Father Mark Woodruff (front right) enjoyed a Luau retirement party June 26, thrown in appreciation of his 25 years as pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Odessa. Rather than entering full retirement, Father Woodruff will transition to “reduced active ministry” at St. Elizabeth under the new parochial vicar, Father Joe Barbieri. Read more about how several of our priests are continuing to answer the call to serve under reduced active ministry, Page 5.
The Hyde Amendment saves lives

The Hyde Amendment respects the consciences of the American people by prohibiting the use of taxpayer funds to pay for most elective abortions. It includes exceptions for cases involving rape, incest, or maternal mortality risk. Since it does not fully protect all the unborn, it is not a perfect policy. However, as a bipartisan compromise, at least it is reducing the overall number of abortions and protecting us from being forced against our will to pay for the killing of the innocent. The Hyde Amendment is currently under attack by the White House and some members of Congress.

Since it is not permanent law, the Hyde Amendment must be joined each year to individual federal appropriations bills in order to take effect. Since 1976, three years after the Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade, this amendment has been signed into law every single year, regardless of whether the Congress or the White House were led by Republicans or Democrats. It is based on a consensus that taxpayers should not be forced to fund this procedure that so many Americans find ethically objectionable.

Abortion is the intentional destruction of an innocent and defenseless human baby. It is a wrongful and violent attack on life. It is an intrinsic evil, meaning that it is never permitted or morally justified, regardless of individual circumstances or intentions. Abortion is not health care and it is not a basic human right. The unborn child is a patient, not a disease or an unjust aggressor. The child’s fundamental right to life comes from God, not from some person’s decision that they want to accept the child.

The Hyde Amendment is a bipartisan provision that has been part of federal appropriations legislation for 45 years. It has also served as a model for many other federal policies that prohibit the government from funding abortions in other areas, such as in foreign assistance programs and community health programs. It is estimated that over 2.4 million children are believed to have been born because of the protections of the Hyde Amendment.(1)

The Hyde Amendment leaves the legislatures of all fifty states free to provide state funds for abortion if they wish. Most states have chosen to follow the criteria of the Hyde Amendment.(2) Laws like the Hyde Amendment leave everyone, including those who want to pay for other people’s abortions, free to act on their own convictions.

All women deserve the resources they need to fully care for their babies and to welcome them in a loving, stable environment. Government money would be much better spent supporting women in unexpected or challenging pregnancies and struggling new mothers than to end the lives of their children. The Hyde Amendment has been broadly supported by the majority of the people.

The Angelus

Intercessions for life: Children — born and unborn

For orphaned children throughout the world, and especially those who are abused or neglected, that God might send others to love and care for them;
We pray to the Lord

For children who are unwanted by their parents, that God’s grace might send others to love and care for them;
We pray to the Lord

For the children of our country, especially those who are forgotten or neglected, that their presence might remind us of the infinite value of human life;
We pray to the Lord

For every little child: That we might accept and preserve each one as a sign of the infinite love of God for us;
We pray to the Lord

For all unborn children: That our love for them may keep them safe until the joyous day of their birth;
We pray to the Lord

That the Lord, who rescues the life of the poor from the power of the wicked, might send an angel to guard and protect all unborn children;
We pray to the Lord

That the Lord, in her mother’s womb, that in her life we may see the infinite love of God;
We pray to the Lord

That through the intercession of Saint Vincent, who spilled his blood for the defense of the Gospel, the lives of unborn children may be spared;
We pray to the Lord

That the Lord, in her mother’s womb, that in her life we may see the infinite love of God;
We pray to the Lord

For every little child: That we might accept and preserve each one as a sign of the infinite love of God for us;
We pray to the Lord

For children who have died from abortion, that God might send an angel to guard and protect the innocent and defenseless;
We pray to the Lord

For every little child: That we might accept and preserve each one as a sign of the infinite love of God for us;
We pray to the Lord

For all children who have died from abortion, that God might send an angel to guard and protect the innocent and defenseless;
We pray to the Lord

For every little child: That we might accept and preserve each one as a sign of the infinite love of God for us;
We pray to the Lord

For all children who have died from abortion, that God might send an angel to guard and protect the innocent and defenseless;
We pray to the Lord

For the children of our nation, especially those who are unwanted by their parents, that God might send others to love and care for them;
We pray to the Lord

For all children who have died from abortion, that God might send an angel to guard and protect the innocent and defenseless;
We pray to the Lord

Found at usccb.org.
Catholic faith runs strong in Midland athlete set to compete in Tokyo Olympic Games

By Becca Nelson Sankey

The Philippians Bible verse, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” could have been Bryce Hoppel’s mantra in his trajectory to the 2021 Summer Olympics. Hoppel, a member of St. Ann’s Catholic Church, was once an adolescent with a lofty goal: growing up to become an Olympian, the odds of which are approximately .00013 percent. But his strong faith is one of the reasons few, if any, in his inner circle are surprised that the 23-year-old qualified in June to compete in the 800-meter race at the 2021 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

“Bryce knows God is playing a part in this and gave him the talents,” said Monty Hoppel, Bryce’s father. “He wears his cross (necklace) outside of his uniform. He’s running for God and knowing God gives him strength, and he knows he’s helping him accomplish all this.”

Bryce’s path to the Olympics wasn’t always clear cut. Raised in Midland, he and his sisters attended St. Ann’s School, where his mother taught, and attended St. Ann’s Catholic Church. The Hoppels have also always been a sports-centric family: Monty works for a minor league baseball team, and their three children played a variety of sports while growing up. But it was soccer, not running, that was Bryce’s first love.

“One summer in high school, they had us do cross country to stay in shape for soccer, and I found an incredible group of friends,” Bryce said during a telephone interview from Kansas, where he attends college and trains. “I fell in love with the team. … And it made me start loving the sport. I honestly didn’t love running at the time, but it was cool how I found that group and we went through the journey together, and I discovered I was good at [running]. I quit soccer and fully committed to track and field my junior year of high school.”

One day after a high school race, Bryce told his parents he was going to make the Olympics one day. “We said, ‘Okay, Bryce, sure. That’s a good goal to have,’” said Rita Hoppel with a laugh.

He made his goal known to his friends and church family, including Alison Pope, his former high school youth minister at St. Ann’s. “I know this has been a dream of his for a while, and he’s always been willing to put in that hard work,” Pope said. “Whether it came to his schoolwork or his running or his faith, he’s always been determined and driven.”

As Bryce excelled in running, his dream suddenly didn’t seem so far-fetched. He broke Midland High School’s record as its first student to win a state championship in the 800-meter, then earned a scholarship in track and field to the University of Kansas. His sophomore year there, he achieved his first championship in the 800-meter run and competed in the NCAA Championships. His junior year, he won 21 consecutive races, as well as the NCAA Championships for both indoor and outdoor seasons. In 2019, he was part of the U.S. Championship team at the professional level and placed third, which allowed him to compete in Qatar for the World Championships, where he placed fourth. That same year, he gave up the NCAA and went pro.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck and delayed the Olympic trials, he trained, traveled, and raced in Europe. “I went to Croatia and Qatar, and I hung out in Rome in between races so I got to see the Vatican,” Bryce said. “2020 was a training and reflective year.”

The first two rounds of the U.S. Olympic Trials were held June 18-19, with the final on June 21. Bryce placed in the top three, officially clinching his spot in this year’s Summer Olympics.

“Coming across the [finish] line, you have so many thoughts that it’s almost numbing,” he said. “I wanted to get to my family, I wanted to thank God. Everything was happening so quickly, I really couldn’t take it in. I feel like I’ve been riding that feeling ever since. It feels unreal. It’s so cool to get the opportunity and honor to represent not only the country but all the people who got me here.

“My favorite quote is, ‘To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.’ I feel like we’re all given abilities, but it’s what we do with them. That’s what my parents have taught me — to be thankful for those blessings.”

“I think we all feel like Bryce was given some talent, and he’s busting his rear end to make sure that it comes true and he takes advantage,” Monty added. “We all know that prayer and faith is the reason all this is happening, along with his hard work.”

Bryce agreed that he “absolutely” would not be where he is without his Christian foundation. “There would be no purpose without my faith,” he said. “Being brought up in that and having that, with my parents so involved in the church, I feel like having all that is what’s gotten me here today, and I definitely wouldn’t be able to do it without it.

“There are some days where the body clearly is not wanting to do anything. You’re going to be pushing your body to its limits, and you have to believe it’s going to be fine, even when you feel like you’re going to pass out or something is going to break. You gave to have faith that it’ll be okay.”

Bryce also credited his teammates, coach, and support system in Kansas for his accomplishments thus far. “I think a lot of the time, especially when you get to those big races, it’s like, ‘Do I deserve to be here?’ I train with the Kansas University team here, and we do a lot of the same stuff, and I’m like, ‘What am I doing differently?’ That’s something I don’t always open up about, because I don’t know why I’m the one [headed to the Olympics], when we’re all doing the same workouts. I am thankful.”

Becca Nelson Sankey is a freelance writer, editor, and photographer in San Angelo.
Priests in reduced active ministry continue to share gifts

By Loretta Fulton

Back when Bishop Michael Sis was a young priest at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Austin, an older priest lived there and served in a variety of ways.

Neither Sis nor the older priest, Father Clement Funke, knew it at the time, but that service left a lasting impression on the young priest. Funke had no administrative authority, but his presence alone was a gift.

“He was a joy to have around,” Sis said. “He opened the church every day and celebrated the 6:30 a.m. Mass.”

Funke heard confessions most days, ate lunch with the other priests, and occasionally celebrated a wedding or baptism. He served as needed and was a blessing to the other priests and the congregation.

“People loved having him around,” Sis recalled.

A few years ago, Sis decided to adopt a similar arrangement in the Diocese of San Angelo. Msgr. Bernard Gully gave it a name—reduced active ministry. In 2018, Gully became the first priest in the diocese to step into that new role, after a lifetime of service. The diocese was established Oct. 16, 1961, and Gully was ordained in Sacred Heart Cathedral on May 29, 1962.

“I was actually the first priest to be ordained in the cathedral,” Gully said.

By 2018, fifty-six years later, Gully realized it was time to step away from full-time ministry. He no longer had the energy it takes to serve a parish as a full-time priest. And that’s when the idea of “reduced active ministry” took form in the diocese.

“We explored that,” Gully said. “That’s what I decided to do.”

Effective July 1, two more priests in the diocese will step into the role of reduced active ministry.

Msgr. Fred Nawarskas, pastor of Holy Family parish in Abilene, and Father Mark Woodruff, pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Odessa, will leave their full-time positions and enter into a little less hectic life.

Gully, the first priest in the diocese to take on the new role, believes both men will enjoy the slower pace, while still serving the church before entering full retirement.

“It is certainly a good way to process and merge into the new phase,” Gully said.

As Nawarskas and Woodruff transition into reduced active ministry, Gully is retiring in July. He will move from St. Ann parish in Midland, where he has served two years in reduced active ministry, into a retirement community in San Angelo. Moving to San Angelo will complete a circle for Gully, the first man to be ordained as a priest at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The Most Rev. Thomas Drury, the first bishop of the diocese, ordained Gully, who has served in a number of cities and churches in the diocese since then. Gully’s first assignment to reduced active ministry in 2018 was to Sacred Heart parish in Abilene.

After serving Sacred Heart’s mission in Clyde for a year, Gully spent the past two years at St. Ann. Now, the time has come for full retirement. Gully doesn’t see the transition as the end of something, but rather as a beginning.

“This is a commencement to a new life,” he said.

As Nawarskas and Woodruff transition into reduced active ministry, they will have Gully and Msgr. Robert Bush to look to for guidance. Bush has served the past two years in reduced active ministry at St. Joseph parish in Odessa and continues in that role. He was pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Abilene from 1996 to 2019.

Nawarskas came to Holy Family in Abilene the same year. Bush has a daily routine at St. Joseph but also serves as needed. He presides over the 5:30 p.m. Mass most weekdays and other Masses on occasion.

“It keeps me out of trouble,” he joked.

Bush will turn 78 in July. He was ordained in 1969 by the Most Rev. Thomas Tschoepe, the bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo. He enjoys his reduced active ministry role as he transitions to inevitable retirement.

“I guess it’s going to come,” he said.

Nawarskas will serve in reduced active ministry at Holy Family parish in Abilene, where he began serving as pastor in 1996. He bought a house four years ago close to the church and will serve the new pastor, the Very Rev. Santiago Udayar, who also will continue as vicar general for the diocese.

In his new role, Nawarskas hopes to find time to play the baby grand piano he has in his home. An accomplished musician, Nawarskas will be available to substitute as church organist if needed.

“In a bind, I could do that,” he said.

Woodruff, too, will continue to serve at the parish where he was serving as pastor, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Odessa. Woodruff said he had noticed in recent years that he didn’t have the same level of energy he had as a younger priest.

“It didn’t seem right to the people I served to remain as their full-time pastor if I couldn’t fulfill all the demands of the job,” he said.

He wasn’t ready to retire and will continue his ministry by celebrating Sunday and weekday Masses, hearing confessions, and handling other activities at the request of the pastor, Father Joe Funke.

“He is one hundred percent in charge of the parish,” Woodruff said, “but I’ll be there to help as I am needed.”

Woodruff was ordained in 1972 at St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco by Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken. Woodruff served in the Archdiocese of San Francisco four years before getting permission to join the Diocese of San Angelo in 1976. He requested the move to have more of a missionary experience and to minister among Hispanics.

The desire to continue to help, but in a reduced way, is the common thread connecting all priests who transition into the role of reduced active ministry. The position in the Diocese of San Angelo is similar to “senior priest” or “pastor emeritus” in other dioceses.

The arrangement at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Austin was such a good experience for Sis as a young priest that he wanted to replicate it in the diocese he now serves as bishop. The position was created to respect the gifts of older priests in their golden years, Sis said. They can still serve, but with a lightened load.

Retired priests also can continue to serve, but in different ways from a priest assigned to reduced active ministry. A retired priest sets his own schedule and can go anywhere to serve. Priests in reduced active ministry are assigned to a particular parish by the bishop. His salary and benefits are proportionally reduced according to an agreement between the parish pastor and the priest, with approval from the bishop.

The reduced active ministry role has proven to be a blessing in the Diocese of San Angelo, Sis believes. Both the priest, who isn’t quite ready for retirement, and the people he serves benefit from the arrangement.

“The people in a parish receive the loving services of a priest in his elder years,” Sis said, “and the priest gets to continue applying his skills in a constructive way.”

Loretta Fulton is a freelance writer in Abilene.
Knights of Columbus councils contribute to state charities

On May 1, 2021, at the Knights of Columbus State Convention in Houston, the State Councils Charities presented a check for $14,889.00 to the Diocese of San Angelo. Those funds will be used to support vocations to the priesthood in this diocese.

This year, 23 of the 31 active Knights of Columbus councils in the Diocese of San Angelo contributed toward the State Charities project. This represents a strong commitment to the needs of the church even during the time of the coronavirus pandemic. The contributing councils are as follows:

2163 — Abilene, Sacred Heart
8788 — Abilene, St. Vincent Pallotti
14412 — Andrews, Our Lady of Lourdes
10985 — Ballinger, St. Mary, Star of the Sea
13824 — Brady, St. Patrick
3867 — Brownwood, St. Mary, Queen of Peace
16390 — Crane, Good Shepherd Cathedral
9641 — Garden City, St. Lawrence
9215 — Midland, Our Lady of Guadalupe
1937 — Midland, St. Ann
12657 — Midland, St. Stephen
16391 — Midland, San Miguel
8773 — Odessa, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
10404 — Odessa, St. Joseph
3203 — Odessa, St. Mary
2772 — Olfa, St. Boniface
12008 — San Angelo, Holy Angels
2136 — San Angelo, Sacred Heart Cathedral
12798 — San Angelo, St. Joseph
17204 — San Angelo, St. Margaret of Scotland
13514 — San Angelo, St. Mary
4316 — Wall, St. Ambrose

Catholic high school in the Permian Basin continues to make an impact

MIDLAND — The school year may have been winding down, but Holy Cross Catholic High School (HCCHS) had an eventful month of May.

On May 7, Holy Cross accepted a donation from the annual Double Eagle Charities event, Cook Off for Kids. HCCHS was selected as one of the two recipients for the event.

Double Eagle Charities, Inc. was formed in 2017 as the charitable arm of Double Eagle, with the purpose of giving back to the communities of Fort Worth and West Texas. The event gave the opportunity for HCCHS to speak about the school's story, mission, needs and student achievements. HCCHS received a check in the amount of $156,000.

"The pandemic has hit Holy Cross Catholic High School very hard, just like many other non-profit organizations. We are so very blessed that Double Eagle, as well as the local philanthropic community, have helped us immensely. The Double Eagle event truly shows an organization that gives back to the community as great corporate citizens," said Holy Cross Catholic High School Board President, Brad Gibson.

Not only was HCCHS excited to spread the word about completing their second year at the Cook Off for Kids event, but they were also preparing for their own fundraiser, the second annual Black and Gold Ball. Even with all the uncertainty from the pandemic of whether the event could be held, the community provided outpouring support in attendance and fundraising. All proceeds of the event went to benefit HCCHS.

The Black and Gold Ball was held at The Way Retreat Center on May 15. The evening provided great food, drink, silent and live auctions, and dancing to live music. The honorary co-chair sponsors for the event this year were Sondra and Toby Eoff of Odessa, and Brenda and Travis Stice of Midland. Stice expressed the importance of a Catholic high school here in the Permian Basin and introduced one of Holy Cross' students, Alejandro Hinojos. Hinojos is a Junior at HCCHS and he spoke of his experience at Holy Cross and how it has transformed his life. He gave a very emotional speech that came from the heart.

"With two very successful fundraisers, we are incredibly grateful, especially following 2020," Gibson said. "The Black and Gold Ball was chaired by a dedicated group of folks who have a heart for kids and believe in the power of education to transform lives."

"This year has definitely been complicated and filled with uncertainties, but through it all we have been blessed with community members who stepped up and ensured that we continue with our mission to educate the young people of the Permian Basin. Our Holy Cross family continues to be blessed with the generosity of our community. We thank them for gifting us their prayers and their commitment to our school," said Carolyn Gonzalez, Head of School of Holy Cross Catholic High School.
St. Mary’s School Jobs

St. Mary’s Central Catholic School is looking for the following positions:

- Middle School (6th - 8th) English Language Arts Teacher (part-time or full-time)
- Teacher’s aide (part-time)

Please visit smcsscodsessa.org to download application. Completed applications should be emailed to psalcido@smcsscodsessa.org or brought to the school office. For more information call 432-337-6052.

St. Boniface Fall Festival

The St. Boniface Fall Festival at Olfen will be Sunday, October 10, 2021. Details will follow at a later date.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

St. Boniface Fall Festival

The St. Boniface Fall Festival at Olfen will be Sunday, October 10, 2021. Details will follow at a later date.

I AM A DEACON, AND A COACH

How are you a deacon in your workplace?

Being placed as the DRE and youth minister of my parish allows me to work with our youth and the adults who assist in bringing Christ to these special children. Being a deacon places a religious responsibility on me to show these kids the Christ in me and for them to respond in a like manner to others. After ordination and being a coach and teacher at our local school, many of my students, not just our Catholic youth but all the kids, would ask questions about my faith. As a result, several entered RCIA and became Catholics. What a gift it is to be able to help bring Christ to our youth in the public-school setting.

DAN SHANNAHAN
St. Ambrose Wall

ARE YOU CALLED?

Office of Diaconal Ministry
Deacon Freddy Medina • 325-651-7500
deaconoffice@sanangelodiocese.org

Msgr. Droll Scholarship now available for Catholic laity

SAN ANTONIO — Catholic laymen and women pursuing a graduate degree in theology or religious studies serve their church in a professional capacity must submit applications for the Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship by September 13, 2021.

The $2,000 scholarship is awarded to candidates in need of tuition assistance.

“Today many dedicated Catholics, who are not ordained clergy or women religious, serve parishes as Parish Coordinators or Administrators, as Pastoral Associates, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministers, Liturgists, and many other roles,” said Msgr. Droll. “This scholarship can help provide the funds to earn an advanced educational degree in theology or religious studies that is often required for these positions.”

This scholarship is geared toward those who have already obtained their bachelor’s degree and are either enrolled or want to enroll in any Catholic graduate school in Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, or Mississippi. Applicants may also be enrolled in an extension program or the Catholic University of America School of Canon Law.

Applications may be found online at www.cliu.com under the “Giving Back” tab and then by clicking on “Faith-Based Scholarships”, contact the Communications Department at (210) 828-9921 or 1-800-262-2548 or by writing to Catholic Life Insurance, Attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio, TX 78265-9527.

Founded in 1901, Catholic Life Insurance offers life insurance, IRAs, and retirement annuities to individuals and businesses living in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Mississippi.

Father Michael Udegbunam celebrates 40 years

Bishop Michael Sis will help Father Michael Udegbunam celebrate the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination with a Mass at St. Ann Church in Colorado City, Sunday, July 11, 2021, at 10:30 a.m.


Following his ordination, Father Udegbunam served many parishes in the archdiocese and was assistant editor to the archdiocesan Trinitas Magazine. He also served as chaplain to various organizations and as a member of archdiocesan panels and councils, including eight years as secretary on the presbyteral council. Father Udegbunam also taught at several secondary schools and two colleges.

In July 2002, Father Udegbunam traveled to the United States to continue his priestly ministry, serving first at Epiphany Catholic Parish in Normal, Illinois, in the Diocese of Peoria, before moving to the Diocese of San Angelo in October 2003. Father Udegbunam has served at Holy Redeemer and St. Mary Parishes in Odessa, Sacred Heart Parish in Mena, and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish in Junction. He is currently the pastor of St. Ann Parish in Colorado City and its mission church, St. Joseph in Loraine. Father Udegbunam was incardinated as a priest of the Diocese of San Angelo in 2006.
Patriotism

Editor’s Note: this month’s column is an update to Father Knick and Sandie's column from the August 2018 West Texas Angelus.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

These words should stir the patriotic fervor we felt in our 4th of July celebration — favorite foods, time with family and friends, and fireworks celebrating America’s Declaration of Independence from Great Britain in 1776. Inherent in that celebration each year is the remembrance of the ensuing revolution to win the rights and freedoms that come with being independent, the lost lives, the hard work of the Founding Fathers as they forged a new nation through the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. We remember that the source of our liberties and basic human rights is God, as our Declaration of Independence reads: "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.” We also remember all who have labored up to and in our time to preserve these rights and freedoms at great personal costs.

What is patriotism? Is it allegiance to one’s country compatible with being a Christian? Does patriotism have a place in our multicultural society that includes many immigrants, migrants, and refugees? What are the duties and implications of patriotism?

In Catholic Culture, Father Stephen J. Brown, SJ, uses the common definition of patriotism as love of one’s country, and uses two words to describe the essence of patriotism: the Latin patria and the German Vaterland, translated “fatherland.” He says that a sense of attachment to and devotion to one’s country is historical and universal — written about and extolled by the Jewish people, the Greeks and Romans, and peoples throughout the world since.

"Country" is not synonymous with nation, state, or society. A state is an entity under the control of some authority or government. A nation is only a collection of people to a foreigner and is a patria or fatherland only to those who live there and are loyal to it. Through war and politics, a nation may be a combination of countries or parts of countries. A society is a group of people in an organized community. So, what is distinctive about the concept of country? “It is the entire heritage transmitted to us by our countrymen who have gone before us” (Brown).

Patriotism is not in conflict with each person's ethnic/national roots, nor is patriotism just an emotional feeling or attachment. Patriotism is loyalty to one’s country. One’s country is the land itself, the people who inhabit it, and the traditions associated with it. One’s native land — patria/fatherland — is an extension of one’s family and home. St. Thomas Aquinas in his Summa Theologica wrote of the virtue of pietas — dutifulness. He tells us that because our parents and our country have given us birth and nourishment, we are indebted to our parents and country after God — pietas/dutifulness. Father Brown points out that "unlike nationalism, patriotism comes within the sphere of virtue, duty, and moral obligation." In 1890, Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical On Christians as Citizens, wrote that patriotism is a moral obligation based on natural law which "bids us give the best of our affection and of our devotedness to our native land so that the good citizen does not hesitate to brave death for his country."

What is the primary duty of one’s love for and loyalty to America? Good citizenship. A patriotic citizen, both native-born and naturalized, abides by what is best and beneficial for his country, and defends it against its enemies.

Father Knick and Sandie

Knickerbocker

First Chilean saint a model for youth

Juanita Fernández Solar was a brilliant, vivacious and hot-tempered young girl. She rode horses high up in the Andes, loved active sports, especially swimming and tennis. She was born on July 13, 1900, in Santiago, Chile, and grew up with three brothers, who nicknamed her “the Amazon,” and two sisters. Her parents, Miguel Fernández and Lucia Solar, were members of the Chilean upper class. “Juanita,” as she was known to her family, was educated in the college of the French sisters of the Sacred Heart. She was pious when young but also had her fair share of impatience and bad temper, writes David Farmer in the Oxford Dictionary of Saints.

Juanita was six when she knew that God was drawing her to him. She wrote later in her diary, “It was shortly after the 1906 earthquake that Jesus began to claim my heart for himself.”

Her devotion to the Eucharist became more intense after she made her first Communion at the age of 10. The holiness of her life was evident to friends and family and was apparent in all of life’s situations.

When she was 14 and suffering a painful bout of appendicitis, she heard the voice of Jesus telling her that her pain was in imitation of his suffering. Rosemary Guiley writes in the Encyclopedia of Saints that Juanita suffered from numerous illnesses during her adolescence that weakened her health, but helped her to discover her religious vocation. She read The Story of a Soul by Thérèse of Lisieux and was so moved by this autobiography that she decided she wanted to become a Carmelite nun. Sarah Gallick writes in The Big Book of Women Saints that Juanita gave herself completely to prayer and began to record her spiritual journey.

When she was 15, she made a private vow of celibacy, taught catechism and helped poor children. After reading the lives of The Vow of Avila and Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, her desire to join the Carmelites increased.

Guiley writes that Juanita was admitted to the convent of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Los Andes as a novice in May 1919 and was given the name of Teresa of Jesus. The Carmelites lived in extremely primitive conditions. She continued to write spiritual letters, which survive with her diary (Letters of Saint Teresa of Jesus of the Andes, translated by Michael D. Griffin). Her abbess allowed her to maintain an extensive correspondence with the outside world, a highly unusual privilege for a novice.

David Farmer writes in the Oxford Dictionary of Saints that Juanita dedicated herself as a ‘victim’ for sanctifying priests and sinners and wrote: “I wish to be holy, therefore I will give myself to love ... whoever loves has no will except that of the beloved.” She felt fulfilled in the Carmelite way of life and knew it was what she was born to do.

A few months into her novitiate, her health began to deteriorate, and she contracted typhus on Good Friday, April 2, 1920. On April 7, she was allowed to make her religious profession in articulo mortis because of danger of death. She died on April 12, 1920 having been with the Carmelites only 11 months as a postulant and a novice.

Her remains were venerated in the Sanctuary of Auco-Rinconada of Los Andes where an estimated 100,000 pilgrims visit each year. Pope John Paul II declared her Blessed on March 4, 1987, before a million people in Santiago. He canonized her in 1993. St. Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes (Teresa de Jesus “de los Andes”) was the first Chilean to be declared a saint.

Guiley writes that she is considered a role model for youth in the Catholic Church. Her feast day is July 13.

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

James R. Sulliman, PhD

An introduction to Dante’s ‘Divine Comedy’
and a closer look at ‘Inferno’

Introduction to the “Divine Comedy”

Dante Alighieri, author of the “Divine Comedy” (called by him simply Commedia), lived during the cusp of the 13th and 14th centuries (1265-1321), a period that was also a transitional one between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The first poet to write a major work in the vernacular, Dante was part of a movement called “the new spirit.” It was a time of change, in the world and in the church.

St. Francis had died only 39 years before Dante’s birth in 1226, and the movement of Friars Minor and Poor Clares (the women’s order, started by St. Clare), was spreading throughout Europe. Dante himself would become a Third Order Franciscan and remain devoted to St. Francis throughout his lifetime.

The church and faith were central to all aspects of society, but, as Dante graphically points out, this centrality of religion did not mean that the teachings of Christ were universally followed, even by those in the highest offices of the church.

Human nature, being then as it is now, led to an array of responses to the Gospel, from the fervor, devotion and mysticism of the saints to the utter rejection of it in terms of actions and attitude depicted in the Inferno. It was to convey the need for spiritual renewal in the church and in the world, and especially in himself, that Dante wrote the “Divine Comedy.”

To understand the “Divine Comedy,” it is important at least to understand, if not to read, Dante’s earlier work, La Vita Nuova (The New Life). In this brief but important book, Dante recounts his beginnings as a love poet, in the tradition of courtly love, which was extremely popular at the time.

In simplified terms, this tradition involved devotion, almost adoration, of a lady, usually from afar, in which she was spoken of in religious terminology, at times, leading to a kind of adulterous adulation.

Frequently, the lady was the wife of a nobleman or even a king, and her devoted follower, perhaps a knight or simply a troubadour, would sing her praises with a longing that remained unsatisfied. Sometimes courtly love led to actual adultery, as in the case of the famous lovers Lancelot and Guinevere, the queen of King Arthur, Lancelot’s lord.

Dante’s love interest was Beatrice, a girl he met when she was 8 and he was 9 years old. La Vita Nuova recounts their first meeting when he saw her, wearing a red dress (the color of love), her greetings to him on the street (moments of great exaltation) and her withdrawal of the greeting (a time of great pain and self-realization).

As the book continues, Dante describes himself as moving from simple courtly love for his lady to a transformation that her inner goodness and beauty inspire in him. By the end of the book, after her death at age 24, Dante has already begun to depict Beatrice as not simply a beautiful woman who inspires romantic devotion, but as a vehicle of the grace of God, which will lead him to eternal life.

However, the path upward to Paradiso involves his moving through the agony of repentance, and that, for him, is depicted as a journey through the three worlds (according to Catholic theology) of the afterlife — hell, purgatory and heaven (or Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso).

Dante’s Inferno

Dante begins the Inferno by describing himself as “lost in a dark wood.” He is terrified and tormented by the threat of three beasts — a lion, a leopard and a she-wolf. Scholars have debated the nature of these three beasts, but almost all would agree that they represent various types of sin (the world, the flesh and the devil, a most likely interpretation).

Dante seeks some help from a ghostly figure who appears to him, the Roman poet Virgil, whose inspiration has been key to Dante’s development as a poet. He tells Dante he has been sent (by the spirit of Beatrice, who came to Virgil in the part of hell where the virtuous pagans live without punishment but also without God) to help him to avoid damnation and experience salvation.

He tells Dante that Beatrice herself was sent by two other ladies in heaven, St. Lucia and Mary, the mother of Jesus. This encouragement overcomes Dante’s hesitation, and he embarks on the first part of his journey with Virgil, through hell.

Two scenes illustrate the transformation involved in Dante’s journey. In Canto V, in the second circle of hell, damned lovers Paolo and Francesca are being punished together. They were adulterous lovers (historically they lived shortly before Dante did), killed by her jealous
Supreme Court sides unanimously with Catholic Social Services in religious freedom case

By Kate Scanlon
Catholic News Agency

WASHINGTON D.C. – The Supreme Court on June 17 decided unanimously in favor of Catholic Social Services in its lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia, ruling that the city violated the group’s free exercise of religion.

The city in 2018 had stopped partnering with the agency in its foster-care program, since Catholic Social Services [CSS] would not certify same-sex couples as foster parents on religious grounds.

In the majority ruling, the high court found that “The refusal of Philadelphia to contract with CSS for the provision of foster care services unless CSS agrees to certify same-sex couples as foster parents violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.”

“CSS seeks only an accommodation that will allow it to continue serving the children of Philadelphia in a manner consistent with its religious beliefs; it does not seek to impose those beliefs on anyone else,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion.

“The refusal of Philadelphia to contract with CSS for the provision of foster care services unless it agrees to certify same-sex couples as foster parents violates the First Amendment,” he added.

According to Becket, a religious liberty law firm representing the foster moms and Catholic Social Services in the case, 29 other foster care agencies in Philadelphia work with LGBTQ couples, and three of those agencies are certified by the Human Rights Campaign for their excellent service to LGBTQ families. The firm also said that Catholic Social Services had not turned away any same-sex couples before the city ended the contracts.

In a tweet, Becket stated on Thursday, “This is a huge victory for heroic foster moms and for religiousfreedom. It ensures that religious groups like Catholic Social Services— who serve kids regardless of their race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation—can continue their great work.”

Roberts’ majority opinion was joined by Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett. Justice Samuel Alito filed a concurring opinion, joined by Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch. Gorsuch also filed a concurring opinion, joined by Thomas and Alito, and Barrett also filed a concurring opinion, joined by Kavanaugh, and Breyer — in part.

The case — Fulton v. City of Philadelphia — concerns the largest city in Pennsylvania ending its foster care contracts with Catholic Social Services because the faith-based agency said it would not certify same-sex couples as foster parents; the agency’s policy was religious, due to the Church’s teachings on marriage and family. The agency also does not certify unmarried couples as foster parents, regardless of their sexual orientation.

The city argued that the policy constituted discrimination according to its nondiscrimination ordinance, and would no longer work with the group.

Two foster mothers who worked with the agency — Sharonell Fulton and Toni Simms-Busch — sued Philadelphia, arguing that in ending the contracts the city violated the agency’s First Amendment right to religious freedom.

A spokesperson for the city of Philadelphia did not immediately respond to a request for comment from CNA.

Catholics and religious freedom advocates praised the decision on Thursday.

"Today's decision prohibits government sanctioned discrimination against religious adoption and foster care agencies because of their beliefs about marriage,” stated Ashley McGuire, senior fellow with The Catholic Association. “Those efforts are rooted in an anti-Catholic bigotry that refuses to tolerate pluralistic views and beliefs.”

“For more than two centuries, Catholic agencies have successfully placed the most at-risk kids in loving, forever homes. Today, the Supreme Court rightly affirmed that the Constitution guarantees faith-based agencies freedom from government harassment and discrimination because of their religious beliefs about marriage,” stated Brian Burch, president of CatholicVote.

Other pro-LGBT activists criticized the ruling.

In a statement, Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ advocacy group, said the decision “does not negate the fact that every qualified family is valid and worthy — children deserve a loving, caring, committed home.”

One legal expert said the ruling was significant for religious freedom.

Professor Richard Garnett, a First Amendment expert, said the ruling "will have significant impact."

"It is striking, and telling, that the Court's more liberal justices joined the Court's decision,” Garnett noted. "Today's ruling illustrates that respect for religious freedom should not be a partisan, or left-right issue. All nine justices agree that, when a rule targets religious practices for disapproval, or singles our religious exercise for burdens, it is highly suspect.”

CATHOLIC WOMEN’S CONFERENCE
For the Diocese of San Angelo
SEPTEMBER 10 & 11, 2021
MCNEASE CONVENTION CENTER
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Celebrate Our 5th Anniversary With Contagious Joy!
Music & Ministry for the Feminine Heart 
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Hosted by the Heart of JMJ Foundation
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Save the Date
The Young Family Ministry presents
Feed the Faith
Saturday, August 28, 2021
St. Lawrence Catholic Church
Mass at 4:00 pm by Bishop Sis and Guest Speaker Karlo Broussard
Happy Hour 5-6
Domino Tournament & Cornhole to Follow
Catered Meal Provided
$75/couple or $40/single
Purchase tickets at stlawrencecatholicchurch.com
Questions? ~ stlawrenceyfm@gmail.com
The Angelus

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Report on immigration highlights care needed

By Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A Catholic agency has collaborated with a professor from The Catholic University of America on a report pointing out deficiencies but also opportunities in the care of unaccompanied migrant children in the United States.

The report, "A Vision Forward: Policies Needed to Protect the Best Interests of 'Category 4' Unaccompanied Immigrant Children," focuses on minors who crossed the border but have no family or a custodian waiting to claim them.

Without a home to go to, the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement places the children in facilities.

However, rising numbers of minors entering in general — 17,847 registered minors recorded as of May 26 — have prompted concerns, particularly for "protecting unaccompanied children whom the government has determined do not have viable sponsors."

Catholic University, with help from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migrant and Refugee Services agency, worked on the report, which points out recommendations, including better collection of information on the population; access to legal help; family- and community-based care, as opposed to large-scale facilities; and ending detention for those who reach 18, when they age out of the system. The report says those 18 to 21 should be helped with independent living conditions.

Stacy Brustin, a professor of law, who also is director of the university's Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Clinic at the Columbus School of Law, wrote the report.

She traveled to the southern border with students to provide legal help to migrant families, said a news release from the university.

"Decades of research show that children in the care of the state need small, familylike settings to recover from the trauma they have endured," Brustin said. "Yet unaccompanied immigrant children without sponsors, many of whom have experienced extreme violence in their home countries and have valid legal claims to stay in the U.S., spend too much time in large, congregate settings where they are at risk of being traumatized again."

Some have experienced violence, trafficking, gang recruitment, extreme poverty, and natural disasters at home, "often enduring long, dangerous journeys along the way," the news release said.

The report says an increase in unaccompanied minors is likely to continue "given the ongoing violence, poverty and natural disasters afflicting the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador," where the majority of minors come from.

"These changes are not only in the best interests of immigrant children but in the best interests of our country," Brustin said.

"Children who make (the journey) unaccompanied to the U.S. are extremely resourceful and resilient young people," she continued. "With care, stability, and legal status they can make significant contributions to our economy and society."

"Time and again during our interviews," she said, "we heard stories of unaccompanied children who, when placed with supportive foster families, attended school, acquired legal status and went on to finish high school or college, obtain employment, pay taxes and contribute meaningfully to their communities."
Confirmation in Crane and McCamey

The Knights of Columbus of St. Stephen Parish in Midland on June 5, 2021. The knights help load donations onto trucks at Helping Hands of Midland on the first Saturday of each month.

Confirmation at St. Stephen Parish, Midland, June 12, 2021.

Confirmation at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Odessa, June 12, 2021.

Confirmation in Crane and McCamey

Father Kumar Jujjuvarapu celebrated First Communion at Good Shepherd Parish in Crane on May 29 and at Sacred Heart Parish in McCamey on May 30, 2021.


The Catholic faith is alive in West Texas

The Diocese of San Angelo Catholic Charismatic Conference was held June 18 and 19 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo. The featured speaker at the conference was theologian Dr. Mary Healy. Pictured are Bishop Michael J. Sis, Mary Healy, Sandy Selvid, and Father Albert Ezumanya.

Confirmation at St. Stephen Parish, Midland, June 12, 2021.
Will and estate planning: Stewardship in action

By Mercedez Rassi

Most people think writing a will is something that only the privileged or wealthy need to worry about. Apart from our tendency to underestimate the total value of what we own, the fact is that good stewardship is not about how much we have, but how we make use of it. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord. Leaving a bequest in a will to your parish or favorite charity is one way to practice stewardship through your end-of-life planning.

Bequests allow individuals to make larger gifts than they could during their lifetime to support a charitable organization's work. In addition, gifts through a will are flexible. They can be changed as individuals' life circumstances change. The most common types of legacy gifts are:

- General gift: a specific amount of money or percentage of your estate
- Residuary gift: any remaining assets after all other requests have been fulfilled
- Specific gift: the donation of a particular item, such as furniture or a vehicle
- Contingent gift: a donation based on certain conditions being met, such as your main beneficiary passing away before you

Unfortunately, if you die without a will, your estate will be divided according to the laws in the state where you live. The resulting transfer of assets may be very different from what you had wished. While certain family members will likely receive part of your estate, close friends or charities that you may have wanted to remember will not be included. Also, if you are a parent of minor children, dying without a will can have significant ramifications, such as a court deciding who will care for your children.

Only you know the special circumstances of your family and your heirs. That's why it is important to discuss these factors with an attorney. Some things to address include how to distribute your estate, whom you want to be your executor, and what charities you wish to support. Relationships and situations change, and you are free to alter your will with a codicil or to change your will entirely at any time.

Whether you are planning to make your first will or are in the process of revising and updating an older will, look at this process as an act of stewardship. Creating a will is a caring and selfless act, as it puts others ahead of ourselves. By making a plan, we spare loved ones the trouble, expense and emotional upset that often results when no plan has been made. Although it is not a difficult process, there are many who postpone it until it is too late. When your will or other estate planning instrument is completed, you will have satisfaction and peace of mind.

If we can be of assistance, particularly if you would like to make a charitable bequest to The Catholic Foundation for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, please contact our office at 325-651-3717 or email us at mrassi@sanangelodiocese.org.

This information is for educational purposes only. These materials do not constitute legal or tax advice.

Mercedez Rassi is the Executive Director of the Catholic Charitable Foundation for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo and Director of Stewardship and Development for the Diocese of San Angelo.

‘Hermanamiento’ special collection benefits Honduran partnership dioceses

This year the partnership (“hermanamiento”) among the Dioceses of Tyler (Texas), La Ceiba (Honduras), San Pedro Sula (Honduras), and San Angelo celebrates its 20th anniversary. The special collection to assist our fellow Catholics in the Honduran dioceses and parishes goes back even further, when it began as a means of providing relief from Hurricane Mitch.

Today our partner dioceses face the devastation caused by both the coronavirus pandemic and back-to-back hurricanes, Eta and Iota, last November. Bishop Angel Garachana of San Pedro Sula and Bishop Michael Linehan of La Ceiba have written about how the pandemic has made the poverty of their people even worse than before and that many homes, churches, and rectories have been damaged by the hurricanes.

The collection, July 17 and 18, 2021, will be divided between the two Honduran dioceses, except in cases where local parishes have partnered with specific Honduran parishes.
One surprising note of the past year is how many of us got into bird-watching! I remember old sitcoms from my childhood where a bird-watcher was its very own special type of nerd. They wore khaki shorts, knee socks, a Park Ranger hat pulled all too low over their head and, of course, the ever-present pair of binoculars. Now as an adult, in the time of "corona," I want that outfit.

This year, we all became bird-watchers from our windows, on those long walks we found ourselves on more frequently and when we learned we really didn't have anything better to do than to sit and stare at a body of water.

Brian Doyle, the beloved and award-winning Catholic writer who died in 2017 was ahead of his time. He loved "birding," as the cool kids say. In each bird, he saw the marvels of God's creation and sometimes God's sense of humor.

Doyle was born in New York City in 1956 into an Irish Catholic "storytelling" family of eight children, a teacher mother and a journalist father. Doyle received a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Notre Dame in 1978 and worked at U.S. Catholic and Boston College Magazine before moving to Oregon.

On the morning of his wedding to Mary Miller Doyle, their priest said that he knew he was supposed to give Brian some sort of spiritual advice but his "only advice is you marry that girl or else I will leave the priesthood and marry her tomorrow. There's only one woman like that in a generation, and God knows why you were chosen for such a gift but that appears to be the case." Together they had three children, who "emerged from (his) wife one after another like a circus act" and in whom they delighted. In 1991 Doyle was named the editor of Portland magazine, where he led the helm while writing six collections of poetry, 13 essay collections and seven novels.

Doyle wrote about his family, his wife, his children, strangers, Girl Scouts, toothbrushes, hot showers and anything else that came within a mile radius of himself. He saw God in all of these ordinary, everyday objects. God's mercy and love and kindness surged through all these living (and nonliving) things — especially birds.

In one of his most famous essays, "Joyas Voladoras," Doyle ponders the glory of a hummingbird; those "flying jewels" whose heart is the "size of a pencil eraser" and beats 10 times a second. Did you know hummingbirds visit a thousand flowers a day? Doyle did.

He researched every facet of bearded helmetcrests and red-tailed comets and purple-crowned fairies. He knew that they could fly backward, dive at 60 miles an hour and could fly more than 500 miles without stopping.

But it is that tiny, little pencil eraser heart that Doyle kept coming back to, as if to look closer is to find the very breath of God, a God who cares for a bird with a heart the size of a pencil eraser.

This heart drives the most "ferocious metabolisms." It is a "race-car heart" that eats oxygen at an "eye-popping rate." Doyle writes of a hummingbird's "mad search for food, the insane idea of flight. The price of their ambition is a life closer to death; they suffer more heart attacks and aneurysms and ruptures than any other living creature."

In this heart, we see our own echoed. "So much held in a heart in a lifetime," Doyle writes; when we are older we know "that all hearts finally are bruised and scarred, scored and torn, repaired by time and will, patched by force of character, yet fragile and rickety forevermore."

But it wasn't just hummingbirds that caught his attention, herons too. In fact, Doyle writes about herons so often, I'd dare to say they might have been his favorite bird. In the fantastic A Book of Uncommon Prayer, a collection of 100 prayers of the "miracle and muddle of the ordinary," Doyle writes about the heron:

"The way they are long, and thin, and still, and elegant, and shaggy, and awkward, and not at all awkward, and lean, and gangly, and knobby-kneed, and bluegray-brown all at once, and slow and dino-sauric in the air but liquid-quick with their bladed beaks."

All at once, I both realize that he has perfectly described a heron and that I haven't looked as closely at a bird-watcher's bush, long ago."

Reading Doyle's reflections on birds fills you with absolute gratitude to be alive, to be able to witness such beauty and glory. "I have come to think that the birds are shards of faith themselves in mysterious ways. You could spend a whole life contemplating birds and never come to the end of the amazing things they do," he writes.

And then, you realize, all that bird-watching we've been doing, has been prayer.

Shemaiah Gonzalez
Catholic News Service
Faith Alive

Gonzalez is a freelance writer. Her website is www.shemaiahgonzalez.com.
**Catholic Voices**

**Come back to Mass!**

The past fifteen months have been a time of crisis and deep challenge for our country, and they have been a particular trial for the Catholics. During this terrible COVID period, many of us have been compelled to fast from attendance at Mass and the reception of the Eucharist. To be sure, numerous Masses and Eucharistic para-liturgies have been made available online, and thank God for these. But Catholics know in their bones that such virtual presentations are absolutely no substitute for the real thing. Now that the doors of our churches are commencing to open wide, I would like to urge every Catholic reading these words: Come back to Mass!

Why is the Mass of such central importance? The Second Vatican Council eloquently teaches that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life"—which is to say, that from which authentic Christianity comes and toward which it tends. It is the alpha and the omega of the spiritual life, both the path and the goal of Christian discipleship. The Church Fathers consistently taught that the Eucharist is sustenance for eternal life. They meant that in the measure that we internalize the Body and Blood of Jesus, we are readied for life with him in the next world. Thomas Aquinas said that all of the other sacraments contain the virtus Christi (the power of Christ) but that the Eucharist contains ipsa Christus (Christ himself)—and this would help to explain why St. Thomas could never make it through the Mass without shedding copious tears. It is precisely at the Mass that we are privileged to receive this incomparable gift. It is precisely at the Mass that we take in this indispensable sustenance. Without it, we starve to death spiritually.

If I might broaden the scope a bit, I would like to suggest that the Mass is, in its totality, the privileged point of encounter with Jesus Christ. During the Liturgy of the Word, we hear not simply human words crafted by poetic geniuses, but rather the words of the Word. In the readings, and especially in the Gospel, it is Christ who speaks to us. In our responses, we speak back to him, entering into conversation with the second person of the Trinity. Then, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the same Jesus who has spoken his heart to us offers his Body and Blood for us to consume. There is simply, this side of heaven, no more intimate communion possible with the risen Lord.

I realize that many Catholics during this COVID period have become accustomed to the ease of attending Mass virtually from the comfort of their own homes and without the inconvenience of busy parking lots, crying children, and crowded pews. But a key feature of the Mass is precisely our coming together as a community. As we speak, pray, sing, and respond together, we realize our identity as the Mystical Body of Jesus. During the liturgy, the priest functions in persona Christi (in the very person of Christ), and the baptized in attendance join themselves symbolically to Christ the head and together offer worship to the Father. There is an exchange between priest and people at Mass that is crucially important though often overlooked. Just before the prayer over the gifts, the priest says, "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father," and the people respond, "May the Lord accept the sacrifice you are about to offer him, the Lord, God of your ancestors, for his holy Church." At that moment, head and members consciously join together to make the perfect sacrifice to the Father. The point is that this cannot happen when we are scattered in our homes and sitting in front of computer screens.

If I might signal the importance of the Mass in a more negative manner, the Church has consistently taught that baptized Catholics are morally obligated to attend Mass on Sunday and that the conscious missing of Mass, in the absence of a valid excuse, is mortally sinful. I understand that this language makes many people today uncomfortable, but it shouldn't, for it is perfectly congruent with everything we have said about the Mass to this point. If the Eucharistic liturgy is, in fact, the source and summit of the Christian life, the privileged encounter with Jesus Christ, the moment when the Mystical Body most fully expresses itself, the setting for the reception of the bread of heaven—then we are indeed putting ourselves, spiritually speaking, in mortal danger when we actively stay away from it. Just as a physician might observe that you are endangering your life by eating fatty foods, smoking, and refraining from exercise, so a doctor of the soul will tell you that abstaining from the Mass is compromising your spiritual health. Of course, as I suggested above, it has always been the law of the Church that an individual may decide to miss Mass for legitimate prudential reasons—and this certainly obtains during these waning days of the pandemic.

But come back to Mass! And might I suggest that you bring someone with you, someone who has been away too long or has perhaps been lulled into complacency during COVID? Let your own Eucharistic hunger awaken an evangelical impulse in you. Bring in people from the highways and byways; invite your co-workers and family members; wake up the kids on Sunday morning; turn off your computers. Come back to Mass! - - -

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

**Joy — A sign of God**

"There is only one true sadness, not being a saint!" French novelist, philosopher, essayist, Leon Bloy ends his novel The Woman Who Was Poor with that much-quoted line. Here is a less known quote from Leon Bloy which helps us understand why there is such a sadness in not being saint: "Joy is a sure sign of the life of God in the soul."

Joy is not just a sure sign of the life of God in the soul, it is a sign of the life of God — period. Joy constitutes both joy and happiness. For us, happiness is a profound joy and happiness in giving of a grandparent looking with pride and delight at a grandchild.

Then they take their origins inside of God. This means that God is joyful, is joy.

If this is true, and it is, then we should not conceive of God as a disappointed lover, an angry spouse, or a wounded parent, frowning in the face of our inadequacies and betrayals. Rather, God might be imagined as a smiling grandmother or grandfather, delighting in our lives and energy, at ease with our littleness, forgiving our weaknesses, and forever gently trying to coax us towards something higher.

A growing body of literature today suggests that the purest experience of love and joy on this earth is not what is experienced between lovers, spouses, or even parents and their children. In these relationships, there is inevitably (and understandably) enough tension and self-seeking to color both its purity and its joy. This is generally less true in the relationships of grandparents to their grandchildren. That relationship, more free of tension and self-seeking, is often the purest experience of love joy on this earth. There, delight flows more freely, more purely, more graciously, and mirrors more purely what is inside of God, namely joy and delight.

God is love, scripture tells us; but God is also joy. God is the gracious, benevolent smile of a grandparent looking with pride and delight at a grandchild.

However, how does this all square with suffering, with the paschal mystery, with a suffering Christ who through blood and anguish pays the price of our sin? Where was God’s joy on Good Friday as Jesus cried out in agony on the cross? As well, if God is joy, how do we account for the many times in our lives when, living honestly inside of our faith and our commitments, we do not feel joyful, happy laughter, when we struggle to smile?

Joy and pain are not incompatible. Neither are happiness and sadness. Rather, they are frequently felt together. We can be in great pain and still be happy; just as we can be in great joy and still be unhappy. Joy and happiness are predicated on something that abides through pain, namely, meaning; but this needs to be understood. We tend to have an unhelpful, superficial notion of what constitutes both joy and happiness. For us, they are incompatible with pain, suffering, and sadness. I wonder how Jesus would have answered on Good Friday as he hung on the cross if someone had asked him, "Are you happy up there?" I suspect he would have said something to this effect. "If you’re picturing happiness in the way you imagine it, then no! I’m not happy! Today, of all days, particularly so! But what I’m experiencing today amidst the agony is meaning, a meaning so deep that it contains a joy and a happiness that abide through the agony. Inside of the pain, there is a profound joy and happiness in giving myself over to this. Unhappiness and joylessness, as you conceive of them, come and go; meaning abides throughout those feelings.

Knowing this still does not make it easy for us to accept that God is joy and that joy is a sure sign of the life of God in the soul. However, knowing it is an important start, one we can build on.

There is a deep sadness in not being a saint. Why? Because our distance from saintliness is also our distance from God and our distance from God is also our distance from joy. - - -

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.
¡Vuelves a la Misa!

Los últimos quince meses han sido una época de crisis y de profundos desafíos para nuestro país, y han sido una prueba particular para los católicos. Durante este terrible período de COVID, muchos de nosotros nos hemos visto obligados a ayunar de la asistencia a la Misa y de la recepción de la Eucaristía. Ciertamente, se han puesto al disposición numerosas misas y para-liturgias eucarísticas en línea, y gracias a Dios por ellas. Pero los católicos saben íntimamente que esas presentaciones virtuales no sustituyen en absoluto a la realidad. Ahora que las puertas de nuestras iglesias comienzan a abrirse al cielo en libertad, nos es indispensable que una vez más nos unamos a la asistencia presencial a la Misa, a la cual debemos estar dispuestos.

¿Por qué la Misa tiene tanta importancia? El Concilio Vaticano II enseña elocuentemente que la Eucaristía es la “fuerza y cumbre de la vida cristiana”, es decir, aquello de lo que procede el auténtico cristianismo y hacia lo que tiende. Es el alma y el omega de la vida espiritual, tanto el camino como la meta del discípulo cristiano. Los Padres de la Iglesia también decían que la Eucaristía es el sustento de la vida eterna. Querían decir que en ella se realizaban el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Jesús, estás preparados para la vida con él en el otro mundo. Tomás de Aquino decía que todos los demás sacramentos contienen la virtus Christi (el poder de Cristo), pero que la Eucaristía contiene ipse Christus (Cristo mismo), lo que ayudaría a explicar por qué santo Tomás nunca pudo terminar la Misa sin derramar copiosas lágrimas. Es precisamente en la Misa donde tenemos el privilegio de recibir este don incomparable. Es precisamente en la Misa donde tomamos este sustento indispensables. Sin ella, nos morimos de hambre espiritualmente.

Si pudieras ir un poco más lejos, me gustaría sugerir que la Misa es, en su totalidad, el punto privilegiado de encuentro con Jesucristo. Durante la Liturgia del Preámbulo, no escuchamos simples palabras humanas elaboradas por genios de la poesía, sino las palabras de la Palabra. En las lecturas, y especialmente en el Evangelio, es Cristo quien nos habla. En nuestras respuestas, le devolvemos la palabra, entrando en convivencia con la segunda persona de la Trinidad. Luego, en la Liturgia de la Eucaristía, el mismo Jesús que nos ha hablado con su corazón nos ofrece su Cuerpo y su Sangre para que los comsumamos. Sencillamente, a este lado del cielo, no hay comunión más íntima posible con el Señor resucitado.

Me doy cuenta de que muchos católicos, durante este período de COVID, se han acostumbrado a la facilidad de asistir a la Misa virtualmente desde su hogar, pero es cierto que la Misa no tiene sustituto. Es la fuente y la cumbre de la vida espiritual. La Misa es el momento en que el Cuerpo Místico de Jesús, el cual fue dispuesto a su muerte por el Amor de Su Padre, se entrega y comunión con Jesucristo. Durante la liturgia, el sacerdote actúa en persona Christi (en la persona misma de Cristo), y los bautizados asisten simbólicamente a Cristo cabeza y ofrecen juntos el culto al Padre. Hay un intercambio entre el sacerdote y el pueblo en la Misa que es de crucial importancia, aunque a menudo se pasa por alto. Justo antes de la oración sobre las ofrendas, el sacerdote dice: “Oren, hermanos, para que este sacrificio, mío y de ustedes, sea agradable a Dios, Padre todopoderoso”, y el pueblo responde, “El Señor recibe de tus manos este sacrificio, para alabanza y gloria de su nombre, para nuestro bien y el de toda su santa Iglesia”. En ese momento, cabeza y miembros se unen para hacer el sacrificio perfecto al Padre. La cuestión es que esto no puede ocurrir cuando estamos dispersos en nuestras casas y sentados frente a las pantallas de las computadoras.

Si me permite decir lo que siento, en la Misa se encuentra el momento en que el alma de cristiano se acerca a Jesucristo, el momento en que el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo se nos ofrece como una realidad palpable. Es el momento en que los bautizados nos hacemos concisos, somos talavera de Cristo, y de esta manera la Iglesia habla a cada uno de nosotros.

¿Por qué la Misa tiene tanta importancia? Porque es el momento en que el alma de cristiano se acerca a Jesucristo, el momento en que la Iglesia habla a cada uno de nosotros.

De regreso a la normalidad! ¿Cuál normalidad?

Es notable el entusiasmo que invade a nuestra sociedad y a nuestras comunidades de fe al saber que poco a poco regresamos a cierto nivel de normalidad. La reciente pandemia del COVID-19 en verdad ha sido una prueba fuerte en nuestras vidas. Y...Cuántas cosas asumimos cada día! La salud, las demás personas, las estructuras que regulan nuestra existencia común, las pequeñas cosas de la vida, etc. Todo ello nos ofrece cierto sentido de normalidad.

Nuestra sociedad ha hecho un buen trabajo en los últimos meses controlando el virus. Aún así, una buena porción de la población estadounidense sigue sin vacunarse. La mayoría de personas en el resto del mundo todavía no tiene acceso a la vacuna y a tratamientos médicos adecuados si llegan a contraer el virus.

Cualquier regreso a la normalidad tiene que también reconocer que para muchos católicos en nuestra sociedad la vida no será como antes de la pandemia. Cientos de miles de personas se han ido para siempre. Millones no volverán a sus trabajos. Hemos cerrado cientos de parroquias y colegios católicos, y muchas cosas de nuestras vidas como misa compartida en los momentos de la comunion.

¡De regreso a la normalidad! ¿Cuál normalidad?
Challenging the establishment on childhood gender transitions

A 23-year-old woman named Keira Bell recently brought a pivotal lawsuit against the National Health Services Gender Identity Development Clinic in London, better known as the Tavistock Clinic. Keira experienced significant personal harm from puberty blockers, testosterone and an operation to remove her breasts. She claims the medical staff at the clinic failed to challenge her seriously about her decision as a teenager to transition to a male. In a landmark ruling delivered in December 2020, a British court upheld her claim that she’d been rushed through gender reassignment without proper safeguards.

Keira represents the leading edge of a new class of young people struggling with gender dysphoria who, as they become adults, are starting to push back against various “gender affirmation” interventions perpetrated against them, even, in some cases, seeking legal recourse and financial redress. As these intrepid individuals challenge the status quo, they are becoming known as “trans-desisters” or “detransitioners.”

When Keira was 16 and struggling with gender dysphoria, she was referred to the Tavistock Clinic and was almost immediately launched down the medical path. After three one-hour long visits to the medical facility, she was prescribed puberty blockers, powerful drugs that delay the development of signs of puberty. In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, she stated that there hadn’t been adequate investigation or therapy prior to that stage.

“I should have been challenged on the proposals or the claims that I was making for myself,” she said. “I think that would have made a big difference.”

Later she was prescribed the male hormone testosterone to help her develop male features like a beard, moustache and a deep voice. A few years later she underwent a mastectomy.

“Initially I felt very relieved and happy about things, but I think as the years go on, you start to feel less and less enthusiastic or happy about things.”

“You can continue to dig yourself deeper into this hole or you can choose to come out of it and have the weight lifted off your shoulders.”

She stopped taking the cross-sex hormones at age 22 and says she has come to accept being female now. She remains upset, however, about what had happened to her over the last decade.

“I was allowed to run with this idea that I had, almost like a fantasy, as a teenager... and it has affected me in the long run as an adult.”

Vulnerable young people, caught up in the pressure of the moment, have too easily been driven into life-altering pathways involving medications and scalps with their frequently irreversible effects. Puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and complex surgeries can all lead to permanent damage, even the destruction of a young person’s reproductive organs and fertility.

Now in her early 20s, Keira soberly observes, “I’m very young. I’ve only just stepped into adulthood and I have to deal with this kind of burden or radical difference.”

Parents have a serious obligation to protect their children from the gender-reassignment industry, which profits handsomely from the lucrative, long term hormone prescriptions and the multiple complex surgeries. When parents give consent for cross-sex interventions on their children, they will often do so under pressure from clinicians and professional societies like the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Keira and other detransitioners insist that extended waiting periods, with appropriate questioning and challenging of young people, need to occur as part of a good psychotherapeutic response to claims of gender dysphoria. The AAP, meanwhile, strongly discourages such approaches, telling pediatric primary care providers, in an official statement, “to be a reliable source of validation, support, and reassurance,” and exclusively to pursue “affirmation-based approaches” for children’s mental health services, including pharmacological and surgical interventions.

As James Cantor, Director of the Toronto Sexuality Centre, noted in a critical review of the AAP statement, “Although almost all clinics and professional associations in the world use what’s called the watchful waiting approach to helping gender-diverse children, the AAP statement instead rejected that consensus, endorsing gender affirmation as the only acceptable approach.”

The available studies reveal, moreover, that the majority of pre-adolescent children who present as “trans” eventually revert to the identity that accords with their biological sex. Those studies indicate at least 67 percent of gender diverse children cease wanting to transition by puberty as long as “gender affirmation” approaches are not pursued or advocated.

Keira sums up her experience this way: “I look back with a lot of sadness. There was nothing wrong with my body. I was just lost and without proper support. Transition gave me the facility to hide from myself even more than before. It was a temporary fix.”

These first-hand testimonies from brave and outspoken detransitioners like Keira Bell should prompt us to listen closely to their stories and beware of “affirmation-based approaches” that often cloak the betrayal of our gender-confused youth.

With my second child due at the end of the summer, I’ve been reading and rereading a lot of material in preparation for labor, delivery, recovery and life with a newborn. This literature includes recently published works on the new science of motherhood, as well as some scholarship on the sociological phenomenon of “matrescence.”

This term, denoting the physical, psychological and social transition to motherhood, was first coined by medical anthropologist Dana Raphael in 1973. That transition by puberty as long as “gender affirmation” approaches are not pursued or advocated.

A More Human Society

	

Supporting women in the transition to motherhood

I’m looking at a helpless but calm-looking baby, 16 weeks old, resting with eyes closed and one hand next to his or her face. The baby is surrounded by a thin membrane and floating next to the umbilical cord providing oxygen and nourishment.

This photo’s caption, comparing it to an image of a 12-week-old child, declares: “The body has filled out fantastically, quite recognizable now as a human baby.”

The picture, taken by award-winning Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson, was part of a 1965 Life magazine feature titled “Drama of Life Before Birth.” That drama is reaching a new and critical stage.

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide whether the state of Mississippi is allowed — not required but allowed — to protect that 16-week-old baby from being killed. This case may set the stage for modification or reversal of the court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which declared a constitutional “right” to abortion and overturned the relevant laws in all 50 states.

In Roe, the court divided pregnancy into “trimesters” of about three months each. In the first trimester, states could do almost nothing to regulate abortion; in the second, they could only act to protect the health of the pregnant woman, not her child. And in the final months, when the child may be “viable” — that is, able to survive outside the womb if born — abortion must be allowed if the practitioner says it serves the woman’s “health,” defined expansively by the court to include emotional “well-being.”

That decision gave our country one of the most extreme abortion policies in the world, sparking a decades-long controversy and strong criticism on the court itself. Some criticism relates to the court’s arbitrary “trimester” framework — partly because medical advances keep shifting the age when a child may survive outside the womb, from 28 weeks of gestational age down to 22 weeks now.

Nevertheless, the court reaffirmed Roe in Planned Parenthood v. Casey in 1992, declaring that states may not impose an “undue burden” on a woman’s ability to obtain an abortion before viability.

This brings us to the Mississippi abortion law...
The power and beauty of analog human compassion

Brett Robinson

The Theology of Technology

I recently spent a few days visiting the hospital to take care of a loved one who had some complications from a cancer procedure. I marveled at the sophisticated medical technologies that were being used so expertly to treat her.

At one point, a doctor came into the room and removed fluid buildup from around her lungs using what could only be described as a pocket sonogram. It was remarkable.

We should be grateful for all these technological advances. In Laudato Si’, Pope Francis writes, "It is right to rejoice in these advances and to be excited by the immense possibilities which they continue to open up before us." St. John Paul II said something similar in an address to scientists: "Science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity."

However, we seemed to have crossed a strange line in our race to overcome the material limitations of nature. Just like a strange line in our race to overcome the human creativity.

As St. John Paul II said about our human creativity, "It's time to be vigilant about the consequences of an unbridled use of technologies." It's a time to consider how our lives are being transformed by these technologies. It's a time to reflect on what we mean and what we no longer mean.

The June virtual meeting of the U.S. bishops has created a firestorm of press coverage and commentary regarding a proposed document on the Eucharist, unfortunately, much of it negative.

While the bishops are also planning a three-year agenda for a "eucharistic revival," the proposed document was initially prompted by a working group formed by Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the bishops' conference, after the 2020 virtual bishops' assembly last November.

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Archbishop Gomez asked the group to consider how to respond to a newly elected Catholic president who was perceived to "support policies that attack some fundamental values we hold dear as Catholics," including "the repeal of the Hyde Amendment and the preservation of Roe v. Wade."

This working group made two recommendations, a letter addressed to the new president and "a document addressed to all of the Catholic faithful on

See ROBINSON, Page 21

Going on pilgrimage right at home

Effie Caldarola

Catholic News Service

For the Journey

Someone once gave me a plaque that read, "If you want to be a pilgrim on the road of life, you have to travel light."

I can't find that plaque, which amuses me because I realize its absence means I'm a little lighter than I would be if I had kept it. Instead, the quote is stored in my mind, and as I try to pare down my possessions and reorganize, those words are my mantra.

One consequence of our recent isolation is that we've become more aware of the excess clutter in our homes. What is all this stuff? What do I really need? What's essential? And, why, as isolation ends, do I feel tempted to buy more?

St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, often referred to himself as "the pilgrim" as he began his spiritual journey. Pilgrimage is a great concept, the idea of going off, a few items stuffed in a backpack, in search of the truth.

Of course, we can make a pilgrimage in our own home, but it seems that even this demands some simplifying of our lifestyles. Everything won't fit in a backpack, but we can pare down.

Beginning in May 2021, and lasting until July 2022, we are celebrating an Ignatian year, meaning we're celebrating St. Ignatius himself and his great spiritual gifts to us. It was exactly 500 years ago, in May, that Ignatius experienced a "cannonball moment" that led to his dramatic conversion.

Ignatius did not start out as a spiritual pilgrim. Indeed, Ignatius, as he was named, was a man who desired wealth, honor and military success. Born into an aristocratic family, he was a knight who hoped his prowess on the battlefield would improve his success with the ladies. When he was 24, a criminal charge of "nocturnal misdemeanors" was on his police record, and he and his brother were briefly jailed.

A short biography at Fordham.edu puts it succinctly: "In short, Ignatius was an experienced sinner before an inexperienced saint."

In other words, he was a bit like us. On May 20, 1521, Ignatius' life changed dramatically.
Suspected arsons continue at churches across Canada

By The B.C. Catholic Staff
Catholic News Service

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — More churches across Canada have been destroyed or damaged by fires that police are describing as suspicious or suspected arson.

On June 21, the Penticton Indian Band condemned the burning of two churches on First Nations lands in the Okanagan area, saying they and the Osoyoos Indian Band "are in disbelief and anger over these occurrences, as these places of worship provided service to members who sought comfort and solace in the church."

Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations national chief, said June 30 the Indigenous way is "comfort and solace in the church." He called for "prayers and support for our brothers and sisters of Morinville parish as they grieve the loss of their very beautiful and historic parish church."

"I'm angry," he told CBC. "I don't see any positive coming from this and it's going to be tough."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mentioned the church fires, saying: "This is not the way to go. The destruction of places of worship is unacceptable. And it must stop."

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Two more Catholic churches on First Nations lands were then destroyed by fire, while fire damage-
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and timing of multiple medications, but the screen blocks their faces and their humanity.

Faces can smile and wink and nod to show compassion and care, lifting the spirits of a patient who is far more than their sickness. The poor and the sick are an image of God and an image of the suffering Christ.

Something as simple as thirst takes two forms in a hospital setting. A refreshing glass of water can nourish the body but a caring glance or compassionate touch can address a spiritual thirst that we all have for human love and contact, especially when we are in pain.

On the last morning of her hospital stay, my loved one asked the nurses if they could help her wash up. Her hair and face and teeth had not been cleaned in days. They agreed to help her and began preparing a basin of soapy water and soaking some soft white towels in warm water.

The nurses gently wiped her face and hands, gave her some water and toothpaste to brush with and gently washed her hair. All of the technical equipment was turned off and put to the side for a moment, a silent witness to the power and beauty of analog human compassion.

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

URENECK

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After laboring for 23 hours, I was exhausted and depleted, and a roller coaster of hormonal highs and lows made me feel simultaneously in love with my baby and completely anxious about caring for him.

About an hour or so after being wheeled into the recovery room, an obstetrician I had never met, just one of the many visitors who stopped by, came to ask me what method of birth control I would like to be sent home with.

Perhaps I was naive or perhaps I was coming off strong medication, but either way, I was stunned. I couldn't think of a less opportune or appropriate time to talk to a woman about preventing another pregnancy than after she had just delivered a baby.

There are, of course, sound and valid reasons to delay subsequent pregnancies, not the least urgent of which include the mother's physical recovery and the care of the new baby. But the 180-degree turn in medical care — from medicine aimed at welcoming life to artificial means of suppressing it — happened all too quickly for my taste.

In our society, there is a push to make "reproductive health care" as widely available as possible.

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eucharistic coherence."

At the June meeting, after long debate, the bishops approved the drafting of the document, which will focus on "the Eucharist as a mystery to be believed, a mystery to be celebrated and a mystery to be lived," according to Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chair of the bishops' doctrine committee charged with its drafting.

What has confused matters is that there has been a vocal campaign for months to disallow President Joe Biden from receiving Communion because of his policy positions on abortion.

"Such a decision is solely the prerogative of the local bishop, however, and President Biden's local bishop, Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, has already made it clear that he will not do that. Because of this campaign, and because several bishops during the June 17 debate mentioned President Biden and abortion as a reason such a document is needed, many reporters assume that the planned document is an explicit rebuke of President Biden.

While that debate was wide-ranging, observers have noted that another morally serious issue that was never mentioned was the death penalty. Although there are well-known Catholic politicians and officials who continue to support its use, the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes it clear that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person" (No. 2267).

In retrospect, mention of the death penalty within the context of eucharistic consistency debate might have made the discussion appear less partisan, re-minding Catholics that neither of the major parties have agendas completely compatible with Catholic teaching.

While abortion is certainly a point of severe conflict between some politicians and the church, Bishop Rhoades has assured his brothers that the document would not be fixated on only one issue, nor would it be directed at one class of Catholics, such as politicians.

"In a document addressed to all Catholics, it will cover the broad range of Catholic social teaching," he said. "All of us as Catholics will be able to find ourselves in this teaching."

The bishops' debate, civil as it was, made it clear there are differing expectations and concerns regarding this document. The challenge for the doctrine committee will be to create a document that will unify rather than further divide.

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

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DOERFLINGER

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law, which forbids abortions beginning at 16 weeks — except in the case of a medical emergency for the mother, or a severe fetal abnormality incompatible with continued survival for the child.

Does it create an "undue burden" on women's ability to obtain an abortion in that state? Here are some facts to consider.

First, 96% of abortions in the U.S. are performed before the 16th week.

Second, Mississippi has only one abortion clinic now — and it only performs abortions up to the 16th week, presumably because at that time the procedure becomes more complicated and more dangerous for women. (The clinic's physicians commute there from other states, as no Mississippi doctor wants to work there.)

Third, in 2007 the Supreme Court already upheld a ban on a particular abortion procedure even before viability. That "partial-birth abortion" method kills the child when he or she is mostly outside the womb. The court observed that "a fetus is a living organism within the womb, whether or not it is viable outside the womb," and said the ban expresses "respect for the dignity of human life."

Regardless, some warn that by upholding the Mississippi law, banning abortions that are now legal but not available, the court would usher in a Dark Age of disregard for women's freedom.

Weighed against this sweeping claim is that "quite recognizable" human baby, waiting to see if the rest of us are willing to set even modest limits to the taking of innocent human life.

Doerflinger worked for 36 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He writes from Washington state.
AUDAZ Y DIFÍCILES

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Si el regresar a la normalidad significa regresar a lo que era el statu quo de antes de la pandemia, creo que hay poco apetito para ello. 

Si Dios permitió que la pandemia azotara al planeta para enfatizar que la humanidad necesita unirse en causa común, debemos admitir que mucho queda por hacer. La ganancia no es la cuestión. “¿Pues de qué le sirve a uno ganar el mundo, si pierde su vida?” (Marcos 8:36)

Para Kay Spinella y su espóndulo, de Boerne, Texas, una visita a la frontera cambió su vida. Vivían en la casa de sus suegros, con cinco dormitorios y cinco baños, uno para cada uno de sus hijos, piscina, y Jacuzzi. Seis semanas después de ir a Ciudad Juárez con varias familias de su parroquia, San Pedro, vendieron su casa elegante y con financiación, y se mudaron a Arizona.

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KNICKERBOCKERS

Continued from Page 8

the Constitution and obeys the law; respects the national flag and all it represents; knows and recites the Pledge of Allegiance; knows and sings/recites The National Anthem; respects the dignity of other citizens and lives in harmony with them, as well as with immigrants, migrants, and refugees; makes positive contributions to the public life of the country at all levels, including criticizing those in public office and addressing injustices; respects and assists law enforcement agents; defends the integrity of the country, which includes defending our borders; votes when of age; pays taxes; and does honest and productive work.

We are aware of excesses of patriotism that we see in the news and read online and in social media. Stephen Nathanson, in his book Sketch of a Reasonable Form of Patriotism, lists the following excesses: "a belief in the superiority of one’s country, a desire for dominance over other countries, an exclusive concern for one's country, no constraints on the pursuit of one's country's goals, and automatic support of one's country's military policies."

It is timely to consider the implications of patriotism for Americans in light of our current situation with millions of illegal immigrants, as well as legal immigrants, migrants, and refugees. In 2016 the International Organization for Migration issued the document The Responsibilities and Obligations of Migrants Towards Host Countries, which states "Successful integration ... is a two-way process that involves the mutual adaptation of migrants and the host society, as well as equality and reciprocity of rights and obligations. It implies a sense of obligation and respect for a core set of values — such as rule of law — that bind migrants and their host communities to a common purpose."

In summary, it is the obligation of migrants and refugees to observe the laws and regulations of their host countries. In turn, it is the obligation of the host country to respect the basic human rights of migrants and refugees, with the understanding that the host country has the right of expulsion for those who entered illegally and those who have broken other laws.

ENRIGHT

Continued from Page 9

husband, Paolo’s older brother, who found them together in an intimate embrace.

Still in the throes of the courtly love tradition, Dante (the pilgrim, i.e., the character portrayed in the poem, not the author) pities the couple and asks them to tell their story.

Francesca replies by recounting how they were together reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere and their first adulterous kiss, which moved her and Paolo to do the same. It was in this adulterous embrace that they were sent to the afterlife.

Though Dante, the pilgrim, swoons with pity over the lovers at the end of their tale, Dante, the poet, we must remember, is the one depicting them in hell. It is easy to miss this condemnation if one reads Francesca's words without sufficient attention.

She tells Dante: "Love, that can quickly seize the gentle heart, / took hold of him because of the fair body / taken from me — how that was done still wounds me. / Love, that releases no beloved from loving / took hold of me so strongly ... / that, as you see, it has not left me yet." (Canto V, 100-105).

Though the words are beautiful (and they echo the love poetry Dante himself once wrote), they reveal a spiritual blindness that is (for Dante) damnable.

First the love is depicted in only physical terms; she states outright that her lover was drawn to her "because of the fair body / taken from me," and she herself fell in love "through his beauty" — no other reasons given.

Second, she seems to blame love for their adultery, not her own or her lover's choices, for she says, "Love, that releases no beloved from loving / took hold of me so strongly ... / that, as you see, it has not left me yet." She portrays herself as a victim, as if she had no choice whether to act on such a temptation toward an illicit love or not.

To Dante the pilgrim, and to the reader, their situation is deeply tragic, but the kind of love they represent is something that Dante the poet is teaching the reader (and perhaps himself) to reject. (I discuss this scene with Francesca in more detail in an article in Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture (Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter 2007, 32-56).)

As the poem goes on, and the sins (and sinners) become uglier and even grotesque, Dante the pilgrim learns to reject sin in them and, most important, in himself.

Rather than reading the Inferno as a vengeful gossip column in which Dante uses his poetic gifts to punish his enemies, it is more fruitful to read it as a condemnation of sin itself, which is the first step on the road to salvation that Virgil is opening up for Dante.

Dante and Virgil proceed through hell to its deepest pit in Canto XXXIV, where Satan is frozen in a block of ice. Dante's point is clear — while the upper levels of hell are hot, where sins like lust and anger are being punished, the deepest part of hell and the source of evil is cold, rendering Satan, in fact, immovable in a block of ice frozen by the motion of his own bat-like wings.

Satan is ugly (like the sins Dante has seen are shown increasingly to be), and his three faces (in parody of the Trinity) each has an open mouth chewing a sinner: Brutus, Cassius, and Judas with his head in the central mouth of Satan.

After seeing Satan, the poets seem to descend his flank, only to find he now appears upside down. Having seen and rejected sin and its source, the first step in repentance, Dante is ready to move on to the next stage of grace — the Purgatorio.

Nancy Enright is a professor of English at Seton Hall University, where she is the director of the university core curriculum. She is the author of Catholic Literature and Film: Incarnational Love and Suffering and Community: A Reader for Writers, as well as numerous articles on issues related to theology and literature.
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