente malos.” (FC, núm. 14).

Cuando los católicos toman decisiones en la cabina de votación, deben usar su juicio prudencial y seguir su conciencia. Aquellos que se forman de manera que no debemos hacer, ni como individuos ni como sociedad, porque estas son siempre incompatibles con el amor a Dios y al prójimo. ...Estas acciones se llaman ‘actos intrínsecamente malos’. Estos siempre se deben rechazar y ser objeto de oposición y nunca se deben apoyar o aprobar. Un ejemplo claro es quitar intencionalmente la vida de un ser humano inocente, como es el caso del aborto provocado y la eutanasia. ... Es un error con graves consecuencias morales el tratar la destrucción de una vida inocente simplemente como una cuestión de decisión individual” (FC, núm. 22).

Otros actos intrínsecamente malos incluyen la clonación humana, la investigación científica destructiva de embriones humanos y otros actos que violan directamente la santidad y dignidad de la vida humana inocente. Otras acciones que nunca pueden justificarse incluyen el genocidio, la tortura, atentar contra los no combatientes en actos terroristas o de guerra, actos de racismo, tratar a los trabajadores como meros medios para un fin, someter deliberadamente a los trabajadores a condiciones de vida infrahunumanas, tratar a los pobres como objetos desechables, o redefinir el matrimonio para negar su significado esencial (FC, núm. 23).

Todos los problemas de la vida están conectados. “La destrucción directa e intencionada de la vida de personas inocentes, desde el momento de la concepción hasta la muerte natural, es siempre mala y no es simplemente una cuestión entre muchas otras. Siempre debe ser rechazada” (FC, núm. 28).

Sin embargo, nuestra oposición fundamental a la toma intencional de vida humana inocente no justifica rechazar o ignorar otras cuestiones morales graves. Estos incluyen cosas como la degradación del medio ambiente, el racismo, el uso de la pena de muerte, el recurrir a una guerra injusta, el uso de la tortura, los crímenes de guerra, la falta de acción para responder a los que sufren a causa del hambre o falta de cuidado sanitario, la pornografía, la redefinición del matrimonio civil, la puesta en peligro de la libertad religiosa, o una política inmigratoria injusta. Las opciones sobre la mejor manera de responder a estos problemas son materia para debates y decisiones fundadas en principios (FC, núm. 29).

En una situación en la que ya existen leyes moralmente defectuosas, como las leyes que apoyan el aborto, un funcionario del gobierno que se opone completa-mente al aborto a veces puede necesitar buscar solo me-joras parciales y paulatinas de la ley como pasos graduales que lleven a una restauración plena de la justicia. “Sin embargo, los católicos nunca deben abandonar el requerimiento moral de proteger la protección plena de toda vida humana, desde el momento de la concepción hasta la muerte natural” (FC, núm. 32).

No todas las cuestiones tienen el mismo peso moral, y no tratamos todas las cuestiones como moralmente equivalentes (FC, núms. 37, 40). Cuando nuestros, como obispos, ofrecemos orientación y recomendaciones en la aplicación de principios morales a opciones políticas específicas (tales como el conflicto armado, la vivienda, el cuidado médico, o la inmigración), estas recomendaciones no tienen la misma autoridad moral que las declaraciones doctrinales morales universales. Sin embargo, consideramos que esta orientación es esencial para arrojar la luz del Evangelio y la enseñanza católica sobre los juicios morales prudenciales (FC, núm. 33).

Las secciones 34 y 35 del documento merecen una atención especial y deben leerse con mucha atención: “Un católico no puede votar a favor de un candidato que toma una posición a favor de algo intrínsecamente malo, como el aborto provocado, la eutanasia, el suicidio asistido, el sometimiento deliberado de los trabajadores o los pobres a condiciones de vida infrahunumanas, la redefinición del matrimonio en formas que violan su significado esencial, o comportamientos racistas, si la intención del votante es apoyar tal posición. En tales casos un católico sería culpable de cooperar formalmente con un mal grave. Pero al mismo tiempo, un votante no debería usar la oposición a un mal intrínseco de un candidato para justificar una indiferencia o despreocupación hacia otras cuestiones morales importantes que atañen a la vida y dignidad humanas.” (FC, núm. 34).

“Puede haber ocasiones en que un católico que rechaza una posición inaceptable de un candidato incluso sobre políticas que promueven un acto intrínsecamente malo decidida razonablemente votar a favor de ese candidato por otras razones moralmente graves. Votar de esta manera sería solamente aceptable si verdaderamente existen razones morales graves, y no para promover intereses mezquinos o las preferencias de un partido político o para ignorar un mal moral fundamental” (FC, núm. 35).

Al votar, debemos considerar la integridad, filosofía, ...
**U.S. Bishops announce 2020 Election Novena**

**West Texas Angelus**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has announced the dates and intentions for a nine-day Election Novena leading up to this year’s general election on Nov. 3. The Election Novena was originally developed for the 2016 election and returns this year after proving popular among laity and clergy throughout the country.

The USCCB described the novena in a memo announcing the dates: “For nine consecutive days, Monday, October 26 through Tuesday, November 3, participants will be encouraged to pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be for the day’s intention. A closing prayer for elected leaders will be offered on day 10, Wednesday, November 4.”

The novena was announced jointly by the chairs of the USCCB committees on Cultural Diversity in the Church; Migration; International Justice and Peace; Pro-Life Activities; Domestic Justice and Human Development; Evangelization and Catechesis; Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; Catholic Education; Religious Liberty; and the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and Sub-committee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage. The prayer intentions for each day are as follows:

**Day One, Monday, Oct. 26:** “As we prepare for the national and local elections, in the midst of a global pandemic, may our political engagement be guided by our Catholic Faith.”

**Day Two, Tuesday, Oct. 27:** “In this month of the Holy Rosary, may Our Blessed Mother guide us in confronting racial inequalities and restoring peace in our communities.”

**Day Three, Wednesday, Oct. 28:** “May all Americans recall the necessity of dialogue, civility, and humility in this election season.”

**Day Four, Thursday, Oct. 29:** “May all people understand the moral and ethical dimensions of political decisions and decide accordingly.”

**Day Five, Friday, Oct. 30:** “May voters and elected leaders uphold the dignity of every human being in their political engagement.”

**Day Six, Saturday, Oct. 31:** “May Catholics recall all aspects of Catholic Social Teaching as they consider their votes.”

**Day Seven, Sunday, Nov. 1:** “May there be a transformation of politics to focus on the dignity of the human person and the common good.”

**Day Eight, Monday, Nov. 2:** “May we keep in mind the gift of religious freedom and our duty to defend and exercise it as faithful citizens.”

**Day Nine, Tuesday, Nov. 3:** “Today, as we approach the polls, may we understand and embrace the principles of our Faith that should guide our political engagement.”

**Closing, Wednesday, Nov. 4:** “May the leaders elected this week be guided by the Holy Spirit as they fulfill their positions.”

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**Bishop’s Calendar**

Please contact the bishop’s assistant, Lupe Castillo, for information about the bishop’s calendar.

**325-651-7500**

lcastillo@sanangelodiocese.org

**Necrology of Priests and Deacons**

Please pray for our departed clergy

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By Brian Bodiford

The Carmelite hermits gained a new member when Brother Augustine Mary of the Mother of God made his solemn profession of vows Oct. 1 at Mt. Carmel Hermitage in Christoval. The Mass was not open to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions, but Brother Augustine Mary was joined by his brothers from the hermitage, his family, and several priests of the diocese during the Mass presided by Bishop Michael Sis.

Brother Augustine Mary is the son of Deacon Ron and Wendy Stegenga of Sacred Heart Parish in Abilene. The Stegengas came to Abilene from Minnesota around 10 years ago, and after visiting all four Catholic churches in town, decided on a new parish to call home. “When I got to Sacred Heart, I knew that was the church we were supposed to be at,” recalled Wendy. Within two years, the couple’s adult children had all moved to Abilene as well.

“He’s always been God’s child,” Wendy said. “We are honored and blessed to take care of [God’s] children.”

In reference to his son’s solemn profession of vows, Deacon Ron Stegenga was at a loss for words. “I don’t know if there are any words that can describe how blessed we are,” he said, adding that the entire diocese is blessed to have the community of Carmelite hermits, which he called “a pillar in our diocese.”

Though the Stegengas had no clear indication that one of their sons would one day give his life in service of God as a religious brother, they did ensure that their children were in the care of the Lord. “We always prayed and consecrated our kids to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” Wendy said. “That’s probably had a greater effect on our family than anything else we’ve done,” added Deacon Ron.

Like his father, Brother Augustine Mary found it difficult to describe the emotions of the day. “It’s a hard feeling to express,” he said. “If I had to express it, it would be a great, profound sense of peace that I am doing God’s will” in giving himself to “a beautiful vocation.”

Brother Augustine Mary first began to realize he was being called down this path about six and a half years ago. “I kind of felt a calling from God about becoming a monk, and I didn’t really know how that was going to be fulfilled,” he said. The next step toward that fulfillment came during a visit by Carmelite Father Fabian Rosette and Brother Martin Mary Hubbs to Sacred Heart Church. Since Msgr. Bob Bush, the pastor at the time, was sick, Brother Martin took over preaching duties during the visit. It was then that Brother Augustine Mary truly began his process of discernment.

During Brother Augustine’s initial visit to Mt. Carmel Hermitage, he found that “it touched my heart very deeply.” He decided being a Carmelite monk was truly what he was being called to do with his life.

Father Fabian Maria of Jesus Crucified, prior of Mt. Carmel Hermitage, has the responsibility of selecting religious names for the new brothers brought in under his supervision. “God inspires me,” he said. For the newest member, Father Rosette “kept looking and praying” before coming to the conclusion that “there is only one saint for him: St. Augustine.”

His fellow Carmelite brothers are happy for their newest member. “We are very blessed to have him,” said Brother John David. “It is somebody that God sent to us and it’s a gift. Like a baby brother,” he added with a smile, “A newborn brother.”

Brother John David continued, speaking for the community. “We admire his courage, commitment, and also how cheerful he is,” he said. “He shares that with our community.”

Brother Martin Mary, whose preaching helped to bring about Brother Augustine’s discernment, referred to him as “the life of the party.” Brother Martin knew that the Mass was the culmination of a lifetime of preparation. “The effort he’s put in in the years leading up to today … this is a manifestation of that,” he said.

Brother Augustine Mary of the Mother of God joins the five other Carmelite Hermits of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel in monastic life in the idyllic Mt. Carmel Hermitage in Christoval.
October is Respect Life Month in the Catholic Church of the United States. To commemorate this occasion, Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann, Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Pro-Life Activities, released a statement calling on Catholics to use this month as “a time to focus on God’s precious gift of human life and our responsibility to care for, protect, and defend the lives of our brothers and sisters.”

The full statement is reproduced below:

**Live the Gospel of Life**
**Respect Life Month Statement, October 2020**

Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

As Catholics in the United States, we will soon mark our annual observance of October as Respect Life Month. It is a time to focus on God’s precious gift of human life and our responsibility to care for, protect, and defend the lives of our brothers and sisters.

This year’s theme, “Live the Gospel of Life,” was inspired by the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *The Gospel of Life*. Pope John Paul’s masterfully articulated defense of the right to life for children in their mothers’ wombs, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the marginalized is more relevant today than ever before.

This past November, the U.S. bishops reaffirmed that “the threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed.” While we noted not to “dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty,” we renewed our commitment to protect the most fundamental of all human rights – the right to life.

This past January, I shared with Pope Francis that the Bishops of the United States had been criticized by some for identifying the protection of the unborn as a preeminent priority. The Holy Father expressed his support for our efforts observing that if we fail to protect life, no other rights matter. Pope Francis also said that abortion is not primarily a Catholic or even a religious issue, it is first and foremost a human rights issue.

The Gospel of Life provides a blueprint for building a culture of life and civilization of love. The important work of transforming our culture begins by allowing the Gospel of Christ to touch and transform our own hearts and the decisions we make. May we strive to imitate Christ and follow in his footsteps, caring for the most vulnerable among us. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may Our Lord grant us the grace to live courageously and faithfully his Gospel of life.

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**U.S. bishops say 'enough' on federal executions**

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Just hours before the sixth federal execution took place this year, and two days before the next one was scheduled, two U.S. bishops' committee chairmen called on the government to end this practice.

“We say to President Trump and Attorney General Barr: Enough. Stop these executions,” said Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in a statement issued late Sept. 22.

“In the last 60 years, before the Trump administration restarted federal executions, there were only four federal executions. Since July, there have been five, which is already more federal executions than were carried out in any year in the last century,” the bishops said.

They said the Catholic Church “must give concrete help to victims of violence” and “encourage the rehabilitation and reintegration of those who commit violence.” They noted that “accountability and legitimate punishment are a part of this process” and emphasized that “responsibility for harm is necessary if healing is to occur and can be instrumental in protecting society.”

“Executions are completely unnecessary and unacceptable, as Popes St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have all articulated,” they added.

The bishops' statement was issued the day before Barr, a Catholic, was scheduled to receive the Christifideles Laici Award, named for St. John Paul II's postsynodal exhortation, at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast. The award is given by the independent Catholic organization in “honor and gratitude for fidelity to the church, exemplary selfless and steadfast service in the Lord's vineyard.”

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, Catholic Mobilizing Network and the Santa Fe Archdiocese's Office of Social Justice and Respect Life spoke out against Barr receiving this honor, emphasizing that in his role as attorney general, he directed the federal government in July 2019 to resume the execution of prisoners on federal death row.

The Catholic Mobilizing Network, which works to end use of the death penalty and promotes criminal justice reform and restorative justice, relaunched its website after federal executions in early September, emphasizing that Barr was being honored “despite promoting actions contrary to Catholic teaching.”

And a Sept. 23 statement by the group's executive director, Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, further denounced Barr's award, especially for its presentation in between two federal executions, saying it “could mislead the public to believe the Catholic Church somehow condones the death penalty. This is categorically false.”

By Bishop Emeritus Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

The moral abyss of infanticide

There is a powerful political block in Washington that has no qualms about advocating for the atrocity of abortion, the killing of a baby, up to the minute of birth. These same negative forces are pushing for legal approval of infanticide, the barbaric killing of a precious child of God, a true tiny person, that has survived a cruel abortion.

This is appalling. As dedicated citizens and true believers of God, we cannot allow our beautiful country to sink into this terrible moral abyss of infanticide. We believe in the constitutional principle of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness even for tiny babies that survive abortion. These tiny images of God have the right to life and deserve lifesaving healthcare, not murder.

Treating such a vulnerable, suffering baby with the same love as any other newborn should not be controversial in a civilized society.
Pre-harvest Mass and breakfast

The community of St. Lawrence held a pre-harvest breakfast and Mass celebrated by Father Chinna Pagidela on Sept. 24. The Mass was held beside a pond on the farm of Carol and Doug Jost at sunrise. The farming community of St. Lawrence considered this occasion a blessing since they were unable to have their traditional pre-planting prayer breakfast this year.

Suiting up for a sacrament

Father Joe Barbieri, parochial vicar of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Odessa, recently prepared to administer the anointing of the sick to a COVID-19 patient in an Odessa hospital wearing the personal protective equipment required by the hospital.

Confirmation in Crane

Parishioners of Good Shepherd Church in Crane and Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Imperial celebrated confirmation on Sept. 27. There were 12 confirmation candidates from Good Shepherd and one from Our Lady of Lourdes.
A referendum for life

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Preamble to the Declaration of Independence).

"Unalienable Rights" are given by God in his Natural Law, unable to be taken away from the person or given away by the person.

The constitution and the Bill of Rights recognize these God-given rights. However, without life there are no other rights or freedoms — no liberty or pursuit of happiness. Life is the preeminent and unalienable right from which all others derive their legitimacy.

"It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish. The greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion, which is war against the child," taught St. Teresa of Calcutta. "We must not be surprised when we hear of murders, of killings, of wars, of hatred. If a mother can kill her own child, what is left but for us to kill each other? ... We must remember that life begins at home and we must also remember that the future of humanity passes through the family." Saying "yes" to life as we choose pro-life political candidates is saying "yes" to the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all life — God, our Father. Saying "yes" to life is saying "yes" to marriage and family as God intended in his creation: one man and one woman committed to each other in a life-long union that is open to procreation for the formation of a family. Saying "yes" to life is saying "yes" to the dignity of every person, born and unborn, without regard to handicapping conditions, race, nationality, or gender. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it' " (Gen 1:27-28 RSVCE).

How ironic that the pro-choice position is actually the choice of death for the unborn or newly-born child. If the choice of a pro-choiceponent were life, the person would be pro-life! We should not be deceived by those who promote pro-choice. Catholics are a people of life, not promoters of a culture of death. Jesus tells us, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:10-11). In electing public officials at every level of government, we have the choice, the opportunity, and the obligation to protect our rights, our freedoms, our families, the church, and our country. As Catholic citizens, it is our duty to form our consciences, to be informed about the candidates' voting records regarding the sanctity of life, and to vote for a culture of life.

St. Margaret d'Youville, ‘mother of universal charity’

Life was starting to get better for Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais. Since her father died when she was seven years old, leaving her mother and six children in great poverty, Marguerite had been helping the family by farming, sewing, embroidery, and teaching.

Now at age 20, Marguerite was being married to Francois d’Youville, a gay, witty, charming, and well-connected bachelor in Montreal’s society. Their marriage in August 1722 was a considerable social occasion.

Soon after their marriage, Francois began to leave Marguerite for longer and longer periods of time, ostensibly to help his brother with the farm. Kathleen Jones writes in Women Saints that Marguerite began to hear gossip that her husband’s real business was fur trading with the Indians, exchanging furs for brandy or whiskey. Liquor trading with the Indians was illegal.

Margaret was appalled, yet she loved him despite his faults. During the eight years of their marriage, she bore six children, but only two sons survived, both of whom later became priests. In 1727 Margaret joined the Confraternity of the Holy Family and developed a special devotion to the Virgin Mary. This gave her some consolation.

When her husband died in 1730, Marguerite opened a small store to pay off his debts and to support herself and her family. She turned her attention to charity and began to take destitute women into her home and nurse them. Montreal had only one hospital and it was for men. She was joined by three companions and together they devoted themselves to a life of service to the needy.

But not everyone thought that what Marguerite and her companions was doing was a work of charity. Father M.A. Habig, O.F.M., writes in Saints of the Americas that some people thought her activities were a front to hide the illegal sale of liquor to the Indians, like her husband had done.

Some of the towns people even heaped insults on Marguerite and her companions and started calling them “the Tipsy Sisters” (“les Soeurs Grises” in French). The French word “gris” also means “grey.” Marguerite later adopted a grey habit for her new religious congregation.

Sarah Gallick writes in The Big Book of Women Saints that the Grey Nuns, as they were beginning to be known, gradually won the respect of the community. During the French and Indian War, they nursed the wounded from both sides. On December 31, 1737, Marguerite’s group officially became the Sisters of Charity of Montreal.

In 1747 Marguerite was given charge of the General Hospital in Montreal. Matthew Bunson writes in John Paul II’s Book of Saints that the hospital cared for disabled soldiers, the aged, insane, and lepers. It also became a haven for orphans and abandoned children. Known as the Hotel Dieu (House of God), it provided care for both men and women.

The Sisters supported themselves by making clothing for military troops. In 1753, Marguerite and her companions received permission to incorporate their activities and in 1755 they officially received a gray habit.

The hospital was destroyed by fire in 1766; it was later rebuilt. Marguerite died in Montreal on December 23, 1771.

Pope John XXIII called her the “Mother of Universal Charity.” She was canonized in 1990 by Pope John Paul II, the first native-born Canadian to be named a saint. Her feast day is October 17.

Mary Lou Gibson writes about the saints for the West Texas Angelus from her home in Austin.
Anti-racism and ministry

I am beginning with a disclaimer. I understand that my view on this topic comes from a place of privilege. While life has not always treated me well, my skin color has never been the reason for my struggles. That being said, racism is an issue our people are dealing with today, thus making it a topic that must be addressed.

After the death of George Floyd, Pope Francis sent a strong message to U.S. Catholics condemning the sin of racism and asking us to pay attention to the racism that is happening in our own communities and churches. In that message, Pope Francis reminded us that “We cannot close our eyes to any form of racism or exclusion, while pretending to defend the sacredness of every human life.” Our faith upholds that all humans are created in the image and likeness of God. Part of our responsibility as baptized Christians is to uphold the truth that everyone deserves dignity.

It is not simple enough to not be racist. We must have an understanding of anti-racism, meaning we are actively working to eradicate racism not only in our own actions, but in society and institutions. Anti-racism begins by recognizing our own, and our church’s, sins of racism and prejudice.

In 2018, the U.S. Catholic Bishops wrote a pastoral letter against racism entitled Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love. This was not their first pastoral letter addressing this topic; the first was written in the 1970s. When wanting to understand the church’s stance on racism, Open Wide Our Hearts is a good starting point. It is where we will begin.

“You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8). This verse is a simplification of our mission as baptized faithful. Yet, we are reminded that “To do justice requires an honest acknowledgment of our failures” (OWOH, p. 8). If we are truly putting into practice the social justice teachings of the church, we must begin with looking at the ways that our practices, and the practices of the institutions we are part of, are unjust. At times, that is as simple as choosing to speak up instead of remaining silent when we see racial injustice occurring. “Too often, racism comes in the form of the sin of omission, when individuals, communities, and even churches remain silent and fail to act against racial injustice when it is encountered” (OWOH, p. 4). When we choose to stay silent about racial injustice, or even claim that church is not the place to discuss the issue, we are guilty of that sin of omission.

This means in our ministries we must first acknowledge the way we have failed. Are we truly inclusive in our ministries and aware of how best to include those of all races while honoring their history and culture? Or does our inclusion end at saying “All are welcome!” but then not having our ministry truly reflect the multi-culturalism of our communities? Do we address the topic of racial injustice and racism, or do we contribute to the sin of racism by remaining silent? “All too often, leaders of the Church have remained silent about the horrific violence and other racial injustices perpetuated against African Americans and others” (OWOH, p. 22). If we are truly leaders, we must be the way in situations to speak out against the violence and racial injustices our brothers and sisters of color suffer.

We must also remember that racism is a pro-life issue. “Too many good and faithful Catholics remain unaware of the connection between institutional racism and the continued erosion of the sanctity of life” (OWOH, p. 10). When we do a pro-life session in our ministries, do we include a variety of pro-life topics — racism, immigration, anti-death penalty — or do we simply focus on anti-abortion? We must remember that being pro-life involves a variety of issues and make sure we are bringing all of them to light in that context. (I must borrow from my friend, Emily Wilson Hussem, here and use her puppies and bunnies analogy. When I say that puppies and bunnies are a difficult pairing, I am simply stating that fact. It does not mean that I think bunnies are not cute, simply means it only that the not issue we are talking about here. Yes, anti-abortion is an important pro-life issue, but that is the not issue I am addressing in this article. Puppies and bunnies.)

In addressing racism in our church, we must also be open to hearing the hard stories of how people have experienced racism. “We must create opportunities to hear, with open hearts, the tragic stories that are deeplySee POPE, Page 22

Discrimination as a tool for discernment

I have been an advocate for discrimination a very long time and especially so for the last 26 years, when I realized its importance even more. In today’s world it is not something that seems to be needed and is frowned upon.

Discrimination was something that was taught to me at a very early age by my parents who wanted to prepare me for life.

That might sound terrible to some people who would see that as an example of how racism is perpetuated generationally. But my parents were not racists. I was given many more examples of discrimination when I left my home, where I was an only child, and mixed with children of different backgrounds as I attended a Catholic elementary school. Sister Marian Angela, Sister Mary Martin, and Sister Catherine are all responsible for continuing my development as a practitioner of discrimination. They, also, were not racists. Nor were the many teachers and professors that taught discrimination to me through high school, college, grad school, and post-grad.

It is critical for us to practice discrimination if we use the original meaning of the word: “recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another.” Every test question is discriminatory because it helps the student to know the difference between the students who have learned the correct answer and those who have not. We discriminate when we go the correct gate at an airport to catch our flight. The departments of motor vehicles discriminate every time they refuse to give a driver’s license to someone who cannot pass the vision test. Our ability to discriminate, hopefully, keeps us away from life threatening situations.

This definition, however, is rarely what we think of any longer when we hear the word, because it has so often been preceded by adjectives that have made it something very bad: “racial” discrimination or “sexual” discrimination, or perhaps “religious” discrimination. Today, even without an adjective in front of it, the word is now more widely understood to mean “the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.”

James R. Sulliman, PhD

In all the countless ways that we use our ability to discriminate, there is one which is most important and way above all the rest … our ability to discriminate, to tell the difference, between good and evil. When discrimination is used in this context, the name it is given is “discernment.”

Thirty years ago, I stayed at a monastery for several days where I was taught some ways in which discernment could be enhanced. Twenty-six years ago I was blessed with three extraordinary people, two women and a Catholic priest, an exorcist, who have provided “advanced training” to my discernment and taken it to an entirely new level through their words and actions. All three put Jesus first in their lives.

At the monastery, I was given some criteria by which to judge “rightness” or “wrongness,” good or evil … whether something was more likely to be in accordance with our Christian faith or incongruent with it. For example:

1. Things that are of God typically reflect “order, harmony, and clarity,” whereas evil can be detected in “chaos, confusion, and disorder.”
2. With God, we have a spirit of peace unlike the spirit of mental disturbance that accompanies evil.
3. God’s spirit brings joy and creativity, not the death and destruction brought about by evil.
4. In God, we seek to gather and unify in his name, whereas “doing your own thing” brings temporary “pleasure” and long term pain.
6. When we believe we are acting in harmony with God’s plan, we are “open to the light,” that is to say we believe that God would see goodness in what we are doing, but when we are doing things we are trying to hide from God or “in the dark,” that is good cause to stop them.
7. Obedience to God’s commands will bring lasting joy, whereas “doing your own thing” brings temporary “pleasure” and long term pain.
8. Service to others and willingness to sacrifice are steps toward God while selfish desires take us away.
9. Honoring the Gospel message is unifying, while the hand of evil can be seen in “watering down” the message, selecting words out of context, or denying the Gospel message and the existence of God altogether.
10. Openness to forgiving others and accepting forgiveness and his grace is of God, not the unwillingness to forgive or accept forgiveness that evil encourages.
11. Recognizing Jesus as Lord brings all of humanity closer to God which is why evil wants us to deny Jesus and worship false gods instead.
12. “Loving one another” is of the utmost importance and that is why evil promotes its opposite.

Evil is extremely deceptive and extremely predictable. It seeks division from God leading to death and destruction. In today’s world “discrimination” between what is of God and what is of Satan is needed more than ever.

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Dr. James Sulliman, a graduate of Rutgers University and Florida State University, has 50 years’ experience in individual, marriage, and family therapy. He is also the Abilene-area pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo.
WINNING THE BATTLE

HELPING PASTORS, YOUTH MINISTERS AND PARENTS FIND VICTORY OVER PORNOGRAPHY FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

FREE ONE HOUR LIVE WEBINAR
AT NOON EST
NOVEMBER 10, 2020
bit.ly/winning-the-battle

Presented by

Religious Alliance and
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY-KANSAS

WINNING THE BATTLE
November 10, 2020 - NOON EST - Register

This live free webinar will present the reality of the pornography problem among teens and young adults within the faith community. In addition, we will present practical steps that faith community leaders can take to help those under their care. Our focus will be on those who are helping teens and young adults. Each presenter will share a real story of someone who has faced the challenge and found victory. We will cover a broad array of topics including:

- THE SCOPE AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM
- TECHNOLOGY-ITS BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES
- THE MESSAGES OF PORNOGRAPHY ABOUT SEX, INTIMACY AND MARRIAGE
- IT IS NOT YOUR DAD’S PLAYBOY
- GOD’S BETTER STORY AND MESSAGES
- VICTORY IS NOT ABOUT DO’S AND DON'TS BUT ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE
- ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT GROUPS
- THE POWER OF CONFESSION AND REpentANCE
- THE ROLE OF PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE
- BRAIN SCIENCE AND ADDICTION
- THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL VICTORY FOR LEADERS

WHO IS THIS FOR?
Pastors, priests, laymen, and parents: anyone who is helping teens and young adults see the reality and the societal culture in which we all live. The webinar will present practical steps and personal testimonies of victory. Everyone who listens will be encouraged and given hope.

FREE ONE-HOUR LIVE WEBINAR
AT NOON EST
NOVEMBER 10, 2020
bit.ly/winning-the-battle

WEBINAR PRESENTERS

Rob Stoddard
Rob is a church Consultant with Covenant Eyes working to help churches and organizations in the fight against pornography. He is a power user aware user. Church leaders want to help those who are using it. Rob has been using Covenant Eyes for 18 years and has been a mentor to many who struggle with pornography. He has been a husband for 38 years, has three grown children and four grandchildren.

Kevin Bohlin
Kevin has a B.A. in English from the University of Illinois and a M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is the Executive Director of the Center for Young Adult Missions for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. He is married with six children.

Josh Martin
Josh currently serves as the Youth and Discipleship Director for the Pennsylvania Diocese of Erie. With over 15 years of youth and Children’s Ministry experience, Josh brings a wealth of experience to the position. Josh is married with two children.

West Texans for Life: Paula Matchen scholarship period now open

West Texans for Life has announced the Paula Russell Matchen ProLife Scholarship requirements for 2020-2021. The $1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a candidate pursuing an education who has shown active involvement in the pro-life movement.

These are the listed requirements for the scholarship: enrollment at a university, college, or high school that requires a tuition fee; at least 40 documented hours of pro-life activity in events or organizations; evidence of pro-life publicity in the newspaper, television, or radio; evidence of spreading the pro-life message on social media; evidence of spreading the pro-life message at your university, college, or high school; a letter of support from a school official (teacher, counselor, or administrator); and a letter of support from a member of the clergy. An application detailing the applicant’s pro-life activities must also be completed.

Applications for the scholarship must be post-marked by May 1, 2021. All required documentation must demonstrate activity between Sept. 1, 2020, and April 30, 2021. Applications should be mailed to Dr. James R. Sullivan, care of West Texans for Life, 1317 North 8th Street, Suite 100, Abilene, TX 79601.

For more information, visit the Facebook page of West Texans for Life.
2020 Diocesan Conference Day
Virtual Conference
OCTOBER 17, 2020
9:00 AM-1:45 PM

Nurturing Families in the Church Today

Keynote Presentation:
Journeying Together: Accompanying Young People and Families through the Messiness of Everyday Life.

Keynote Presenter:
Paul E. Jarzembski
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
Assistant Director: Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

Since 2013, Paul Jarzembski has served on staff at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington DC, leading the USCCB’s efforts for youth and young adults. He and his wife Sarah live in the Maryland suburbs of Washington DC.

Breakout Sessions - TBA
More Information forthcoming

Conference Registration with Payment
$20 before October 2, 2020
$30 after October 2, 2020

For more information, contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at 325-651-7500 or evangelizationcatechesis@sanangelodiocese.org

Catholic Diocese of San Angelo
Immigration Services

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES CLINICS

WHO: Accredited Representatives for the Diocese of San Angelo
WHERE:
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
1401 E. Gordon Lane
Midland, Texas 79701
WHEN: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
July 15th, August 19th, September 16th, October 21st, November 18th
CASES ACCEPTED:
- Adjustment of Status
- Advance Parole
- Affidavit of Support
- Application to Immigrate Family Members
- Consular Processing/Waivers
- DACA Applications
- I-90 Removal (Green Cards)
- Naturalization
- Pardons
- Refugee/Asylee Processes
- Remove Condition on Residence
- Travel Documents
- U Status Applications for Victims of Crime
- VAWA for Victims of Domestic Violence
- Work Permit/Renewal Applications

APPOINTMENTS & INFORMATION (Please do not call Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish)
Diocese of San Angelo Immigration Services
Patricia Stokes Santana
(325) 212-6192

OFFICE AND TELEPHONE CONSULTATIONS AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES ARE PROVIDED FOR NORMAL FEES.

2020 St. Ambrose/Holy Family Festival
Together, Our Faith is Strong

Due to COVID constraints, the 81st annual St. Ambrose/Holy Family Fall Festival will look different than years past.

The festival will consist of the following activities:
- A raffle with over $12,000 in prizes
- Famous festival sausage sale
- General donations
- Cotton bale donations

You may visit our website to order sausage, participate in the raffle, or make a donation: www.saint-ambrose.org.
Or call the parish office: 325-651-7551

October 11, 2020
Plates To Go
$10 11am - 1pm
NO WALKUPS

Prepaid Sausage Only

DRIVE THRU ONLY
Order From
kallieoy634@gmail.com
325-647-6086

Handmade Credit “Queen”
by Ladies of St. Boniface
Silent Auction on FACEBOOK
“Saint Boniface Fall Festival – O’len, TX”
575-831-3017

Polaris Ranger Raffle
Polaris Ranger Crew 570-4
Tickets $20
Contact Parishioners
325-442-2893
ALSO AVAILABLE IN DRIVE THRU LINE

AUCTION ENDS & RAFFLE DRAWING
Oct 11, 3 pm

Together, Our Faith is Strong

SANT BONIFACE
OLFEN, TEXAS

Family Fall Festival will look different than years past.
Cotton bale donations •
raffle, or make a donation: www.saint-ambrose.org.

DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO
Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

The Angelus
OCTOBER 2020
Page 11
Chrism Mass, Sept. 10, 2020, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, San Angelo

Left: The oil of the sick (pictured) and the oil of catechumens were pre-packaged ahead of the chrism Mass to aid in the distribution to parishes after the Mass.

Left: Father Rodney White, dean of the Midland-Odessa Deanery; Father Santiago Udayar, Vicar General for the Diocese of San Angelo; Father Adam Drill, dean of the San Angelo Deanery; and Msgr. Fred Nawratskas, dean of the Abilene Deanery, served as the principal concelebrants for the Mass.

Left: Bishop Michael Sis blessed the oil of the sick during the Mass.

Left: Bishop Michael Sis poured the perfume balsam into the chrism oil, which was not prepackaged, for the offering of the prayer of consecration of the sacred chrism.

Left: Bishop Sis raised his arms over the sacred chrism while offering the prayer of consecration.

After the blessing of the sacred chrism, the oil was removed to the sacristy of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart to be packaged for transportation to the parishes of the Diocese of San Angelo. FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) Missionary Tyler Peterson (left) and Kelsey Johns poured the oil from its original, large vessel into smaller pourers for individual packaging.

Left: Patricia Garza (left) and Irene Villarreal poured the oil into individual bottles to be handed out for each parish to use during sacraments for the coming year. Also assisting in this process were Loretta Burgess, Gloria Johns, and Irene Ramirez.

Right: Father Albert Ezeanya, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Abilene, collects the holy oils for his parish. Phyllis Shannon of the Diocesan Pastoral Center coordinated the distribution to pastors and parish representatives.

Right: Father A. R. White, dean of the Midland-Odessa Deanery; Father Santiago Udayar, Vicar General for the Diocese of San Angelo; Father Adam Drill, dean of the San Angelo Deanery; and Msgr. Fred Nawratskas, dean of the Abilene Deanery, served as the principal concelebrants for the Mass.

Left: The priests of the diocese listened as Bishop Michael Sis presented his homily.

Right: Bishop Sis raised his arms over the sacred chrism while offering the prayer of consecration.
Three young adults from St. Stephen Church in Midland were selected to join the National Evangelization Team as missionaries for NET Ministries. They will embark on a nine-month missionary journey, sharing the Gospel with young people around the country.

The three missionaries (left to right), Angel Rios, Belinda Baeza, and Charlie Cisneros, were commissioned in a Mass at St. Stephen Church on Sept. 17, 2020.
Seven Chosen to Serve

"Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the Twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." (1)

Deacons

Early in the Church’s history, the disciples could not keep up with the daily distribution demands, and some widows and orphans were being neglected. "Therefore, the apostles stopped what they were doing; gathered as a group, prayed, and invented deacons." (2) The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to establish the Order of Deacons, then inspired "the whole multitude" (3) to determine who to select and finally inspired the seven men asked to serve as "deacons" to accept the task to serve those who had been neglected.

What is diaconal service?

Service does not necessarily mean menial or lowly service. What it does imply is "the attitude of the disciples of Jesus is ever to be one of humility in serving others." (4) The gift in service to others is the very essence of the diaconate of which Jesus of Nazareth is unsurpassed and unique expression. Thus, the diaconate’s meaning can be found in Christ-in-the-church’s self-emptying service, a service that is rooted and founded in the Lord Jesus himself. (5)

Why are deacons needed?

Our Church and its people have needs that require ministers with varied experiences and skillsets. Men ordained as permanent deacons are usually older than the required minimum age of 35 and have life experiences with family living, finances, and health issues. They come from diverse work backgrounds and possess special skills which they have developed using their resources. Most permanent deacons are married, so they understand intimate relationships between men and women. These men have experienced from courtship and engagement to marriage, childrearing, and running a household. They also have experience with various mature relationships with co-workers and parishioners and can easily relate to others who struggle with financial, work, marital, and family challenges.

How do men determine that they are called?

Like the first deacons, today’s permanent deacons are called forth by “the whole multitude.” We must not forget that the Holy Spirit speaks through other people. Our wives, family, friends, trusted colleagues, and faith community know us in ways that we don’t always know ourselves. Their perspective can be invaluable in helping discover a person’s identity and mission. Our spiritual tradition clarifies that any discernment done in private or shrouded in secrecy can be counterproductive and faulty. It makes both practical and spiritual sense to seek the counsel of others. (6) The Holy Spirit will speak directly to your heart, not unlike the parable of the unjust judge and the widow. (7) He will be persistent in asking you to follow him to serve those who are being neglected.

What is deacon formation?

Deacon formation is a five-year process that will cover four specific areas or dimensions of growth—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. One who will serve as a deacon requires a formation that promotes the development of the whole person. Therefore, the four dimensions are interrelated to achieve a continual integration of their objectives in each participant’s life and ministry exercise. (8)

The next class is projected to begin in August 2021, concluding the summer of 2026. If you are interested in learning more about permanent deacons in the Diocese of San Angelo, send your contact information to deaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org or call 325.651.7500 and ask for Deacon Freddy Medina.

What are the requirements to be accepted into diaconal formation?

To be accepted into formation, an applicant must:
• Have a willingness to make a life-long commitment of service in the church. The applicant will be asked to assure that, if he is ordained, he will serve in the diocese for the foreseeable future.
• Be in good standing in the church, having been a member for not less than three years and lived within the Diocese of San Angelo not less than three years.
• Have the support of his wife and his pastor in writing.
• Be between the minimum age for an applicant of 31 and the maximum age of 60.
• Be committed to celibacy after ordination, if single.
• Be committed to celibacy after ordination should his wife die before him, if married.
• Be a citizen of the United States of America or a Permanent Resident holding a valid “Green Card.”
• Have stable employment and a financially sound financial history.
• Be without a criminal record.
• Be of sufficient mental and physical health to complete a minimum of five years of formation and, after ordination, serve in an active capacity for a minimum period of 10 years.
• Possess a minimum of a high school diploma and be capable of college-level studies.
• Be able to read, write, and speak the English language. During formation, papers may be written and submitted in Spanish (if approved) if the applicant’s first language is not English.
• If married, be married for at least three years and be living examples of the sacrament and provide evidence of a stable and growing marriage.
• Be in a valid marriage recognized by the Roman Catholic Church if he is married. If any annulments are required (for applicant or wife), they must have been received before applying.
• If divorced and not remarried, at least three years must have elapsed before admission into the formation program.
• If divorced and remarried, at least three years must have elapsed, and you must obtain an annulment before admission into the formation program.
• If applicable, must be current on any child support payments.
• Provide their families with adequate quality time as husbands, fathers, and sons (without putting undue burden on their wives) during formation.
• Possess a significant history of active participation in pastoral ministry in his parish.
• Have completed the Diocese of San Angelo Basic Formation Program.
• Be committed to serving the Diocese of San Angelo after ordination.

Notes:
2. Pope Francis at meeting with bishops at St. Martin’s Chapel, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary. September 27, 2015.
3. Acts 6:5 RSV-CE
God is happy

Father Ron Rolheiser

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam ultimately all believe in the same God. Interestingly, too, in the popular mind they also all tend to conceive of God in the same way, namely, as male, celibate, and not being particularly happy.

Well, the gender of God is not something we can ever conceptualize. God is neither male or female, nor some androgynous mix of gender. So how can we conceptualize God’s gender? We can’t, pure and simple. Classically we’ve spoken of God as male, even as we know that this isn’t exactly true because we affirm, dogmatically, that God is ineffable, incapable of ever being captured in any concept. That also holds true for our notion of God as celibate, as not having a wife. How masculinity and femininity interrelate in God is also ineffable, incapable of being conceived of, but we know God is not simply a male celibate.

But it’s about that other popular notion, namely, that God is not particularly happy, especially with us?

Here we have a clear answer: God is happy. How can God not be? If God is perfect, perfect goodness, perfect truth, perfect beauty, and perfect fullness in every way, how then can God not be perfect happiness? An unhappy God would not be God for such a God would be lacking the power to make himself (pardon the pronoun) happy. Not a minor inadequacy for God. So a perfect God is also a perfectly happy God. But that’s a metaphysical statement. We can still ask, is God happy emotionally and is God happy with us? Mustn’t God frown at times and shake his head in disappointment at our behavior? Surely God can’t be happy with a lot that goes on in our world. God can’t be happy in the face of sin.

Well, just as in every other thing about God, there are things here we cannot comprehend. However, this much must be affirmed, both from what’s deepest in revelation in our scriptures and from the testimony of countless good people: God is happy! God is not habitually disappointed with us, frowning at our weaknesses, and sending the majority of us to hell. Rather, God is like the loving parent of a little child, forever luring us forwards, delighting in our energy, wanting us to flourish, saddened when we act in ways that bring unhappiness to others and to ourselves, but understanding of weakness rather than angry and unhappy.

Julian of Norwich, the famed mystic, describes God this way: “God sits in heaven, smiling, completely relaxed, his face looking like a marvelous symphony.” When I first read this passage some years ago, I was taken aback both by the concept of God as smiling and by the image of God as relaxed. I had never thought of God as “relaxed.” Surely with all that’s happening in our world and surely with all the betrayals, large and small, in our lives, God must be tense, frustrated and anxious. It’s difficult but easier to picture God as smiling (at least sometimes), but it’s exceedingly difficult to picture God as relaxed, as not being tense about all that’s wrong with us and our world.

Here’s my journey in grappling with that. I was wonderfully blessed in my religious background. From my parents and family, through the parish community I grew up in, through the Ursuline nuns who taught me in school, you couldn’t have ordered a more-ideal faith milieu. I experienced faith and religion being lived out in real life in a way that gave it credibility and made it attractive. My seminary training and theological studies strongly reinforced that. But, all that time, underneath, there was a picture of a God who wasn’t very happy and who smiled only when the occasion merited it, which wasn’t very often. The consequence of that in my life was an anxious attempt always to measure up, to be good enough, to not make God unhappy, and to earn God’s approval and affection. But of course, we can never be good enough, never measure up, and so it’s natural to believe that God is never really happy with us and never really happy at all.

In theory, of course, we know better. We tend to have a healthier concept of God theoretically; but the heart is not so easy to bring onside. It’s hard to feel inside myself that God is happy, happy with us, happy with me. It has taken me seventy years to realize, accept, take consolation in, and finally bathe in the fact that God is happy. I’m not sure what pulled all the triggers inside me that helped me make that shift, but the fact that God is happy comes to me now whenever I’m praying whole-heartedly, nakedly, and sincerely. It’s also what comes to me when I look at the saints in my life, those men and women whom I most look up to in faith, who reflect the face of God for me. They’re happy, relaxed, and not perpetually frowning in displeasure.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website: www.ronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

You’re meant to be an eagle, not a chicken: A reflection on baptism

When I was doing full-time parish ministry, one of my favorite activities was performing baptisms. I put the word in the plural, for I hardly ever baptized one baby at a time, but usually ten or a dozen. Typically, the quite large group of family and friends would gather in the first several pews of St. Paul of the Cross Church about 2 o’clock on a Sunday afternoon, I would welcome them and do a very short description of what was about to happen, and then the happy cacophony of twelve babies crying at once would inevitably commence. I would shout my way through the prayers and the baptisms — and a general joyfulness would obtain. Now that I’m a bishop, I have less occasion to baptize, and I do miss it. But an exception took place last week when I was delighted to welcome into the church Hazel Rose Cummins, the daughter of Doug Cummins and his wife Erica. Doug is our Associate Producer for Word on Fire in Santa Barbara.

I would like to share with all of you what I preached to the group gathered outside (it’s COVID time) of San Roque Church in Santa Barbara for the ceremony. I asked them if they had heard the story of Father Matthew Hoad, a priest of the Detroit Archdiocese, who discovered, after watching a video of his own baptism, that he had been invalidly baptized. The deacon who had performed the ceremony did not use the proper words, and as a result, Father Hoad had not in fact been received into the church. And as a consequence of this, he had not validly received first Communion, confirmation, or priestly ordination, since all of those sacraments depend upon the legitimacy of baptism. Now, once this was found out, the Archbishop of Detroit administered all of the relevant sacraments to Father Hoad and the young man was able to minister as a priest. You might think, “Well, that’s a strange story with a happy ending,” but it tells us, in fact, something extremely important regarding the church’s understanding of baptism. We believe that through the words and gestures of the sacrament, something happens. Baptism is not simply a celebration of a new life, or even an act of praying for and offering a child to God.

If that’s all it is, to paraphrase Flannery O’Connor, the heck with it. It is, rather, the visible sign of the invisible grace of incorporation into the Mystical Body of Jesus. It changes an objective state of affairs, whether we acknowledge it or not.

Having said all of this, I then stressed what we might call the subjective side of baptism. Since there were quite a few young people present, I used the well-worn parable of the eagle’s egg that tumbled out of the nest only to fall amidst a flock of chickens. When the eagle was hatched, the only world he came to know was that of chickens, and hence he spent his first years pecking on the ground and never spreading his great wings. One day, I continued, a majestic eagle flew overhead and spotted his young confere on the ground, acting like a chicken. “What’s the matter with you?” he asked. “Don’t you know who you are?” He then taught the eaglet how to deploy his wings and soar.

So it goes in the spiritual order. Every baptized person is, objectively speaking, a child of God, divinized, and destined to be a great saint. But the problem is that most of those who have received this new identity promptly forget it and take on the beliefs and practices of the world. Following the prompts of television, movies, social media, pop stars, and secularist ideologues, we give ourselves over to the acquisition of wealth or power or material success or fame. These things aren’t bad in themselves, but considering them our highest value and running after them with all of our powers amounts to pecking on the ground like chickens. What we need, I told the little congregation gathered for Hazel’s baptism, is a strong community of people to remind this little girl who she is. They didn’t make her a child of God; Christ did that through the mediation of baptism. But they can indeed teach her not to settle for being some pathetic simulacrum of who she is meant to be. Everything that they teach her, everything that they encourage her to do, should be directed to the great end of becoming a saint.

I have sometimes wondered what this country would be like if everyone who is baptized (which I believe is still the case) looked at life through a totally different lens. What if everyone who is meant to soar would, finally, stop poking around on the ground? It would be a true American revolution.

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.
¿Por cuál de los candidatos imperfectos he de votar?

Las elecciones nos invitan a votar como ciudadanos y a escoger a quienes consideramos como los mejores servidores públicos, los más preparados para responder a las exigencias y circunstancias del tiempo presente.

Ya sea que el propósito sea elegir al presidente del país a los miembros del comité escolar en nuestras localidades, como ciudadanos queremos servidores públicos que sean decentes, trabajadores, dedicados a un deber que requiere la vida y la dignidad humana en todo momento, comprometidos con la verdad y la justicia, idóneos y capaces de trabajar con otras personas. Como papá de dos niños abriendo camino en la vida, quiero servidores públicos que inspiren y den buen ejemplo.

La expectativa es exigente pero no imposible. Con un poco de disciplina, cualquier persona puede llegar a encarnar estos rasgos. Los enseñamos en nuestras hogares y escuelas. Escuchamos de ellos en nuestras iglesias. Le aseguramos a nuestros niños y nietos que sí son posibles.

Cultivamos dichos rasgos para asegurar un mínimo de civismo. Veneramos a quienes los viven de manera ejemplar. Cuando las personas los cultivan con el propósito de llevar a otros a Cristo, proclamando el Evangelio y confiando explícitamente en la gracia de Dios, entonces hablamos de santidad.

Sin embargo, ser santo no es un requisito para ser elegido como servidor público. Tampoco ser perfecto. Los candidatos políticos hacen una labor excelente resaltando sus logros y fortalezas. En medio de sus campañas sus imperfecciones también salen a la luz pública. Al final de cuentas, son humanos cualquiera de nosotros.

Reconocer el lado humano de nuestros líderes políticos es importante. Traerlos como figuras mesiánicas es simplemente idolatría. Esperar que no tengan faltas es ingenuo.

Mira OSPINO, Página 23

Yendo más allá de los errores y las debilidades

“Lo excusable no necesita ser excusado y lo inexcusable no puede ser excusado”.

Michael Buckley escribió esas palabras y contienen un importante desafío. Siempre intentamos excusar lo que no necesitamos excusar y siempre intentamos excusar lo inexcusable. Ninguna de las dos cosas es necesaria. Ni útil.

Podemos aprender al lección de cómo Jesús trató a los que le traicionaron. Un ejemplo claro es el apóstol Pedro, especialmente elegido y apodado como la roca de la comunidad apostólica. Pedro era un hombre honesto con una sinceridad infaltil, una fe profunda, y él, más que la mayoría de los demás, comprendió profundamente el significado de quién era Jesús y lo que significaba su enseñanza. De hecho, fue él quien, en respuesta a la pregunta de Jesús (¿Quién dices que soy?), respondió, “Tú eres el Cristo, el hijo del Dios vivo”. Sin embargo, minutos después de esa confesión, Jesús tuvo que corregir esa falsa concepción de Pedro de lo que ese significaba y luego reprenderlo por tratar de desvío de su propia misión. Más dramáticamente, fue Pedro quien, a pocas horas de un arrojante alarde de que, aunque todos los demás traicionaran a Jesús, él perseveraría.

Padre Ron Rolheiser, Página 23

Estás destinado a ser un águila, no una gallina: Una reflexión sobre el bautismo

Cuando ejercía a tiempo completo el ministerio parroquial, una de mis actividades favoritas era hacer bautismos. Puse “bautismos” en plural, porque casi nunca bautizaba a un solo bebé a la vez, pero normalmente eran diez o una docena. Típicamente, el grupo bastante grande de familiares y amigos se reunía en nuestras iglesias. Le aseguramos a nuestros hijos y nietos que sí son posibles.

Habiendo dicho esto, entonces enfatizó lo que podríamos llamar el lado subjetivo del Bautismo. Como había bastantes jóvenes presentes, utilice la trillada parábola del huevo de águila que se cayó del nido y cayó en medio de una bandada de palomas. Cuando el aguilucho nació, el único mundo que conocía fue el de los pollos, y por eso pasó sus primeros años picoteando el suelo y nunca extendiendo sus grandes alas. Un día, continuó, un águila majestuosa voló por encima y le explicó a su joven compañera en el suelo, actuando como una gallina. “¿Qué te pasa?”, preguntó. “¿No sabes quién eres?”. Luego le enseñó al joven águila cómo desplegar sus alas y volar. Así sucede en el orden espiritual. Cada bautizado es, objetivamente, un ícono de lo que estaba a punto de suceder, y entonces la feliz cacofonía de un doce bebés llorando a la vez comenzaba inevitablemente. Yo llegaba a hacer los bautismos, con todas sus oraciones, a gritos, y al final todo el mundo estaba feliz. Ahora que soy obispo, tengo menos ocasiones de bautizar, y las de echo de menos. Pero la semana pasada hubo una excepción, cuando tuve el placer de recibir en la iglesia a Hazel Rose Cummins, la hija de Doug Cummins y su esposa Erica. Doug es nuestro productor asociado de Word on Fire en Santa Bárbara.

Me gustaría compartir con todos ustedes lo que prediqué al grupo reunido afuera (son tiempos de COVID) de la Iglesia de San Roque en Santa Bárbara para la ceremonia. Les pregunté si habían escuchado la historia del Padre Matthew Hood, un sacerdote de la Arquidiócesis de Detroit, que descubrió, después de ver un video de su propio bautismo, que había sido bautizado invalidadamente. El diácono que había realizado la ceremonia no usó las palabras adecuadas, y como resultado, el Padre Hood no había sido recibido en la Iglesia. Y como consecuencia de esto, no había recibido válidamente la Primera Comunión, la Confirmación o la ordenación sacerdotal, y en todos esos sacramentos dependen de la legitimidad del Bautismo. Ahora, una vez que esto se descubrió, el Arzobispo de Detroit administró todos los sacramentos relevantes al Padre Hood y el joven pudo ejercer su ministerio como sacerdote. Podríamos pensar, “Bueno, es una historia extraña con un final feliz”, pero no es, dice, de hecho, algo extremadamente importante en cuanto a la comprensión de la Iglesia sobre el Bautismo. Nosotros creemos que, a través de las palabras y gestos del sacramento, algo real sucede. El bautismo no es simplemente una celebración de una nueva vida, o incluso un acto de rezar y ofrecer un niño a Dios. Si eso es todo, parafrasando a Flannery O’Connor, al diablo con el bautismo. Es, más bien, el signo visible de la gracia invisible de la incorporación al Cuerpo Místico de Jesús. Cambia una situación objetiva, lo reconozcamos o no.

Habiendo dicho todo esto, entonces enfatizó lo que podríamos llamar el lado subjetivo del Bautismo. Como había bastantes jóvenes presentes, utilicé la trillada parábola del huevo de águila que se cayó del nido y cayó en medio de una bandada de palomas. Cuando el aguilucho nació, el único mundo que conocía fue el de los pollos, y por eso pasó sus primeros años picoteando el suelo y nunca extendiendo sus grandes alas. Un día, continuó, un águila majestuosa voló por encima y le explicó a su joven compañera en el suelo, actuando como una gallina. “¿Qué te pasa?” preguntó. “¿No sabes quién eres?”. Luego le enseñó al joven águila cómo desplegar sus alas y volar. Así sucede en el orden espiritual. Cada bautizado es, objetivamente, un ícono de lo que está destinado a ser. Todo lo que le enseñan, todo lo que le animan a hacer, debe estar dirigido al gran final de ser santo.

A veces me han preguntado cómo sería este país si todos los que se bautizan (que creo que sigue siendo la mayoría de la nación) vivieran a la altura de su identidad como hijos de Dios. ¿Y si todos los que están destinados a volar dejaran de hurgar en el suelo? Sería una verdadera revolución americana.
COVID-19 vaccine myths

Several popular myths about COVID-19 vaccines have been gaining traction on social media in recent months, particularly in regard to messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines being developed by Moderna, Sanofi, Pfizer and a handful of other companies. I would like to consider five of these myths:

**Myth 1:** For vaccines that rely on injecting patients with mRNA, the possible incorporation of these genes into our genetic makeup will fundamentally alter who we are as humans, moving us into a project of Transhumanism, the production of a “Human 2.0,” etc.

**Reply:** Any incorporation of new genes into our chromosomes from a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine would be an exceedingly rare occurrence, if it were to occur at all. It is actually very difficult to get the genetic information of mRNA to integrate into our chromosomes, partly because this would mean a reverse directional flow of the so-called Central Dogma of Molecular Biology: our DNA or chromosomes are read ("transcribed") to produce mRNA, which is then read ("translated") to make proteins. Even if the accidental and unintentional incorporation of an mRNA message into our chromosomes were somehow to occur following vaccination, this would not mean that we were creating “Human 2.0,” since those genetic changes would not be expected to affect our sex cells, and therefore would not be transmitted to the next generation. Vaccinating people with an mRNA vaccine for COVID-19, therefore, does not imply that we are “remaking man” or heading down the path of Transhumanism.

**Myth 2:** The rapid pace of clinical trials means that vaccines will be unsafe and/or ineffective.

**Reply:** This could be a legitimate concern, if proper testing were to be curtailed, or approval for public vaccination campaigns were to be granted ahead of conclusive safety and efficacy testing. Such approval, however, appears highly unlikely, even when it comes to any of the major national regulatory agencies like the US Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, or Australia’s Therapeutic Goods Administration (with the possible exception of regulatory agencies in China and/or Russia).

**Myth 3:** Luciferase is the name of the bioluminescent enzyme contained in the vaccine, which seems connected to “forces of evil.”

**Reply:** Luciferase, an enzyme involved in firefly illumination, is being used in various testing and development stages in the production of a COVID-19 vaccine, but is not itself part of the injected material included in human vaccinations. Luciferase is a commonly used biomedical research tool, and has been used, for example, in lab animals to study the most effective way to deliver mRNA vaccines, whether by an injection into the skin, muscle or a vein.

**Myth 4:** Vaccine manufacturers have no legal repercussions for any bad effects from their vaccines.

**Reply:** Dr. John Grabenstein, retired Global Executive Director of Medical Af-
Suicide and mortal sin/ What is true forgiveness?

Q. We have all been dealing with the havoc of the coronavirus, and here on the West Coast, forest fires are causing loss of life and wide property devastation. Some people have lost everything. It has been said that God doesn't allow things to happen beyond what people can cope with, but I'm not sure that this is true.

So if one has lost all that he owned (and perhaps even a family member) and that person commits suicide, has he committed a mortal sin? I don't believe so; it seems to me that that person was in despair and that his state of mind probably does not qualify for eternal damnation. Your thoughts? (Beaverton, Oregon)

A. Suicide has always been considered by the Catholic Church as a grave offense, which is one of the elements that constitutes mortal sin. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "It is God who remains the sovereign master of life. ... We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of" (No. 2280).

But gravity of matter, of course, is only one of the three requirements for a mortal sin -- the others being sufficient reflection and full consent of the will. And it is here that the church now adopts a more nuanced approach with regard to someone who takes his own life. When I was first ordained a priest (in 1966) the church normally did not permit a funeral Mass or burial in a Catholic cemetery for someone who had taken his own life. But that is no longer so.

As this same catechism (promulgated by St. John Paul II in 1992) says: "Grave psychological disturbances, anguish or grave fear of hardship, suffering or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide. We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives" (Nos. 2282-83).

Commonly, then, in the present day the church gives the benefit of the doubt to a suicide victim and grants a Catholic funeral and burial. The church makes the pastoral judgment that there may well have been mitigating circumstances and that the person -- due to severe depression or mental illness -- may not have been capable of making that decision with full freedom.

Q. Does it count as true forgiveness if you don't hate the person, if you pray for their well-being, yet purposely avoid them because you've seen enough to know that they won't change their ways (gossiping, etc.)?

A. Forgiveness is essential to the Christian way of life. We have only to think of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stoned outside the city of Jerusalem, he died praying for his executioners. He took his example, of course, from Jesus, who said from the cross, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

Earlier, after giving us the Lord's Prayer, Jesus had said: "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you" (Mt 6:14). So, a willingness to forgive those who have offended us is a Christian imperative.

At the same time, though, the church does not dictate whom you have to "hang out" with. In your own case, I believe that you have done everything you are obligated to do: You do not hate the one who offended you, and you continue to pray for him or her well-being.

To continue to fraternize with that person may not only be unpleasant for you; it could also "pull you down" into the world of gossiping. You are justified, I would think, in keeping your distance.
BISHOP
Continued from Page 2

specific policy choices (such as armed conflict, housing, health care, or immigration), these recommendations do not carry the same moral authority as statements of universal moral teachings. Nevertheless, we consider this guidance to be essential for shedding light on the Gospel and Catholic teaching on prudential moral judgments (FC, no. 33).

Sections 34 and 35 of the document merit close attention, and they should be read very carefully: “A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who favors a policy promoting an intrinsically evil act, such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, deliberately subjecting workers or the poor to sub-human living conditions, redefining marriage in ways that violate its essential meaning, or racist behavior, if the voter’s intent is to support that position. In such cases, a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in grave evil. At the same time, a voter should not use a candidate’s opposition to a single issue as the only basis for rejecting that candidate for other morally grave reasons. Voting in this way would be permissible only for truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil” (FC, no. 35).

In voting, we should consider the candidates’ integrity, philosophy, and performance. We should analyze their campaign rhetoric critically, and make our voting choices according to principles, not merely on the basis of party affiliation or self-interest (FC, no. 41).

The document addresses the question of single-issue voters in section 42: “As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate’s position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter’s support. Yet if a candidate’s position on a single issue promotes an intrinsically evil act, such as legal abortion, redefining marriage in a way that denies its essential meaning, or racist behavior, a voter may legitimately disqualify a candidate from receiving support” (FC, no. 42).

The next section of the document lists four basic principles of Catholic social teaching which shape our involvement in the political life of any society. These are the dignity of the human person, subsidiarity, the common good, and good stewardship of God’s creation (See FC, nos. 49-51).

The principle of solidarity affirms that we are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice. The suffrage of our fellow human beings, no matter how far away, should be a matter of concern for all of us (See FC, nos. 52-56).

In light of our basic ethical principles, the document presents a summary of policy positions of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in sections 63-90. These are intended to guide Catholics as they form their consciences and reflect on the moral dimensions of society and politics. These policy positions include the following:

- Address the preeminent requirement to protect human life.
- Protect the fundamental understanding of marriage as the lifelong, exclusive commitment between one man and one woman.
- Promote the complementarity of the sexes and reject false gender ideologies.
- Protect the well-being of children.
- Avoid war and promote peace.
- Ensure conscience protection and promote religious liberty at home and abroad.
- Support the rights of workers.
- Foster the creation of jobs for all who can work.
- Affirm economic freedom, initiative, the right to private property.
- Protect consumers from the exploitative interest rates charged by many payday lenders.
- Support rural agricultural communities.
- Fight hunger and poverty.
- Provide affordable and accessible health care that respects the sanctity of human life and moral and religious convictions.
- Address global climate change.
- Oppose unjust discrimination.
- Achieve comprehensive immigration reform.
- Support parental choice in education.
- Reform the broken criminal justice system.

La dignidad de la persona humana es la base de una visión moral para la sociedad. Este principio nos llama a oponernos al aborto, a la eutanásia, a la asistencia asistida, al luto, a la defenestración de embriones humanos para la investigación científica, a la tortura, a la guerra injusta, y al uso indiscriminado de drones para fines violentos, genocidio, y los ataques terroristas. A la luz de nuestros principios éticos, el documento presenta un resumen de las posiciones políticas de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos en las secciones 63-90. Estos están destinados a guiar a los católicos a medida que forman su conciencia y reflexionan sobre las dimensiones morales de la sociedad y la política. Estas posiciones políticas incluyen lo siguiente: 

- Abordar el requisito preeminente de proteger la vida humana.
- Proteger la competencia fundamental del matrimonio como el compromiso exclusivo de por vida entre un hombre y una mujer.
- Promover la complementariedad de los sexos y rechazar las falacias ideológicas de género.
- Proteger el bienestar de los niños.
- Evitar la guerra y promover la paz.
- Garantizar la protección de la conciencia y promover la libertad religiosa en el país y en el extranjero.
- Apoyar los derechos de los trabajadores.
- Fomentar la creación de empleo para todos los que puedan trabajar.
- Afirmar la libertad económica, la iniciativa, y el derecho a la propiedad privada.
- Proteger a los consumidores de las tasas de interés abusivas que cobran muchos prestamistas de día de pago.
- Apoyar a las comunidades agrícolas rurales.
- Luchar contra el hambre y la pobreza.
- Brindar atención médica asequible y accesible que respete la santidad de la vida humana y las convicciones morales y religiosas.
- Abordar el cambio climático global.
- Oponerse a la discriminación injusta.
- Lograr una reforma migratoria integral.
- Apoyar la elección de los padres en la educación.
- Reformar el sistema quebrado de justicia penal.
Safe Environment audit: Diocese of San Angelo in full compliance

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

During the month of August 2020, the Diocese of San Angelo completed an audit of its Safe Environment programs by auditors from Stonebridge Business Partners of Rochester, New York, an independent firm commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), to ensure compliance with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary this year to conduct the audit by videoconferencing and phone calls rather than the traditional on-site audit. Despite the extra steps involved, the audit was completed on time with minimum inconvenience or complications.

The Charter, originally adopted by the USCCB in November 2002, and subsequently revised in 2011 and 2018, sets forth specific requirements which enable dioceses across the country to establish safe environment programs to protect children and youth from sexual abuse as well as other forms of abuse. This recent audit examined diocesan Safe Environment policies; diocesan Safe Environment programs for church personnel, parents, and children; as well as procedures for assisting victims of sexual abuse. As bishop, I am happy to report that Stonebridge has informed the diocese that, based on the analysis of the audit, the Diocese of San Angelo continues its status of being in full compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People for the 2019/2020 Charter audit period.

Since implementation of the Charter and the first compliance audit in 2003, the diocese has been found to be in full compliance with all articles of the Charter in each audit period for the past 18 years. I am pleased with the results of this audit and grateful for the hard work of hundreds of people throughout our diocese in 29 counties — pastors, deacons, women religious, and lay leaders — who provide a safe and sacred environment for all of our children and youth in the many programs and ministries we provide for them. Once again, this audit has given us a great opportunity to step back and see what we have accomplished and explore areas where we can make adjustments or improvements.

Since 2002 the Diocese of San Angelo has conducted over 40,000 background checks and provided Safe Environment training for over 15,000 individuals who work with children and youth throughout the diocese. In addition, over 17,000 parents and other interested parties have attended seminars that the diocese has presented on preventing child sexual abuse. The diocese will continue to move forward, continuing efforts, not only to provide a safe environment for our children and youth in our church programs, but also to raise the awareness of child sexual abuse in society and steps that everyone can take to help protect our children. Everyone in the church and the broader society must remain ever vigilant in our efforts to prevent abuse.

EDICTAL SUMMONS

October 1, 2020
CASE: CORTEZ — VILLANUEVA
NO.: SO/20/49

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking ESPIRIDION SANCHEZ VILLANUEVA.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 30th day of October 2020, to answer to the Petition of GLORIA VELZQUEZ CORTEZ, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “GLORIA CORTEZ and ESPIRIDION VILLANUEVA, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: CORTEZ — VILLANUEVA; Protocol No.: SO/20/49, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

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

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on October 1, 2020.

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

New San Angelo-area coordinator for DOSA pro-life ministry

Stephanie Socha recently took over the role of San Angelo-area coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo’s pro-life ministries.

Socha and her husband Larry have both been members of Holy Angels Church in San Angelo since 1973, during which time they have both been involved in pro-life activities.

Socha joins Abilene-area coordinator Jim Sullivan, Midland-area coordinator Gina Aaron, Odessa-area coordinator Deacon Edward Gonzalez, and diocesan director Jerry Peters.

Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat, healing after an abortion

These retreats are strictly confidential and are open to men and women.

Contact Priscella: 432-897-4788

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Bishop Michael Sis on Twitter:
@SABishopMike

On the Web

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Tomb of young Italian tech whiz opened for veneration

By Junno Arocho Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The tomb of Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian teenager who used his computer programming skills to spread devotion to the Eucharist, was opened for veneration before his beatification in Assisi.

A statement released by the Diocese of Assisi Oct. 1 said the tomb will remain open for veneration until Oct. 17. Acutis' beatification Mass will be held Oct. 10 in the Basilica of St. Francis.

The opening of the tomb was followed by a Mass presided by Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi.

The diocesan statement quoted Antonia Salzano, Acutis' mother, as saying she was "overjoyed that Carlo's tomb has finally been opened" and that those who have been touched by the young teen's life "will be able to see him and venerate him in a stronger and more engaging way."

"We hope that through the exposition of Carlo's body, the faithful will be able to raise with more fervor and faith their prayers to God, who, through Carlo, invites us all to have more faith, hope and love for him and for our brothers and sisters just as Carlo did in his earthly life," she said.

Photos of the remains of the soon-to-be-beatified teen revealed he was buried in jeans and a simple track suit jacket — the attire he was accustomed to wearing and what is seen in many of the photos taken of him during his life.

Before his death from leukemia in 2006, Acutis was an average teen with an above-average knack for computers. He put that knowledge to use by creating an online database of eucharistic miracles around the world.

In his exhortation on young people, Christus Vivit (Christ Lives), Pope Francis said Acutis was a role model for young people today who are often tempted by the traps of "self-absorption, isolation and empty pleasure."

"Carlo was well-aware that the whole apparatus of communications, advertising and social networking can be used to dull us, to make us addicted to consumerism and buying the latest thing on the market, obsessed with our free time, caught up in negativity," the pope wrote.

"Yet he knew how to use the new communications technology to transmit the Gospel, to communicate values and beauty," he said.

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POPE

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imprinted on the lives of our brothers and sisters” (O狒H, p. 10). Do we take time to listen to the stories of others and validate their experiences and feelings? We must provide a safe space for our brothers and sisters of color to share their experiences of racism and prejudice. We can also learn from their stories how we, individually and collectively, can better address issues of racial injustice. We can also learn how, at times unknowingly, our own actions contribute to an attitude of superiority.

The truth that we must face is straightforward. When one culture meets another, lack of awareness and understanding often leads to grossly distorted value judgments and prejudice. This prejudice fuels attitudes of superiority that are embedded in, and reinforced by, social structures and laws. This is evident in how white European immigrants and pioneers acted in their encounters with Native Americans; it is equally evident in the treatment of Africans who were enslaved and brought to the shores of America” (O fou, p. 13). In listening to the stories of those who have experienced racism, it can help to make us more aware of those structures and laws that need to be addressed in order to bring about justice. We can then act on that by advocating and using our vote in a way that brings about needed change and justice.

Prayer and dialogue alone are not sufficient. There must be action to bring about change.

We must address the issue of racism and racial injustice within our communities and as a community of faith. This will mean different things for different communities, but no community is exempt. It may mean anti-racism training at all levels — from religious education to priestly formation. It may mean changing how we have done things in the past. We can no longer accept that our church is either ignorant of the problem or blissfully unaware of its existence.

We must be aware that the ends can never justify the means. Perhaps we Catholics might pause a few minutes before we post something online and ask ourselves, "What profit will it be for me to gain a few retweets or likes if I do not allow all communities — regardless of size — to feel welcome. And we must remember that it is not our parish or our church that is the most pernicious is that it's often shared not in spite of knowledge but because of it.

Some people have followers that range in the thousands to tens of thousands, which only compounds its blow.

Jesus warns his followers, "For there is nothing hidden that will not become visible, and nothing secret that will not be known and come to light" (Lk 8:17).

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It is this behavior by Christians that Pope Francis condemned in his recent Angelus. Gossip undermines the communion of the church, which should be the goal of all fraternal correction. He reminded the faithful that it is the devil who sows discord and division.

Perhaps we Catholics might pause a few minutes before we post something online and ask ourselves, "What profit will it be for me to gain a few retweets and likes but to lose my soul?"

The 17- and 18-year-olds whom I taught were able to learn that lesson. I hope that adult men and women can, too.

Elise Italiano Ureneck is a communications consultant and is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

URENNECK

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the subject — hasn't essentially changed over time, I would argue our technological revolution has anesthetized people to its sting.

What I had used as a deterrent in my classroom — the fear of being discovered — is now encouraged and rewarded by social media platforms. The more salacious the post, the more likely it is to garner attention.

Gossip may be shared between two people, let's say by a tweet and reply or a Facebook post on another person's wall, but it is shared with the knowledge that both parties' followers will see it. What is most pernicious is that it's often shared not in spite of that knowledge but because of it.

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Life has never been easy, but I still chafe at those who say we're a bunch of sissies who just need to toughen up. All quite. We're in the middle of challenging times right now.

We need to be gentle with ourselves and with others. We need to listen for those in pain. We need to find silence. And when we can't pray, we turn our troubles over to Jesus and just let him be with us.

I love this quote from J.R.R. Tolkien’s "Lord of the Rings."

"Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened. Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.”

Cemeteries always remind me of the swift passage of time and the history that we often forget.

Don't set big goals right now. Don't worry about great accomplishments. Honor instead this brief time that has been given to us and try to cover someone you love with warmth.

CALDAROLA

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one of my great-grandfathers, as a child, made it to America on a famine ship with his family.

In Boland’s poem, a tribute to love between a man and woman, the protagonists are not as fortunate as my great-grandfather. In the bitter winter of 1847, they perish together of the Great Hunger, he protecting her with the last warmth of his dying body.

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Entonces, ¿qué hace Jesús con Pedro? No pide una explicación, no pide una disculpa, no le dice a Pedro que está bien, no ofrece excusas para Pedro, ni siquiera le dice a Pedro lo que ama. En lugar de eso, le pregunta a Pedro: “¿Me quieres?”

Pedro responde que sí, y todo sigue adelante a partir de ahí.

A partir de este momento todo avanza. Todo tiene futuro después de una confesión de amor, sobre todo una confesión honesta de amor después de una traición. Las disculpas son necesarias (porque eso es hacerse cargo de la falta y la debilidad para sacarla completamente del alma de quien fue traicionado) pero las excusas no ayudan. Si la acción no fue una traición, no es necesaria ninguna excusa; si lo fue, ninguna excusa la absuelve. Una excusa o un intento de excusa sirve para dos propósitos, ninguno de ellos bueno. En primer lugar, sirve para racionalizar y justificar, ninguna de estas dos cosas es útil para el traidor o el traicionado. En segundo lugar, debilita la disculpa y la hace menos clara y radical, por lo que no elimina completamente la traición del alma de quien ha sido traicionado; y, por eso, no es tan útil una expresión de amor como lo es un reconocimiento claro y honesto de nuestra traición y una disculpa que no intente excusar su debilidad y traición.

Lo que el amor nos pide cuando somos débiles es asumir de forma honesta, no racionalizada, de nuestra debilidad junto con una declaración que nace del corazón: “¡Te amo!” Las cosas pueden avanzar a partir de ahí. El pasado y nuestra traición no se borran, ni si excusan; pero, en el amor, podemos vivir más allá de ellos. Expurar, excusar o racionalizar es no vivir en la verdad; es injusto para el traicionado ya que él o ella carga con las consecuencias y las cicatrices.

Sólo el amor puede llevarnos más allá de la debilidad y la traición y este es un principio importante no sólo para aquellos que se arrepienten de su vida en que traicionaron y herimos a un ser querido, sino para nuestra comprensión de la vida en general.

Somos humanos, no divinos, y como tales estamos acostumbrados a fuerza, cuerpo y mente, con debilidades e insuficiencias de todo tipo. Ninguno de nosotros, como dice San Pablo gráficamente en su Epístola a los Romanos, está a la altura. El bien que queremos hacer, terminamos no haciéndolo, y el mal que queremos evitar, terminamos habitualmente haciéndolo.

Una parte de esto, por supuesto, es comprensible, excusable, así como otra parte no es excusable, por lo que el hecho de que somos humanos y parcialmente un misterio para nosotros mismos. De cualquier manera, al final del día, no se pide ninguna justificación o excusa (o ayuda). No avanzamos en la relación diciéndole a Dios o a alguien a quien hemos lastimado: “¡Tienes que entender! En esa situación, ¿qué otra cosa podía hacer yo también? No quería hacerte daño, ¡sólo que era demasiado débil para resistirme!” Eso no ayuda, ni es necesario. Las cosas avanzan cuando, sin excusas, admitimos la debilidad y nos disculpamos por la infidelidad. Como Pedro cuando Jesús se lo pidió tres veces: “¡Me amas?” de nuestros corazones tene mos que decir: “Tú lo sabes todo, sabes que te amo”.

OSPINO
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Es común que las campañas políticas se valgan de lenguaje que evocar la lucha entre el bien y el mal. No nos debe sorprender. Este es un tema que juega un papel fundamental en que evoque la lucha entre el bien y el mal. No nos debe sorprender que algunos candidatos se identifiquen con una tradición. Ninguno lo ha hecho o lo hará. Lo mínimo que podemos esperar de aquellos candidatos que se identifican con una tradición. Ninguno lo ha hecho o lo hará. Lo mínimo que podemos esperar de aquellos candidatos que se identifican con una tradición. Ninguno lo ha hecho o lo hará.

The communities of St. Lawrence in St. Lawrence, St. Thomas in Midkiff, and St. Paschal in Sterling City held their confirmation Mass Aug. 16, 2020.

The first Communion class of Sacred Heart Parish in McCamey.

Bishop Michael Sis paid a visit to the students of St. Mary Central Catholic School in Odessa on Sept. 4, 2020. While on campus, Bishop Sis blessed each of the classrooms at the school.

Sacraments and School Days