John Thomas Collins passed away at his home in San Rafael, California in the presence of his beloved family on Tuesday May 7th at the age of 68.

John was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on July 14th, 1950, to Frances and Eugene Collins. The second of their six children, John grew up in Gardner, Massachusetts, and later Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. He graduated from Shrewsbury High School in 1968.

John is survived by his loving wife, Lydia, to whom he was married for 34 years. They have five children—Peter, Daniel, Teresa, Anthony, and Catherine. John is also survived by his mother, Frances, his sisters Patricia (Wheeler) and Kathleen (Traynor), and his brothers Joseph and James. John is preceded in death by his father Eugene, and his older brother Michael.

John has called San Rafael home for the last twenty-

California’s Senate Bill 360 (SB 360), introduced by Jerry Hill, would change all that. If passed, a priest who learns of predatory behavior while hearing confessions would be compelled to break the Seal of the Confessional and report the repentant offender. It’s the most extreme reaction by any government entity to the present abuse crisis.

(see Religious Freedom, page 4)

John Collins 1950-2019

John's Catholic faith played a large role in his life. He valued Catholic education so much so that he dedicated his life to Catholic schools.

A ‘Mortal Threat’ To Religious Freedom in California

May 23rd Jerry Hill (CNS) | Michael Warren Davis

What’s the best response to a ‘mortal threat’?

As it stands, all clergymen in California are “mandated reporters”, meaning the state requires them to report suspected instances of the sexual abuse of a minor. However, the law exempts one who “acquires knowledge or a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect during a penitential communication”—most obviously, Catholic priests hearing confessions.

California’s Senate Bill 360 (SB 360), introduced by Jerry Hill, would change all that. If passed, a priest who learns of predatory behavior while hearing confessions would be compelled to break the Seal of the Confessional and report the repentant offender. It’s the most extreme reaction by any government entity to the present abuse crisis.

(see Religious Freedom, page 4)
The Rights of a Person

There has been much written and spoken about in the past weeks regarding various life initiatives primarily in Southern and Midwestern States. Depending upon how one understands or interprets the biological realities of pre-born children such laws are described either as legislative attempts to protect and preserve innocent (preborn) human lives or as assaults on the constitutional rights of women. In general, the new laws grant recognition to the humanity of preborn human beings when a heartbeat is discernible. The medical reality is that such heartbeats are discernible as early as 6 to 8 weeks after the child has been conceived. In Pro-life circles it is not uncommon to see "little feet" lapel pins which display a life sized representation of the feet of a pre-born baby at approximately 10 weeks. The feet would not be confused with the feet of any other creature.

The movement of these legislatures seems to have been prompted by a strong movement in the opposite direction by other legislatures which seek to expand the ‘right’ to end the life of a preborn human being at any time during the entire 9 months of pregnancy. The argument somehow maintains that the humanity of the ‘product of conception’ is not determined until after the child is completely free of all direct connection with its mother. As some argue, it is not the killing of a child it is the termination of a pregnancy.

If I recall correctly, the Supreme Court ruled that we do not know with certainty when human life begins and therefore, in regard to preborn human beings, we are free to act as if human life does not exist. This is recognized in the United States as a legal presumption. A legal presumption is not a fact. A legal presumption can be upheld only so long as evidence which contradicts it is lacking. Given the present state of medical, biological and genetic science it is very difficult, I would say impossible, to uphold the legal presumption that a human child growing within the womb of a human mother is anything other than a human being. The further question, about which various legislative bodies have serious disagreement, is whether the human being growing within the womb of its mother is entitled to the protections of law which are afforded to every human being already born.

The proponents of this particular ‘right’ of women have a serious problem. In the past, when medical science and ultra-sound was in its infancy they would argue that the product of conception is just a blob of cells. We have not heard that argument in decades. Then the argument arose that we do not know whether the product of conception qualifies as a human being. Since a human being has certain distinctive genetic traits we can now say, with certainty, that the child in the womb is a human being. Then the argument against ‘personhood’ was raised. This is an extremely dangerous argument for it hearkens back to the days of slavery when exter nal characteristics, such as the color of one's skin, were deemed to be determinant of ‘personhood.’ In the present moment personhood is deemed to exist immediately upon the completion of birth and yet is non-existent just moments prior. While it is fair to argue that we cannot ‘prove’ that the child yet to be born is a ‘person,’ the reality is that no one of us can ‘prove’ that we are a person. Pope John Paul II in a document titled, Donum Vitae (The Gift of Life, 1987), pointed out, as replicated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), that: “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.” (CCC, 2270 emphasis added)

The language of both "being" and "person" is absolutely intentional. In our Catholic Church we hold and believe that every human being, born or preborn, must be recognized as having the rights of a person. Allowing any law to declare arbitrarily, even with very good intentions, that some human beings are human persons and others are not is dangerous. Allowing any law to declare arbitrarily, even with very good intentions, that some human persons are worthy of protection and others are not is likewise dangerous. Even though we have become very accustomed to include a ‘right’ to have an abortion among the list of women’s legitimate rights it is not permissible to grant to any human being the right to determine, arbitrarily, the humanity or lack of humanity of any other human being, includ-ing that human being temporarily dependent upon its mother.

From the Bishop

Bishop Robert F. Vasa is the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Santa Rosa.
Pope okays pilgrimage to Medjugorje, says apparitions ‘need study’

ROME May 12, 2019 Elise Harris (Cruz Now)

After nearly two years of studying the pastoral status of Medjugorje, where the Virgin Mary has allegedly been appearing since 1981, the Vatican announced Sunday that Pope Francis has given the green light for priests to lead pilgrimages there but expressed no opinion on the authenticity of the “noted happenings.”

A May 12 statement from interim spokesman Alessandro Gisotti said, “the Holy Father has stipulated that it is possible to organize pilgrimages to Medjugorje.”

However, the Vatican said studies into the authenticity of the alleged apparitions are still ongoing, and that the pope’s move must not be interpreted “as an authentication of the noted happenings, which still require an examination by the Church.”

“It must therefore be avoided that these pilgrimages create confusion or ambiguity under the doctrinal aspect,” the statement said, noting that the word of caution goes for ordinary parish priests who intend to visit the site to celebrate Mass.

Long a point of discussion and debate in Catholic circles, the alleged Medjugorje apparitions began in June 1981, and they are often divided into two categories: the “originals” which took place during the period of June 24-July 3 of that year when the Virgin is believed to have appeared daily to six young people aged between 10 and 17 at the time, and subsequent apparitions some of the original seers claimed to have, at times daily, since 1989.

While the original set of alleged apparitions all took place in the same place, seers who claim to still receive messages from the Virgin Mary have said they see Mary at random times and places.

In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI formed a commission to study the alleged apparitions, which was headed by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, who at the time was retired as the pope’s Vicar of Rome. He had also served as president of the powerful Italian bishops’ conference.

The commission submitted its report, called the “Ruini report,” to Francis in 2014.

Francis has previously voiced his own personal skepticism regarding the alleged ongoing apparitions, telling journalists on his way back to Rome May 13, 2017, after a two-day visit to Fatima, Portugal, that the original apparitions need to be distinguished from the ongoing appearances.

“About the first apparitions, when (the ‘seers’) were young, the report more or less says that the investigation needs to continue,” the pope said, noting that the Ruini report “expresses doubts” on the ongoing apparitions.

“Personally, I am more ‘mischievous.’ I prefer Our Lady to be a mother, our mother, and not a telegraph operator who sends out a message every day at a certain time - this is not the mother of Jesus.”

Francis in 2017 named Polish Archbishop Henryk Hoser to study the pastoral care given to the town's residents and visiting pilgrims, with the Vatican emphasizing that his role had nothing to do with determining the authenticity of the apparitions.

In May 2018, Hoser was sent as “Apostolic Visitor” for an undefined time to the Saint James parish in Medjugorje, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, run by the Franciscan friars.

Hoser has previously voiced optimism about the pastoral environment of the city, telling Poland’s KAI Catholic news agency in 2017 that “from a pastoral point of view, there is a very positive result.”

In Medjugorje, there are some 35 confessionals in seven different languages, drawing lines of penitents several hours long.

A number of priests have spoken publicly about confessions they’ve heard in Medjugorje, voicing belief that there is a supernatural grace in the place. Countless pilgrims have often spoken of finding their vocations to the priesthood or religious life while at the site.

In his interview with KAI, Hoser said that at the time “every indication” is that the apparitions will be approved, “specifically, I think it’s possible to recognize the authenticity of the first [seven] apparitions as proposed by the Ruini commission.”

In its May 12 statement, the Vatican said that due to the notable number of people who flock to Medjugorje and the “abundant fruits of grace that flow from it,” the permission to make pilgrimages “is part of the particular pastoral attention that the Holy Father intended to give to this reality, aimed at favoring and promoting the fruits of good.”
Naturally, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has vigorously opposed the bill. In his column for the Angelus, its diocesan newspaper, Archbishop José Gómez points out that, as Catholics, we believe the priest hearing confessions “is only an instrument; he stands in the ‘person of Christ’. We confess our sins—not to a man but to God. The privacy of that intimate conversation—our ability to speak with total honesty from our lips to God’s ear—is absolutely vital to our relationship with God.” He says that SB360 “is a mortal threat to the religious freedom of every Catholic.”

As Archbishop Gómez points out, there are concerns about whether the bill would even be effective. Its sponsor claims that “The clergy/penitent privilege has been abused on a large scale, resulting in the unreported and systemic abuse of thousands of children across multiple denominations and faiths.” Yet, Gómez notes, “Hearings on the bill have not presented a single case—in California or anywhere else—where this kind of crime could have been prevented if a priest had disclosed information he had heard in Confession.”

This makes even more bizarre the amendment to SB360 that passed through the Senate’s appropriations committee this week. Now the bill stipulates that priests must only break the Seal if the penitential predator is another cleric or a coworker. If the offender is an ordinary parishioner, and it comes to light that the priest had knowledge of the abuse before he was caught, the confessor couldn’t be held culpable. The idea of forcing priests to violate the Seal only to report in other priests will strike many as being, in fact, a good deal worse than the original. The added implication is that abuse is endemic with the Catholic priesthood—so much so that, in the fight to protect children, we don’t even have to bother with non-priests.

Still, whether a predominantly Protestant country like America would care much about this uniquely Catholic practice—one that, historically, Protestants have regarded as heretical—remains in doubt. Surely that contributes to a push by some Catholic figures to bundle the Seal of the Confessional into the religious liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment.

For instance, a California canonist named Fr. Fius Pietrzyk pointed out in USA Today that governments “have almost universally upheld a ‘priest/penitent’ privilege, akin to the attorney/client privilege. Although not directly taken up by the US Supreme Court, the privilege is also rooted in the constitutional imperative not to prohibit the free exercise of religion.” Fr Pietrzyk says that, “If this bill passes, no religion is safe. If a core principle as deeply ingrained in Catholic tradition and doctrine can be wiped away this easily by the state, no fundamental rights of religion or conscience are safe.”

Perhaps, but there’s no doubt that the historical protections for the Seal of the Confessional are something of an anomaly. They didn’t arise organically from the First Amendment but, rather, were added by local authorities. As Charlotte Allen noted in First Things: “All 50 states and the District of Columbia have ‘privileges’ built into their evidence codes that protect disclosures between penitents and priests, as well as other kinds of confidential communications with clergy whose faith forbids disclosure.”

Allen isn’t surprised that such “privileges” are coming under threat in 21st century America. “Our age is so secular,” she writes, “that most people cannot understand why a priest hearing confessions should enjoy any more protection than, say, a psychiatrist hearing confidences in a counselling session. The Seal of Confession may sound to them like an irrelevant medieval holdeover.”

It may be that the privileges will only be kept if the original spirit of the law is maintained—that is, the Seal of the Confessional is something intrinsically good and worthy of protection. Californians would have to be comfortable with the idea of government accommodating the sacred, and acknowledge the existence of laws greater than those ratified in the chambers of their state senate. That seems unlikely even in the best of times.

Yet this is quite another matter from the reality to which Archbishop Gómez drew attention: the absence of proof that this legislation would help in the fight to safeguard children from abuse. If SB360 passes, it will mean that a major state’s government is willing to meddle with the Church’s sacramental life simply because it finds it suspicious. One must wonder what other Catholic practices will be deemed problematic by the California senate. The all-male priesthood, perhaps, or the refusal to celebrate same-sex marriages? We’ll have to wait and see.

UPDATE: SB 360, Threat to Seal of Confession, Passes California Senate
Sacramento, CA May 23 (California Catholic Conference)
Andy Rivas, executive director of the California Catholic Conference, issued the following statement following the passage of SB 360 Mandatory reporting (Hill, D-San Mateo):

“We are disappointed that the California State Senate today passed SB 360, a bill that will help no one yet has the potential to hurt everyone. While the California Catholic Conference shares the desire to combat the scourge of sexual abuse of minors and is committed to strengthening mandatory reporting requirements, interjecting the government into the confessional is not going to accomplish that objective and could undermine the guarantee of confidentiality all of us depend upon. The Senate Appropriations Committee insert amendments that recognize the need to protect confessions, unfortunately those changes left out protections for employees and members of the church. We will continue to work to protect confession for all as the bill moves to the State Assembly.”

Write a letter to your Assembly Member at the California Catholic Conference website under the TAKE ACTION! heading www.cacatholic.org

(Official Appointment, cont. from page 1)
Reverend Jeffrey Keyes - Chaplain to Sonoma State Newman Center effective June 24, 2019.
Reverend Ramon Pons - Temporarily released to serve in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, effective June 24, 2019.
Reverend David Jenuwine - Parochial Vicar of Saint Vincent de Paul Parish, Petaluma effective June 24, 2019.
Reverend John Boettcher - Parochial Vicar of Saint Eugene Cathedral, Santa Rosa effective June 24, 2019.
Reverend Peter Reddy - Parochial Administrator of Saint Mary of the Angels Parish, Ukiah and in charge of Saint Elizabeth Mission, Philo and Saint Francis Mission, Hopland.

Apollinaris Parish in Napa, effective June 24, 2019.

(John Collins, cont. from page 1)
seven years. Prior to that, he lived in San Francisco, where he met his beloved wife, Lydia. John and Lydia raised their five children in San Rafael.
After graduating from the University of Notre Dame in 1973, John made his way to California from the East coast. It was during his time in San Francisco that John found his calling as an educator and eventually an administrator in the Catholic school system. John would continue his studies at the University of San Francisco, where he received his Doctorate in Education in the Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership.
John’s Catholic faith played a large role in his life. He valued Catholic education so much so that he dedicated his life to Catholic schools. Before serving as the Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Dio-

6/4 St. Francis Caracciolo | Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary 6/5 St. Boniface
‘The Eucharist Is Only in This Church’—How One 2019 Convert Found, and Embraced, The Catholic Church

By Christine Rousselle

Washington D.C., May 23 (CNA) - Elise Amez-Droz's journey to the Catholic Church began in a place well known for religious fervor, but not exactly known for Catholicism: Salt Lake City, Utah.

While at a conference in Salt Lake City, Amez-Droz, 24, met someone who was converting to Catholicism, which surprised her, she said. A native of Switzerland, Amez-Droz said the only Catholics she knew in her home country were not very devout.

"I was shocked that, clearly, he loved Christ, and I could see it," she said. "But it just puzzled me that he was joining what I thought was a dead faith."

Amez-Droz was raised an Evangelical Christian, and said that in her youth she had no thoughts of leaving her childhood faith.

But in graduate school, she struggled.

"I started really wondering about the purpose of life. It was a really rough time for me," said Amez-Droz. She started to feel as though her life was suddenly without purpose, she said.

In Salt Lake City, she decided to join her new friend for Mass—the first Catholic Mass she had ever attended.

"My first thought was ‘well, it’s not as heretical as I thought it was [going to be],’" she said.

She kept in touch with her friend, and asked him questions about converting and why he was becoming Catholic. After she moved to Washington, DC, she made many Catholic friends, and noticed "how good all these people were," and that they practiced virtue, "without having an incentive to do it."

She initially found their virtue "annoying," and was "really struggling" with how nice her new friends seemed to be.

Still, she decided to learn more about the Catholic faith. In 2018, she entered RCIA. But before committing to an RCIA program, she checked out RCIA at several different parishes in the Washington, DC area.

"I was like, ‘this is a long process. I’m signing up for something that’s going to last seven, eight months,’” she said, describing her relatively unusual approach to RCIA.

"I wanted to make sure I could connect well with the leader of it and that I was going to be learning the true doctrine of the Church," she added.

After a few weeks, she narrowed it down to two parishes, before deciding on St. Peter's in Washington, DC. She said she was intrigued by the Dominican friars who taught RCIA at the parish.

Amez-Droz also appreciated the approach the parish took to RCIA, which was to include past participants who had already been received into the Church.

"I knew every Tuesday night that there would be a group of people who were going to be there every time," said Amez-Droz. "That really made a big difference for me, because it showed me that people were still learning and they wanted to do that journey with us."

Still, even though she had put in that much effort to find the right RCIA fit, Amez-Droz still was not entirely sold on entering the Church until just a few months before Easter Vigil.

She told CNA that she was convinced after a period of intense study and reading.

"It became more clear to me that I could never go back to my Protestant faith, just having read too much history," she said. She also was particularly taken by Augustine's 'Confessions,' and she was intrigued by "The Benedict Option."

"I thought [The Benedict Option] was really interesting. I think it really worried me up to tradition, considering what community life looks like," she said. Another huge influence on her conversion was Christopher West’s 'Theology of the Body For Beginners.'

"That theology made so much sense," she said. "I was like, this is one of the most compelling things I've ever heard, and it's from a pope. So that's what made me think."

One of the biggest ideological hurdles for Amez-Droz was accepting the authority of the Church. Once she did, however, it was relatively smooth sailing from there.

"As a convert, it comes down to ‘do I accept the authority of the Church? If I do, then everything else is true,’ she said, and one must embrace the Church’s teachings.

Amez-Droz chose St. Therese of Lisieux as her confirmation saint, after first learning about her at a retreat.

She told CNA that she appreciated that St. Therese "emphasizes being great by being small," and that she admired her humility. She also found it interesting that St. Therese died at age 24, the same age Amez-Droz would be when she entered the Church.

Additionally, Amez-Droz spoke French as her first language, the same as St. Therese.

The Eucharist was another major factor for Amez-Droz, and was the reason she decided to stick with Catholicism even amid the "summer of scandal" that plagued the Church.

She also said that she appreciated that the Catholics she knew were open and willing to discuss the scandals, particularly those concerning former Archbishop of Washington, Theodore McCarrick.

"It helped me understand how Catholics were taking it," said Amez-Droz. "It’s true that every time I would hear ‘but where else would we go? The Eucharist is only in this Church,’ and I thought that was true."

She explained that the scandals themselves did not impact her decision to join the Church, but did help her discern where to attend RCIA.

"I don't expect the Church to be perfect going forward, either. Ultimately, it didn't really affect my decision," she said.

"I think the biggest impact it had for me was choosing an RCIA, because I wanted to make sure the priest wasn't involved with scandals himself."

Amez-Droz received the Eucharist for the first time on April 21, 2019 at the Easter Vigil.

She almost immediately broke down in tears.

She explained to CNA that she had spent the day with her best friend, and watched "The Passion of the Christ." The movie, she said, made her feel as though she was "totally not worthy" of receiving communion.

"At the Easter Vigil, I was really happy and I was super-excited to get confirmed, but when it came to communion, it was like ‘this is what it’s all about,’” she said.

I was just overwhelmed that I could share in God’s very person in such a close way, even though I’m totally unworthy,” she said.

While she has only been a confirmed Catholic for a few weeks, Amez-Droz told CNA that she feels entirely supported by her parish, and that she is fond of the structure provided by Mass, and the requirement that Catholics attend Mass each Sunday.

"There’s so many ways that Christ exposes himself to you in life. It’s not like you finding him, it’s like ‘this is part of your schedule,’” she said.

"It’s making me a lot closer to God.”

This story is part of “The New Catholics Project,” a CNA series profiling new converts to the Catholic faith. Look for additional profiles to come.
Dana Couey, a leading light of gospel music in the North Bay who spread joy and laughter throughout the region’s tight-knit Cursillo community, died this week at the age of 61.

The Santa Rosa woman was the founder of the 4th Day Gospel Singers, a choir that sprung from the Cursillo movement in Sonoma County. Cursillo, Spanish for “little course,” is a series of three-day retreats designed to train Catholic laypeople to develop deeper connections to their faith.

Couey, a professional musician, had been involved in North Bay Cursillos since 1986, according to friends. She also performed at secular events such as weddings and funerals around the North Bay with her husband, Doug Harman, and her stepson, James.

“She had an amazing capability of getting others to sing and enjoy the joy of worship kind of music together,” said Sue Lowman, a friend who first met Couey in 1986. “What a voice, what a voice.”

Couey was deeply involved in the Cursillo community, according to Lowman and others who knew her, and once served as a rectora, or the leader of a Cursillo weekend retreat.

“She was active in Cursillo, and when I say active, I mean active,” Lowman said. “Dana’s theme on that weekend was ‘Love Can Build A Bridge’; and that’s the way she lived her life.”

Barbara Sackett, who knew Couey for over 30 years, said she had an incredible talent for impacting listeners through song.

“She made God alive for us through her music,” Sackett said. “We just loved her. Her music was angelic.”

Couey was a generous person who would always help the Cursillo community in any way she could, often playing fundraisers for free, Sackett said. She also volunteered outside of Cursillo, including with the Kairos Prison Ministry, a faith-based organization that works to help rehabilitate incarcerated men and women.

“As far as our community’s concerned, she has served our community faithfully for over 30 years,” Sackett said. “She was generous to a fault with her time.”

Veronica Eicken, Sackett’s daughter, knew Couey since Eicken was a baby. She said Couey’s importance to Cursillo communities in the North Bay and around the nation can’t be overstated.

“There are so many communities that are just crying right now, because there’s such a gaping hole that will be left,” she said. “She was just this silent little butterfly that brought joy wherever she went.”

One of Couey’s biggest impacts was her constant presence at North Bay Cursillo events, where she would sing for free despite the fact that she made her living as a musician, Eicken said.

“It definitely was a God-given talent, and she gave it away,” she said.

Carrie Tate, who sang under Couey in the 4th Day Gospel Singers, said Couey’s talent as a music director was to make performers want to bring out the best in themselves.

“She had so much joy on her face while she was singing, that it made you want to sing better,” she said. “She just comes alive when she’s singing. She’s had an impact on a lot of people, because of her talent and abilities.”

Jo Ann Schloegel, the president of the Redwood Empire Secretariat of the Cursillo Movement, said Couey was known in the Cursillo community as a “go-to” musician, who would always deliver a stunning performance. But Couey was also well known for her sense of humor, including doing an impression of the “Saturday Night Live” character Father Guido Sarducci.

“She did him really well, and she would come out in a priest’s outfit, and she would have her Italian accent; I loved that,” she said.

Julie Schaefer, a friend of Couey’s for the last 15 years, said the look on Couey’s face as she sang made a lasting impression on everyone who saw it.

“You could tell she was in the song when she was singing it, and smiling,” Schaefer said. “It was just beautiful to watch her as she was singing—there’s no way to describe it.”

Members of the Cursillo community, including Lowman, Eicken and Schaefer, say the community is all picturing Couey the same way: singing with the angels, her heart filled with joy.

“I can see her now in heaven singing in the great gospel choir, and everybody’s in tune, and everybody’s clapping and swaying in unison, and she’s got a smile on her face,” Lowman said. “And that’s what I think about when I think about Dana, and that’s where I think Dana is now.”

Family members could not be reached this week for information on services and survivors. A vigil was held on May 2nd in Santa Rosa, CA.

The Knights of Columbus Council 1292, from San Rafael, CA, has created a Go Fund Me Memorial to help Dana’s husband Doug with the emergency costs, and funeral expenses.

Dana Couey passed away suddenly on Sunday, April 28, as she prepared to perform her weekly music ministry at Mass at the Holy Rosary Chapel at the St. Vincent’s School for Boys in San Rafael, CA. Dana and her husband, Doug Harman, are well known and loved by the Christian faith communities of Northern California, particularly in Marin and Sonoma counties, for the joy that they brought through their music. All of the funds raised through this fundraising campaign go directly to Doug to help him defray Dana’s emergency care costs, her funeral expenses, and to sustain him during this difficult time.

https://www.gofundme.com/dana-couey-memorial

There are many things of truly significant import happening every day as reported by our ever present media. It’s important to maintain a holy balance in what we take into our minds. Sometimes Jesus may seem asleep while we endure our high decibel news cycle; our cacophonous tessellation of information; our swirling mass of chaotic noise that broadcasts through our ubiquitous laptop and hand held screens. But we can benefit by contemplating the image of Jesus asleep in the boat as the terrific apostles finally decide to wake him (as if he didn’t know about the storm), and comparing that image to the image of Gethsemane; as the apostles slept, Jesus contends with the storm that really matters; our eternal salvation. In other words, follow all the news and information, but place your trust in Jesus to address it all. After all, He IS God, and He alone can handle it. Someone said: “when Jesus is awake, stay awake; when Jesus is asleep, take a nap.”

The powerful image of Divine Mercy shows the red and white rays of light coming from the Sacred Heart of Jesus out toward us. Perhaps we can try to imagine the image of Divine Mercy, with the rays of mercy and forgiveness standing behind every screen we gaze upon. As we gaze, we can pray the prayer: “Jesus I trust in You.”

We are in times when we are called to choose to step up to the plate and share our faith. This year’s Religious Freedom Week is June 20-29 and is notable in that it includes the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) and the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us encourage our fellow Catholics as we stand together in the fellowship of faith. How beautiful to journey together humbly sharing the joy that comes from stepping forward knowing that, though we will soon stumble, Our Lord, Our Lady, and the cloud of witnesses that surrounds us will be there with a smile when we look up from the dust! The Lord is calling us to take our stand fully committed and swing for the fence, even though we are most likely to “strike out looking”. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said: “God does not require that we be successful only that we be faithful.”

Chris Lyford is the Communications Director for the Diocese of Santa Rosa, California

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Happy Father’s Day

By Julie Sparacio

Dear Fathers,

I know you probably thought I was talking to priests. Nope—I’m talking to all of the dads that are reading this. In all of the years I have worked with children, and with victims of abuse, one of the most obvious truths that comes through is the importance of fathers in the lives of their children. In honor of Father’s Day this month, I want to write to the Dads, to complement you, to encourage you and to nudge you.

There are certain students that stick in my mind—the boy who was struggling with school attendance, marijuana use and self-defeat—who never saw his Dad because he lived across the country. The girl who had great college prospects and a desperate need to pay another bill to pay. Or the girl who had been sexually abused by her dad, who ran from the CPS worker calling his installation as the seventh Archbishop of Washington an “indescribably humbling moment,” Gregory pledged himself to a new era of openness in our local faith community.”

"I want to be a welcoming shepherd who laughs with you whenever we can, who cries with you when- ever we must, and who honestly confesses his faults and failings before you when I commit them, not when they are revealed,” Gregory said to applause during his May 21 installation Mass as Archbishop of Washington, D.C. in Washington’s National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

“We stand at a defining moment for this local faith community,” Gregory said.

“Our recent sorrow and shame do not define us; rather, they serve to chasten and strengthen us to face tomorrow with spirits undeterred.”

Calling his installation as the seventh Archbishop of Washington an “indescribably humbling moment,” Gregory pledged himself to a new era of openness in Washington.

The archbishop’s installation Mass was presided over by apostolic nuncio Archbishop Christoph Pierre and attended by eight cardinals, more than 50 bishops, some 300 priests, and nearly 100 deacons.

U.S. bishops’ conference president Daniel DiNardo, reportedly still recovering from a March stroke, was not in attendance.

The celebration was held at the National Shrine instead of Washington’s St. Matthew’s Cathedral in order to accommodate the crowds, numbering about 3,000.

Members of the faithful from around the archdio- cese gathered outside the basilica waving flags and banners of welcome before the Mass began. A Gospel choir led the music during the Mass.

Acknowledging the scandals that have rocked the Church, both in Washington and around the world, Gregory said, “We have been tossed about by an unusually turbulent moment in our own faith journeys recently and for far too long.”

Of the most amazing things is these things are not just done by birth dads. They are done by adoptive fathers, step fathers, or uncles, grandfathers, men who stepped in to fill a need.

The thing is, you fathers have a profound impact on your children. One 26 year study found that the number one factor in empathy development is father involvement—that involved fathers raise compassionate adults! Other studies show that positive father relationships are associated with more positive social and moral behavior in both boys and girls. I read one study that said that our relationship with our earthly father. Wow!

Your children are watching you, listening to you and modelling themselves after you. How do you treat their mother? How do you treat your own mother or mother in law? How do you treat other people? Do your kids hear you tell lies, and then get in trouble when they lie? It’s said that boys grow up to be like their fathers and girls grow up to marry men like their fathers. Boys learn how to be men from watching their dad. Girls learn how to be respected by men from watching their father treat them, their mother, and other women. Do you follow the example of St. Joseph? Do you live a life of obedience to God, demonstrate love and support for their mother, and for your children?

While it is often true that fathers and mothers have different parenting styles, they both want to protect their child from harm. Teen boys and girls are highly susceptible to manipulators, online and in person. It can be easy to brush off a worried mom—it’s just Mom being Mom. Interestingly, teens used to tell me it’s not quite as easy to brush off Dad. So Dads, if you are letting Mom handle those tough conversations—stop. Your children need to hear your voice too. Tell them that you want them to be safe, that you want them to be smart in scary situations and that you will always have their back. One of the things that makes me shake my head even now is the way teens think. Often, if you don’t say the words—it doesn’t matter, they think it isn’t true. So if you haven’t told them you love them, for example, they will wonder. If you haven’t told them about how to be safe in a scary world, they think they already know and we all know how little teenagers actually know!

What I am trying to say is—you Dads are so important! Your children love and admire you, respect you and look up to you. If your relationship is a little strained—it’s not too late to fix it. Don’t stop trying, no matter how old your child is. If your relationship with your children is good—celebrate it, and consider yourself richly blessed!

Here’s to Dads!”
China’s Technological Controls Keep Christians Under Constant Surveillance

By Courtney Grogan

Beijing, China, May 23 (CNA) - As the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests approaches, the Chinese Communist Party is utilizing authoritarian tactics old and new to crack down on Christians. High tech means of controlling religious observance include facial recognition surveillance and a smartphone app that ranks citizens’ party loyalty.

On the local level, however, government officials are still manipulated with similar methods used 30 years ago to implement the one child policy, in which local officials were heavily pressured to force women into abortions, according to China expert Steven Mosher.

Local government officials are punished if their superiors find evidence of unauthorized religious expression in the areas under their control via a “job responsibility contract” system, Mosher told CNA.

“What that contract says is that you must enforce the new restrictions on religious behavior. You can’t allow children under the age of 18 to attend religious services. You can’t allow any unauthorized religious gathering to take place. If it does, you find the people present and you can arrest the leaders,” Mosher, president of the Population Research Institute, said.

Changes in 2018 within Chinese governance shifted direct control of all religious affairs in China to the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Work Department, an agency tasked with ensuring that groups outside of the CCP, ethnic minorities like Tibetan Buddhists, Xinjiang Muslims, Hong Kong democracy activists, and the Catholic Patriotic Association, are following the party line.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called the United Front Work Department one of his “magic weapons,” used to co-opt and control.

“Local officials have been given the green light to intensely persecute the local church and the Patriotic church is not going to be exempt,” Mosher said. “We now know that Patriotic churches are being destroyed, not just underground churches.”

In Hebei province, there are 24 village churches currently slated for destruction, according to Mosher.

In September 2018, the Vatican signed a provisional agreement with the Chinese government on the appointment of bishops, intended to unite China’s estimated 12 million Catholics who worship in both underground and registered churches.

The terms of this Sino-Vatican agreement have not been made public, something that Mosher says has been used against Catholics living in China.

“The problem with any secret agreement is that either side can misrepresent it at no cost because there is nothing to compare their statements with,” he said.

“Clearly the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Department is misrepresenting the Sino-Vatican agreement... telling bishops and priests that they must join the Catholic Patriotic Association. Now, I don’t think that is what the Vatican intended,” Mosher continued.

“It would be helpful if the Secretary of State would speak out and say that the agreement does not call for priests and bishops in China to join the Patriotic Association,” he said. “The only kind of pressure that the People’s Republic of China responds to is external pressure. They deal with internal pressure by setting up reeducation camps and filling them with dissidents.”

In China’s Xinjiang region, between 800,000 to 2 million Uyghur Muslims have been detained and sent to “re-education camps,” where they have been subjected to abuse and political indoctrination.

Chinese authorities in the region use high-tech surveillance with facial recognition and an app tracking its user’s location to intensely monitor the Uyghur ethnoreligious minority, a technological model that the Chinese could apply to expand to other parts of the country in the future.

Christian churches throughout China have been equipped with 24-hour CCTV surveillance. Beijing’s largest Protestant church was forced to close last September after its pastor refused a government order to allow face-recognition cameras to be installed on his pulpit.

Mosher told CNA that he is particularly alarmed by how China’s social credit score system is being used to limit Christians educational and employment opportunities and other social benefits, including the ability to travel.

“Being a believer is a big hit to your social credit score... If your social credit score gets too low then you can’t get a passport, you can’t get an exit visa, you can’t buy a plane ticket,” he said.

A Chinese citizen can boost their social credit score by earning points on the Chinese Communist Party’s app, Study the Great Nation—the most downloaded app in China.

The app, developed by the CCP’s Propaganda Department, includes news and speeches by Xi and socialist theories with daily quizzes on the information. User data is kept by the Propaganda Department.

“They are saying to the 94 million members of the Chinese Communist Party: You cannot be a believer in anything, but the party. You need to download your Study Xi Strong China app on your phone. You need to do your half an hour of homework every day. You need to answer the questions correctly in order to stay a party member in good standing,” Mosher explained.

However, Mosher says he finds hope in the fact that there may be more Christians today in China than there are members of the Chinese Communist Party.

Open Doors estimates that there could be more than 97 million Christians in the country.

Mosher stressed that Catholics around the world need to remember to pray for the Chinese people.

“The battle goes on not just in the natural, but in the supernatural all the time. It never hurts to say more prayers, and they certainly need our prayers,” he said.
Marriage & Family Life Office: Marriage Preparation!

Greetings to you, our family in Christ! We recently returned from a trip to the far northern reaches of our beautiful diocese, driving up to the parishes in Eureka and Crescent City. We couldn’t have gone at a more beautiful time; the rhododendrons were in full bloom along the highway, the redwoods were sending forth new growth on their branches, and we had blue skies and sunshine all along the coast. The beauty of God’s creation was in full glory! The reason for the trip was to present the updates to our diocesan Marriage Preparation Policy to those who help the engaged couples through the preparation period: pastors, deacons, FOCCUS facilitators, and anyone involved in the marriage preparation process.

The main purpose of the newly updated policy is to help guide and form engaged couples so that they have a solid understanding of the beauty of marriage as a Sacrament in the Catholic Church. So let’s take a look at a few of the components of the marriage preparation process aimed at not only helping couples to have the wedding of their dreams but more importantly to have the marriage of their dreams as well!

To start off, if you live within the Diocese of Santa Rosa and are engaged to be married, the first step is to plan ahead. The entire preparation process can take 9-12 months before your tentative wedding date. The first step is to meet with your pastor. It is important that he get to know each of you as individuals and as a couple. As part of developing this relationship, he will also let you know all about the various components involved in preparing for your lifetime vocation of marriage.

Next up is to take a prenuptial inventory known as FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study). This inventory can be taken online or in person with a FOCCUS facilitator. The inventory gives a snapshot of how well you know yourself and your future spouse and measures how much you are in agreement or disagreement with each other on a variety of topics. The facilitator then “facilitates” your discussion with each other on those topics. It is actually kind of fun to do and is a wonderful way to see how compatible you are and provides an opportunity to discuss those topics that perhaps you have avoided or that could become potential problems within a marriage.

The next component is fairly new and exciting in the marriage preparation process. Everyone needs a good friend or mentor to share the good times and to help you through the rough patches of life. Witness to Love is a great mentorship program whereby you, as the engaged couple, get to choose a couple in your parish whose marriage you admire. Maybe it’s a couple you know, or maybe a couple you don’t know but who just has that “something” in their relationship you hope to have in yours. You invite them to be your mentor and together you explore the virtues that lead to healthy, happy marriages through the Witness to Love program. Because they have been married for many years, they can tell you from their own experience what marriage is about. Married couples, fair warning! You just might be the couple that has that “extra something” an engaged couple from your parish admires. To find out more about Witness to Love or to see a video about the program, go online to: www.witnesstolove.org

The time of engagement for a couple can be busy with many different activities involving planning for the wedding ceremony. But more importantly this time needs to help direct the engaged couple to a full and profound understanding of marriage as a life-long vocation as husband and wife. The newly updated Marriage Preparation Policy is intended to provide the engaged couple with various experiences to lead them to the altar on their wedding day with a full awareness of the joy and beauty of marriage as a sacrament.

We hope to share with you a few of the other components of the marriage preparation process in future articles.

—Pax Christi, Carlin & Deacon Dave Gould, Family Life Office Co-Directors

(Archbishop Gregory, cont. from page 7)

unusually turbulent moment in our own faith journeys recently and for far too long.”

“... We clerics and hierarchs have irrefutably been the source of the current tempest.”

Recalling the image of the apostles’ fear on stormy seas, Gregory told the assembly that true peace is found by remembering that Christ was in the apostles’ boat.

“He invites us to place our trust in Him - not in trite and easy programs - but in Him and Him alone.”

Despite the pressure of recent scandals, Gregory said he had already received an “affectionate and embarrassingly gracious welcome.”

“The example I wish to set forth for you is that of a man filled with the faith, hope and joy of knowing Jesus Christ is in the boat.”

Gregory thanked Pope Francis for the “righteous challenge —more an opportunity” to carry the Gospel message to the poor, the marginalized, and the neglected.

“Beginning today, that is my take here in the Archdiocese of Washington.”

Lourdes Rivera, a local mother of 14, told CNA after the Mass that she was “overjoyed” with Gregory’s homily.

“He spoke like a father - a father. I am so happy. He’s our new father here in Washington and our family now feels even bigger.”

Local resident Everett Jacobs added his hope that Gregory’s arrival will bring fresh impetus to the new evangelization in the archdiocese.

“Bishop Gregory’s pastoral spirit represents a reaffirmation of God’s love for the Archdiocese of Washington. I look forward to his fresh proclamation of the gospel,” Jacobs said.

Gregory’s appointment was first reported on March 28, and his installation has been eagerly anticipated. Technically, Washington has been without an archbishop since Cardinal Donald Wuerl’s resignation was accepted by the pope in October last year, though Wuerl himself has served as interim leader of the archdiocese since that time.

Gregory paid tribute to his predecessor during his homily, calling Wuerl a “cherished friend” and “above all, a true Christian gentleman.”

“The presence of retired Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles at the Mass generated some controversy among Catholics in attendance. Mahony has been accused of impeding police investigations of clerical sexual abuse in the 1980s, and was in 2013 relieved of his duties to Love and Study).”

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—Pax Christi, Carlin & Deacon Dave Gould, Family Life Office Co-Directors
The ‘Young Man With A Big, Good Heart’: STEM Hero Kendrick Castillo Laid to Rest

By Mary Farrow

Denver, Colo., May 17 (CNA) - On a warm Friday morning in May at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Littleton, Colorado, about 40 Knights of Columbus dressed in full regalia flanked the entrance of the church as friends and family of Kendrick Castillo filed in to commend him to God at his funeral.

Each attendee was handed a small card—on one side, Kendrick smiling, dressed in a Christmas sweater and sitting on a Jeep. On the other side, a simple tribute including his birth and death dates, funeral location, and the bible verse John 15:13 that seems to capture the way his life ended: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Kendrick was the lone casualty in the STEM high school shooting on May 7 in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. He died, witnesses say, after he jumped up in the line of fire and ran to stop one of the shooters with a couple other students.

His funeral was attended by relatives and friends that filled the large Catholic church, and included an honor guard of 80 Knights of Columbus, about half of whom dressed in the old feather-capped regalia, and half in the new uniform with a beret.

The Knights lined the aisles and drew their swords in tribute to Kendrick during the processional and recessional, honoring a young man who spent hundreds of hours volunteering for the Knights of Columbus with his dad. A group of Kendrick’s close friends from high school served as pallbearers.

Bishop Jorge Rodríguez, auxiliary bishop of Denver, and five other priests and deacons presided at the Mass.

In his homily, Rodriguez talked about how Kendrick imitated Christ and “pleased God” throughout his life as a selfless, loving person.

“Kendrick was ‘a holy young man,’ Rodriguez said. ‘A young man who was a good disciple of Jesus Christ. We call ‘saints’ those able to love to the end. Kendrick gave everything he is, and everything he had -family, a future, a degree, his life- so other young men and women could go back to their families, have a future, graduate and live.”

“Kendrick’s life is like the echo of Jesus’ words: ‘Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends,’” he added, again referencing John 15:13.

The bishop referenced Scripture throughout his homily, noting how Kendrick was pleasing to and loved by God.

“Only a young man with God in his heart and possessing a big good heart can do what he did: to lay down his life to save his friends. I’m sure John and Maria, that you feel proud of your son: God too is very proud of his child, Kendrick,” Rodriguez said. “The Book of Wisdom repeats: ‘His soul was pleasing to the Lord.’ The soul is the center of our consciousness, freedom, the seat of love and will; that self that makes us God’s image and touches who we really are. God loves Kendrick’s soul because he is a good young man,” he added.

He noted that Kendrick was only a few days from his high school graduation when he was killed, and could have accomplished many more things on earth with his “big good heart,” but that he was now with God, where “all the evil of this world will not be able to touch him again.”

Instead, Kendrick experienced a much more profound kind of graduation, Rodriguez said.

“Kendrick graduated not for an academic degree, but he graduated in humanity and in Christian life,” he said.

At the end of life, everyone will be examined not on their academic knowledge or worldly success, the bishop noted, but on how well they loved.

“He accomplished in a short time a great career in honorableness, love and holiness. As Scripture says, the greatness of a man ‘cannot be measured in terms of years.’”

(see Kendrick Castillo, page 11)
Despite Religious Freedom Concerns, House Passes Equality Act

Washington D.C., May 17 (CNA) - The House of Representatives passed the controversial Equality Act on Friday, amid heated opposition from those who argue it would pose serious threats to critical constitutional freedoms.

“This bill undermines human dignity by threatening the fundamental freedoms of speech, religion, and conscience that the First Amendment guarantees for every citizen,” said Kristen Waggoner, senior vice president of the U.S. legal division for Alliance Defending Freedom. “Americans deserve better than the profound inequality that this intolerant, deceptively titled legislation offers.”

In a May 17 statement, Waggoner said the legislation would harm women.

“It undermines women’s equality by denying female athletes fair competition in sports, depriving women of business opportunities designed for them, and forcing them to share private, intimate spaces with men who identify as female,” she said.

Waggoner added that the legislation would force Americans to participate in events and message that go against their deepest convictions.

“Many activists want to con Americans into believing that disagreement on important matters such as marriage and human sexuality is a form of discrimination that requires the government to enforce one view over another, but that is obviously wrong,” she said.

The House approved the bill by a 236-173 vote. Eight Republicans voted in favor of the bill. Seven Democrats refrained from voting for or against.

The legislation would add anti-discrimination protections for sexual orientation and gender identity to existing protections for race, color, national origin, sex, disability and religion.

It would apply not just to employment, but other areas like housing, jury duty, credit, and education, as well as at retail stores, emergency shelters, banks, transit and pharmacies, among others. It would also specify facility access for self-identified transgender persons, such as access to male and female bathrooms.

Critics have argued that the bill’s concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity are too broad and would penalize the appropriate recognition of difference between the sexes or differences between married heterosexual couples and other couples.

Representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had opposed the measure in a March 20 letter. They said that while they support efforts to ensure that all people are treated with dignity and respect, the legislation would fail to advance those goals and would instead harm society.

“The Act’s definitions alone would remove women and girls from protected legal existence,” they said. “Furthermore, the Act also fails to recognize the difference between the person—who has dignity and is entitled to recognition of it—and the actions of a person, which have ethical and social ramifications. Conflating the two will introduce a plethora of further legal complications.”

The bishops also warned that the Equality Act would harm free speech, conscience, and exercise of religion. It would require that homeless shelters place biological men with vulnerable women and adoption agencies place children with same-sex couples, even if this violates their beliefs and the birth mother’s wishes. It could threaten professionals in the wedding industry who will serve all customers but cannot express messages to which they object. And it would require health professionals to provide ‘gender transition’ treatments and surgeries in violation of their medical and ethical judgments, they said.

Furthermore, the Equality Act would exempt itself from the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a move that the bishops noted is “unprecedented.”

The Equality Act now moves to the GOP-led Senate. Supporters of the bill will need to pick up more than a dozen Republican votes to advance the legislation. President Donald Trump has said that he opposed the measure, but has not indicated whether he would veto it if it came to his desk.
Fear and the Benedict Option

by Leah Libresco Sargeant

When people ask me if the Benedict Option is a call to hospitality or to hunker down, I tell them it's both, at different times. As one friend of mine said in a Bible study:

If fishing is a metaphor for the Church's work (“I will make you fishers of men”), it's noteworthy that we see the Apostles not only "casting a net" (Matt. 4:18) but also "mending their nets" (4:21). If casting represents preaching, spreading the gospel, suffering martyrdom, etc., what does mending represent? In any case, it alerts us to the fact that spreading the gospel is going to be rough: There will be damages.

We gather together in small groups, focused on our faith, in order to remind ourselves of our baptismal promises and turn to God more ardently in prayer. Then, strengthened by His grace, we turn outward, ready to offer what we receive. In my own BenOp practice, that has meant hosting open events that anyone I know can come to (including religiously-tinged events that might prompt questions and further conversation), but also some closed events just for fellow Christians.

Those latter events sometimes cause problems. When I announced I would host monthly dinners for Christian friends to enjoy each other's company, eat, and pray night office, one of my baptized-but-non-believing friends was hurt I was planning an exclusive gathering. She was friends with a lot of the people I planned to invite; Why couldn't she come, too? She was perfectly willing to put up with the prayer, so couldn't we tolerate her in return?

The prayer was the point, I tried to explain. I wanted a few Christian-specific gatherings so that prayer could be possible at any moment, without fear of giving offense or excluding others. Restricting the guest list allowed me to make a space where we didn't have to translate our conversation into secular terms. God was our lingua franca, and after a week of work in a pluralistic world, it was a relief to have somewhere to speak our native tongue.

I still think these respites provide important refreshment to our faith. They remind us of what we are tempted to forget, just like the renewal of our baptismal promises at Easter. But offering a place of rest comes with risks other than just offending those who are excluded.

After a Christian from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church attacked and killed Jews in a San Diego synagogue, others at his parish were quick to clarify that their pastor didn't lend fuel to the shooter's fire. But Matthew Loftus asked a good follow-up question to pastors and parishioners. It isn't enough to not preach the faith that is "foolishness to the gentiles." Such grifting agitators are not seeking space to speak the truth, but to reveal division. They may lead people moved by real political concerns to view their opponents as permanent enemies, not our divided brothers whom we are called to pray for and convert into allies. They may lead people who already feel isolated to seek consolation by grounding their identity in race, not Christ. Conveniendly, they forget that the most vicious and violent suppression of Christians falls on non-white Christians in China, Southeast Asia, and outside the West. A Benedict Option strengthening persecuted Christians shouldn't be primarily white or Western.

The enemies of our enemies are not our friends. Wallowing in fear and giving in to contempt will eventually lead us to despair. Hatred for God's people cannot coexist alongside love for him and trust in his love for us. It will destroy us, and may spill over into violence visited upon others. When our lives are shaped by fear, we cut ourselves off from the full glory of creation. In No Name in the Street, James Baldwin describes the prison that the fearful create for themselves, even when they achieve worldly success:

Force does not work the way its advocates seem to think it does. It does not, for example, reveal to the victim the strength of his adversary. On the contrary, it reveals the weakness, even the panic of his adversary, and this revelation invests the victim with patience. [...] The victor can never be the victor on the contrary, all his energies, his entire life, are bound up in a terror he cannot articulate, a mystery he cannot read, a battle he cannot win—he has simply become the prisoner of the people he thought to cow, chain, or murder into submission.

Christians taking up the BenOp project need to be ready to recognize this kind of fear and to seek deliverance from it. Seeking the perfect love that casts out fear might involve praying the St. Michael prayer for deliverance from temptations. It might involve reading authors outside the pattern of your present concerns (that's why two friends and I had a Baldwin bookclub). It might involve setting up a prayer schedule to pray for whomever you feel frightened or threatened by. In order to pray for the people the Devil wants us to see as enemies, we need to see them as people.

Baldwin writes that the deficiencies in William Faulkner's writings on race stem from a narrowness of vision: "Faulkner could see Negroes only as they related to him, not as they related to each other." Christians can make this mistake with race, national- ity, and political divisions. We see others only as they relate to us, and not as they are in their fullness.

Our homes must be field hospitals for those sickened by the present plague of fear and disgust with others. Our refuges will never be places of purity—they will be full of sinners. Gathering together shouldn't be a way of seeking ease, but of finding relief from the external pressures and distractions of the world to be able to ask to be cleansed. It takes preparation and courage to offer Isaiah's prayer—“I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips”—and to truly desire the Lord's abundant, but terrifying healing that comes to us like a burning coal.

Leah Libresco Sargeant is the author of Arriving at Amen and Building the Benedict Option.

June 3: St. Charles Lwanga and Companions
Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Hatred for God's people cannot coexist alongside love for him and trust in his love for us.
Denver, Colo., May 22 (CNA) - A new study examining the correlation between religion and marital happiness found that women who are part of a highly religious, traditional couple are most likely to report being happy in marriage, as well as sexually satisfied in their relationship.

In addition, a woman in a highly religious couple was most likely to report that she and her spouse share responsibility for important household decisions, rather than one spouse making all the family’s decisions.

The study of families in 11 countries, conducted by the Institute for Family Studies, found that “highly religious couples in heterosexual relationships” enjoy happier marriages and more sexual satisfaction than less religious, mixed, or secular couples.

At the same time, however, religious couples are not any less likely to experience domestic violence than are less religious or secular couples, the study found.

“In many respects, this report indicates that faith is a force for good in contemporary family life in the Americas,” the authors wrote in the Institute for Family Studies.

The researchers assigned a “relationship quality” score in order to compare different religious affiliations in their sample, with a higher score representing greater overall satisfaction. Catholic couples sampled reported an overall score of 15.83, which is equal to the score reported by Muslims and slightly higher than the score for nonreligious couples.

Protestants and Latter-Day Saints lead the table with scores of 16.36 and 17.24, respectively.

“In listening to the happiest secular progressive wives and their religiously conservative counterparts, we noticed something they share in common: devoted family men,” the authors wrote in a New York Times op-ed accompanying the release of the study.

“Both feminism and faith give family men a clear code: They are supposed to play a big role in their kids’ lives. Devoted dads are de rigueur in these two communities. And it shows: Both culturally progressive and religiously conservative fathers report high levels of paternal engagement.”

“Relationship to domestic violence

The study found that “women in highly religious couples are neither more nor less likely to be victims of IPV [Intimate Partner Violence],” and men in highly religious couples are neither more nor less likely to be perpetrators of IPV.”

Domestic violence—including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and controlling behaviors—is neither more nor less prevalent among religious couples than among nonreligious ones, they concluded.

Infidelity was highest among men in mixed or less religious couples than any other, however.

The researchers defined “relationship quality” in terms of several factors, including a couple’s reported overall satisfaction, how important they view the relationship in their life, their satisfaction with their sex lives, and whether or not important household decisions are decided jointly or by just one of the partners.

In the sample used, 19% of couples reported never attending religious services, 60% attended only minimally, and 21% attended regularly.

Both women and men in “highly religious” couples—i.e. regular attendees—reported significantly greater satisfaction in their relationship than did both the other groups, with liberal, secular couples running a close second.

“Both feminism and faith give family men a clear code: They are supposed to play a big role in their kids’ lives. Devoted dads are de rigueur in these two communities. And it shows: Both culturally progressive and religiously conservative fathers report high levels of paternal engagement.”

“Men and women who share an active religious faith, for instance, enjoy higher levels of relationship quality and sexual satisfaction compared to their peers in secular or less/mixed religious relationships. They also have more children and are more likely to marry. At the same time, we do not find that faith protects women from domestic violence in married and cohabiting relationships.”

The 11 countries studied were Argentina, Australia, Chile, Canada, Colombia, France, Ireland, Mexico, Peru, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and the study drew on data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Global Family and Gender Survey (GFGS).

In many respects, this report indicates that faith is a force for good in contemporary family life in the Americas.

“Faith may buffer against this post-familial turn, both by attaching particular meaning and importance to family life and by offering norms and networks that foster family solidarity,” the authors wrote in the introduction.

“But these questions are also important given that religion may be a force for ill—legitimizing gender inequality or violence in the family—a concern that has taken on particular salience in light of recent headlines about religion, domestic violence, and child sexual abuse.”

Relationship satisfaction

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“Among men, highly religious traditional men were found to be significantly higher in relationship quality than men in shared secular progressive and less religious progressive relationships.”

In addition, women in highly religious couples were most likely to report that she and her spouse practice joint decision-making in their relationship.
Getting Up in the Morning:
Our First Spiritual Battle

By Fr. John Portavella

A new day begins. The alarm clock sounds. It is time to get up quickly from bed. The moment has arrived to offer the first sacrifice to our Lord. The body says, “No, not yet!” but the soul says, “Yes! It is time!” And the most important part, the soul, must conquer. It is the first of the many affirmations of love that, with God’s help, are to come throughout the day. It is not a matter of thinking that we are better than others, but of struggling with ourselves, aware that the sweetest victory is over ourselves, when it is offered to God.

St. Josemaría notes, “The heroic minute.” It is time to get up, on the dot! Without hesitation, a supernatural thought and…up! The heroic minute; here you have a mortification that strengthens your will and does not weaken your body.

St. Josemaría further explains the reason for this practice:

Conquer yourself each day from the very first moment, get—ting up on the dot, at a set time, without granting a single minute to laziness. If, with the help of God, you conquer yourself in that moment, you’ll have accomplished a great deal for the rest of the day. It’s so discouraging to find yourself beaten in the first skirmish!

St. Mark tells us, “And in the morning, a great while before day, he [Jesus] rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed” (1:35). It is in this fashion that our Lord has taught us how to begin the day aright.

This is a good moment to say, “I shall serve!” in a daring response to Satan’s suggestion: “I will not serve!” Together with these first offerings, there could be the first prayer addressed to the entire “company of veiled spectators.” First among them is the Triune God, to whom we will offer our entire day, each in our own fashion. Perhaps we could say, like St. Josemaría: “All my thoughts, all my words, all the actions of this day, I offer to You, Lord, and all out of Love.”

It makes sense that the day’s first thought and first act of love should be for the concealed Lover who is constantly seeking our attention. Giving the Lord our first thoughts and acts of love will be a big boost to our attempts to be with Him throughout the day.

Morning Offering

The moment we awake is the time to greet our Lord and thank Him for the gift of a new day. We offer Him all our actions and our entire lives. It is moving to think of the many generations of Christians who have passed along the wonderful custom of offering to God all the actions of the day.

The Morning Offering gives meaning and purpose to our whole day. It starts our conversation with the veiled Lord. It is important to offer our work to God; otherwise we are only doing our work for some other goal, such as for the money we get, for the prestige it brings us, and so forth.

The purpose of the Morning Offering is to dedicate every action of the day to God. And every action, except sin, can be offered to Him. St. Paul says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). With the Morning Offering, all our activities for the day are dedicated to the Lord through a virtual intention acceptable to Him. It is even better if we renew this intention at other moments during the day.

The consciousness that our day has been offered to the veiled Lord is a great help in performing well in our daily struggles. Before the famous Battle of Trafalgar, Admiral Nelson said: “England expects that every man will do his duty.” The British soldiers were motivated, for they knew why they were fighting. Likewise, the Morning Offering reminds us of the purpose of our daily actions and of the King we serve.

Greeting the Saints

After this, it is a good moment to address our Lady (and maybe to kiss our brown scapular) and St. Joseph, our guardian angel, the saints, as well as the souls in Purgatory, and to formulate the desire of gaining all the indulgences that our loving Mother, the Church, has granted to us for the day that is beginning.

In a childlike manner (provided we are certain nobody sees us doing it, for they would not understand what we were doing), we might want to wave at them, and perhaps focus our attention on someone from that great multitude of witnesses: a saint of our devotion, a relative, or a friend who has passed away.

This contact with the other world is very comforting. If we were to hesitate and think that such a practice would be childish, we need only remember that our Lord said, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (Luke 18:17).

Surely, to be aware that we are surrounded by a whole “company of witnesses” is an effective way of avoiding sin, as well as feeling well accompanied. The daily rituals we perform routinely, such as dressing and getting ready for the day could be given much worth and meaning if we attach spiritual interactions or aspirations to them—simply put, by praying. For example, we can imitate St. Josemaría, who, while...
Citizenship.

Immigration Issues and an update from the Bishops’ as well as a report on the Bishops Working Group on the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis hear reports from Bishop Robert E. Barron, Chairman of the Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons.

Priorities of the Conference for the development of the Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons.

The bishops will also hear a report on the Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons.

revised passage of the death penalty for the U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults and subsequent recognition of the death penalty for the U.S. Catholid Catechism for Adults.

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These Franciscan University Alumni Expect ‘Great Things’ From New President

Steubenville, Ohio, May 22 (CNA) - Franciscan University of Steubenville announced Wednesday the appointment of Fr. David Pivonka, TOR, as the university’s seventh president. Several prominent Cathoid alumini of Franciscan said Pivonka’s appointment is positive news for the university.

Pivonka is the first alumnus of Franciscan University to be named to its top post. The priest, who graduated from the school in 1989, will begin presidntial duties immediately and be formally installed in a ceremony later this year. He has served previously as a vice president at the university, and in other administrative and teaching roles.

Curtis Martin is a 1993 master’s graduate of the university, and was given an honorary doctorate by the university at its commencement ceremony this month.

Martin is the founder of national campus ministry apostolate FOCUS. He told CNA that Pivonka’s appointment is “great news for Franciscan University!”

“Even in my encounters with Fr. Dave, I have been impressed by his commitment to Christ and the new evangelization. He is the perfect choice to keep Franciscan University as the leading force for equipping young leaders for a lifetime of dynamic, Christ-centered renewal.”

Evangelist Chris Stefanick, founder of Real Life Catholic, is also a graduate of the university.

Stefanick said he expects “great things” from Pivonka’s leadership.

“Franciscan University has remained the hub from its founding as the leader for dynamically orthodox Catholicism under the leadership of Fr. Mike Scanlan. That said, get ready for a renewal like the university hasn’t seen since Fr. Mike took the helm in 1974.”

Stefanick referred to the renewal of Catholic identity the university experienced under the leadership of Fr. Michael Scanlan, TOR. Scanlan led the university from 1974 to 2000. When he took the helm, the school was a failing regional college on the verge of financial collapse. By the time Scanlan retired, the university had gained a global reputation for “dynamically orthodox” Catholicism, and for graduates reaching leadership roles across the Catholic Church.

Dr. Timothy Gray, president of the Augustine Institute, a Colorado-based graduate school offering degrees in theology, is one such graduate.

Gray told CNA that “Fr Pivonka brings tremendous faith and passion to the leadership of Franciscan University and he will continue its amazing service to the Church in the new evangelization. I can think of no one better to continue Franciscan’s spiritual leadership than Fr David Pivonka. This is good news indeed!”

Congressman Jeff Fortenberry earned a master’s degree in theology from Franciscan University in 1996. Fortenberry told CNA that Pivonka is “faithful, sacrificial, and approachable.”

“America has been devastated by corruption and loss of once-great Catholic institutions—Franciscan must remain strong in a world screaming for meaning,” Fortenberry added.

National Catholic Register editor-in-chief Jeanette DeMelo is a 1998 graduate of the university, and received an honorary doctorate from the school in 2018.

DeMelo told CNA that “I have no doubt that Fr. Dave understands what makes Franciscan unique. He experienced it himself as a student and, in a way ever since then, has carried that experience to others through his pastoral ministry.”

“I remember Fr. Dave from my days as a student, when he had recently returned from his graduate studies and became a faculty member. Students loved him. He is energetic, vibrant and a convincing preacher much like Fr. Mike [Scanlan] was.”

Pivonka “will build well on the foundation built by his predecessors, especially the recent work of [outgoing president] Fr. Sean [Sheridan], who has led at a time of intense growth as well as pivotal moment in the wider culture,” DeMelo added.

Alumni of the university are not the only ones to praise Pivonka’s appointment.

The Diocese of Steubenville told CNA that Bishop Jeffrey Montforton sent a letter to Pivonka, congratulating the priest on his new role.

“I look forward to our collaboration along the lines of Franciscan University these coming years. I also look forward to our ministerial relationship and sharing our Lord Jesus Christ with our brothers and sisters throughout the region,” Montforton wrote.

“I have every confidence you will be a great blessing to everyone at Franciscan, a university I hold in high regard.”

The Holy Spirit Came as Fire, Not a Schedule, Pope Francis Tells Catholic Charity

By Hannah Brockhaus

Vatican City, May 23 (CNA) - Pope Francis Thursday condemned an exaggerated focus on plans and agendas which do not leave room for the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit.

He cautioned against “those particular churches, those who do so much in the organization, plans, to have everything clear, all distributed.”

“It makes me suffer,” he said May 23, at Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica for the opening of the general assembly of Caritas Internationalis.

In his homily, Francis warned against “the temptation of efficiency,” which he said causes people to think everything in the Church is going well as long as it is under control, “without shocks,” and “agenda always in order.”

“But the Lord does not proceed like this; in fact, to his followers he does not send an answer, he sends the Holy Spirit,” he underlined. “And the Spirit does not come bearing an agenda, it comes as fire.”

The pope also said that “Jesus does not want the Church to be a perfect model, which is pleased with
The Argentinean doctor, Rodríguez, was convicted of refusing to perform an abortion because he believed it was against his conscience. Rodríguez is the head of the department of gynecology at the Rio Negro Hospital in Argentina. He decided not to terminate the pregnancy in May 2017, when he treated a 19-year-old woman who was 23 weeks pregnant and the baby weighed more than 1 lb. 2 oz. At the time, Rodríguez was a public functionary.

Rodríguez said, “It was a difficult decision to make,” Francis said, since Jesus had since ascended into Heaven, and he was no longer there among them to question perfectly about how to proceed.

From this passage, the pope said, “We learn three essential elements for the Church on its way: the humility of listening, the charism of the whole, the courage of renunciation.”

The Argentinean Doctor Convicted of Refusing to Perform Abortion

Buenos Aires, Argentina, May 23 (CNA) - Dr. Leandro Rodríguez Lastra, an OB-GYN in Argentina, was found guilty on Monday of having prevented an abortion, after he decided to save the life of an unborn baby whose mother had taken an abortion pill.

After three days of arguments in the Rio Negro Court in Argentina, Judge Álvaro Meynet found Rodríguez guilty of failing to carry out his duty as a public functionary.

In the coming days, the court will announce the sentence, which could range from suspension from practicing medicine to two years in prison.

Rodríguez is the head of the department of gynecology at the Pedro Moguillansky Hospital in Cipoletti. In May 2017, he treated a 19-year-old woman who was suffering from severe pain due to ingesting mifepristone, the first of a two-part abortion pill regimen, which had been administered by an abortion group.

The doctor confirmed that the woman was almost 23 weeks pregnant and the baby weighed more than 1 lb. 2 oz., so in conjunction with the medical team and the hospital board, he decided not to terminate the pregnancy.

Rodríguez stabilized the patient and when the baby reached 35 weeks gestation, labor was induced. Days later, the baby was adopted and will soon be two years old.

However, Rodríguez and Dr. Yamila Custillo, who also refused to perform an abortion, were cited by the hospital board, he decided not to terminate the pregnancy in May 2018. But the case against Rodríguez continued on the grounds that he had stopped an abortion in progress.

Judge Meynet ruled that the doctor carried out a “delaying maneuver” to take advantage of a vulnerable woman. He said that since Rodríguez was not registered as a conscientious objector, he was obliged by law to perform the abortion.

During the course of the trial, thousands of people and pro-life institutions in the country backed the doctor through social media, petitions drives, marches, and vigils outside the court.

After the reading of the verdict, Rodríguez said he will appeal the decision and will continue fighting for justice to be done.

Pope Francis Prays for China Invoking Mary Help of Christians

By Courtney Grogan

Vatican City, May 22 (CNA) - Pope Francis Wednesday asked Our Lady Help of Christians to intercede for Chinese Catholics, whom he said continued to believe and hope amid trials.

“Dear faithful in China, our Heavenly Mother will help you all to be witnesses of charity and fraternity, keeping you always united in the communion of the universal Church,” Pope Francis said in St. Peter’s Square May 22 following his weekly Wednesday audience.

The pope expressed his closeness and affection for all Catholics in China ahead of Friday’s feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, a Marian devotion particularly venerated in Shanghai’s Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan.

Pope Benedict XVI established the custom of praying for China on the Marian feast in 2007, and composed a prayer to Our Lady of Sheshan for the occasion.

This year Pope Francis’ prayer for unity with Chinese Catholics has added significance following the signing of a provisional agreement between Beijing and the Holy See in September 2018.

While the terms of the Sino-Vatican agreement have not been made public, Vatican officials have said that the pact was intended to unify the underground Church and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

The Chinese Communist Party government has continued to persecute Chinese Catholics and other religious believers following the agreement by demolishing Marian shrines and forbidding religious practice for anyone under the age of 18.

Pope Francis offered his blessing for Catholics in China, whom he said “continue to believe, hope, and love” amid “daily labors and trials.”

The pope concluded Wednesday the weekly catechesis he has provided on the Our Father prayer since 2018. He said that the Gospels describe how Jesus lived out the Our Father prayer throughout his life.

“Form the end of the Gethsemane Jesus prays in this way, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will,’” he said.

“How can we fail to recognize in this prayer, however brief, a trace of the Our Father?” Pope Francis said.

Pope Francis said that the Holy Spirit is at the center of Christian prayer found in the New Testament.

“The Holy Spirit makes us capable of praying as children of God,” he said.

“A Christian can pray in every situation,” Pope Francis said. “And to the Father we never cease to tell of our brothers and sisters in humanity, because none of them, especially the poor, remain without a consolation and a portion of love.”

South Sudan President: I Was ‘Almost Trebling’ As Pope Francis Begged Me to Make Peace

By Alejandro Bermudez and Jonah McKeown

Juba, South Sudan, May 20 (CNA) - In an unprecedented gesture last month, Pope Francis kissed the feet of several South Sudanese leaders, who were visiting the Vatican for a retreat, in a plea for peace in the country.

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir told EWTN News that the exchange, which garnered attention around the world, left him “almost trembling.”

“I felt humbled at the humility of the Holy Father, to bend down on the ground and kiss my feet,” Kiir told EWTN News in an interview May 7.

“I was almost trembling because that thing has not happened before, except at the time when Jesus knelt down to wash the feet of his disciples. And it should have been the opposite; his disciples should have been the ones to wash his feet... this is what came into my mind when I first saw it down.”

Kiir and former vice-president Riek Machar met with the pope April 10-11 during a retreat at the Vatican. The pope hosted the retreat specifically for the leaders, who have been at war with each other for years.

Pope Francis encouraged the South Sudanese leaders to “seek what unites you, beginning with the fact that you belong to one and the same people, and to overcome all that divides you,” and told them he was praying for South Sudan to become a beacon and encourage others to “build peace through dialogue, negotiation and forgiveness.”

“We have clearly heard the cry of the poor and the needy; it rises up to heaven, to the very heart of God our Father, who desires to grant them justice and peace,” he said.

In 2011, the predominantly Christian South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, which has a Muslim majority and been governed mostly by Islamic law since the 1980’s.

A five-year civil war began shortly after the country gained its independence. The war has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions more.

The fighting has primarily taken place between those forces loyal to Kiir and rebel groups led by Machar. The war has left 2.1 million people internally displaced, with another 2.5 million refugees, according to the United Nations.

“The purpose of this retreat is for us to stand together before God and to discern his will... it is to reflect on our own lives and the common mission the Lord has entrusted to us, to recognize our enormous shared responsibility for the present and future of the people of South Sudan, and to commit ourselves, reinvigorated and reconciled, to the building up of your nation,” the pope told Kiir and Machar.

Kiir and Machar signed a tenuous peace agreement in September 2018, which the country’s Catholic bishops have called “fatally flawed” because it does not address the complex root causes of the conflict.

“Taking the decades and years of mistrust that had existed between these different forces, it’s not an easy thing... to have peace established overnight,” Bishop Eduardo Kussala of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan told EWTN News.

Still, Kussala said the bishops’ conference is grateful

(see News Briefs, page 17)
UPDATE: California Advances Bill to Violate Sacramental Seal

Sacramento, Calif., May 24 (CNA) - State senators in California have voted to approve a law that would require priests to violate the seal of confession. Senate Bill 360 passed Thursday by an overwhelming margin, with legislators voting 30-2 in favor of the measure.

The bill would require priests to report any knowledge or suspicion of child abuse gained while hearing the confession of another priest or colleague.

In a statement released Friday, Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez said he was "deeply disappointed" by the result and insisted that strong child protection measures did not require the violation of the sanctity of the sacrament of confession.

A previous draft of the law would have compelled the violation of the sacramental seal any time a priest came to suspect abuse from any penitent. In a statement released Monday, Gomez acknowledged the changes but said that "no government, for whatever reason, should violate the privacy and confidentiality of that sacred conversation."

"SB 360 still denies the sanctity of confession to every priest in the state and to thousands of Catholics who work with priests in parishes and other Church agencies and ministries."

The sacramental seal is covered by civil law in many jurisdictions around the world. The "clergy-penitent privilege" is widely regarded as a fundamental exercise of religious liberty.

The bill's sponsor, California state Senator Jerry Hill (D-Calif. 13), has claimed that "the clergy-penitent privilege has been abused on a large scale, resulting in the unreported and systemic abuse of thousands of children across multiple denominations and faiths."

The senator has claimed that such abuse has been revealed through "recent investigations by 14 attorneys general, the federal government, and other countries."

Despite the volume of investigations into the clerical sexual abuse crisis no data exists establishing or indicating the use of sacramental confession either to facilitate or perpetuate the sexual abuse of minors.

Critics of the proposed legislation have noted that sacramental confession between accomplices of a Royal Commission report into clerical sexual abuse.

While the commission's executive summary states that "the practice of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) contributed... to inadequate institutional responses to abuse," it does not provide data detailing the frequency of that contribution.

South Australia and the Northern Territory have already passed similar laws mandating that clergy report suspected abuse in violation of the seal of confession.

Despite the interventions of Perth Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Western Australia's Child Protection Minister, Simone McGurk, said the matter was non-negotiable.

"I've received calls from the Archbishop of Perth, as has the [Prime Minister], but we think the time for discussion about this has passed," McGurk said. "I understand that is the Catholic Church's position, however as a Government we have an obligation to put in place laws and to implement those laws to make sure that children in our community are safe and that is what we are doing."

Canon law describes the seal of the confessional to be "inviolable", and priests are "absolutely forbidden" to disclose the sins of a penitent "in any way, for any reason." Violation of the seal by a priest is a grave crime against the faith and is punished by an automatic excommunication which can be augmented with other penalties, including dismissal from the clerical state.
Los Derechos de una Persona

Ha habido muchas conversaciones y escritos en las últimas semanas con respecto a diversas iniciativas de vida, principalmente en los Estados del Sur y Medio-Oeste. Dependiendo de cómo uno entienda o interpreta la realidad biológica de los niños antes de nacer estas leyes se describen como intentos legislativos para proteger y preservar inocentes (pre-nacido) vidas humanas o como agresiones a los derechos constitucionales de las mujeres. En general, las nuevas leyes otorgan el reconocimiento a la humanidad de seres humanos pre-nacido cuando el latido del corazón es perceptible. La realidad médica es que el latido del corazón es perceptible de 6 a 8 semanas después de que el niño ha sido concebido. En los círculos de Pro-vida es muy común ver broches de solapa con “piecitos”; que muestran una representación real del tamaño de los pies de un bebé antes de nacer de aproximadamente 10 semanas. Los pies no se pueden confundir con los pies de cualquier otra criatura.

El movimiento de estas legislaturas parece haber sido motivado por un fuerte movimien-to en la dirección opuesta por otras legislaturas que buscan ampliar el derecho de acabar con la vida de un ser humano pre-nacido en cualquier momento durante los 9 meses de embarazo. El argumento de algún manera mantiene que la humanidad del producto de la concepción no se ha determinado hasta des-pués de que el niño está completamente libre de toda conexión directa con su madre. Como algunos sostienen, no es la muerte de un niño es la terminación de un embarazo.

Si recuerdo correctamente, la Corte Suprema dic-taminó que no sabemos con certeza cuando comienza la vida humana y por lo tanto, con respecto a seres humanos pre-nacidos, somos libres de actuar como si no existiera vida humana. Esto es reconocido en los Estados Unidos como una presunción legal. Una presunción legal no es un hecho. Una presun-ción legal puede ser confirmada solo que carece de evidencia que la contradiga. Dado el estado actual de la ciencia médica y biológica y genética es muy difícil, quiero decir imposible, mantener la presunción legal de que un niño humano crece dentro del útero de una madre humana es otra cosa que un ser humano. La pregunta es, de la cual varios cuerpos legislativos tienen serios desacuerdos, es si el ser humano creciendo dentro del útero de su madre tiene derecho a la protec-ción de la ley que se le confiere a cada ser humano ya nacido.

Los autores de este particular derecho de las mujeres tienen un problema grave. En el pasado, cuando la ciencia médica y ultra sonido estaba en su infancia argumentaban que el producto de la concepción es sólo una gota de células. No hemos oído ese argumen-to en décadas. Entonces el argumento se presentó de no saber si el producto de la concepción califica como un ser humano. Puesto que un ser humano tiene ciertos rasgos genéticos distintivos ahora podemos decir, con certeza, que el niño en el vientre es un ser humano. Entonces se planteó el argumento en contra de persona. Este es un argumento extremadamente peligroso el cual se remonta a los días de la esclavitud cuando las características externas, tales como el color de la piel, se consideraban determinante de ‘persona’. En el presente persona se considera que existe inmediatamente al terminar de nacer y aún es inexistente sólo mo-mentos antes. Si bien es justo sostener que no podemos ‘probar’ que el niño aún por nacer es una ‘per-sona’, la realidad es que ninguno de nosotros puede ‘probar’ que somos una persona. Papa Juan Pablo II en un documento titulado, Donum Vitae (El Regalo de la Vida, 1987), señala, ya replicado en el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica (CCC), que: “La vida humana debe ser respetada y protegida absoluta-después del momento de la concepción. Desde el primer momento de su existencia, el ser humano deben ser reconocidos sus derechos de persona—entre los cuales, está el derecho inviolable de total ser inocente a la vida.” (CCC, 2277 énfasis agregado)

El lenguaje de “ser” y “persona” es absolutamente intencional. En nuestra Iglesia Católica sostenemos y creemos que cada ser humano, nacido o pre-nacido, debe ser reconocido sus derechos de persona. Permitir que cualquier ley declare arbitrariamente, incluso con muy buenas intenciones, que algún ser humano sea persona humana y otros no, es peligroso. Permitir que cualquier ley declare arbitrariamente, incluso con muy buenas intenciones, que algunas personas humanas son dignas de protección y otros no es también peligroso. A pesar de que nos hemos acostumbrado en incluir ‘derecho’ a tener un aborto entre la lista de los derechos legítimos de las mujeres no es permisible conceder a cualquier ser humano el derecho a decidir, arbitrariamente, la humanidad o falta de humanidad de cual-quier otro ser humano, incluyendo ese ser humano que temporalmente depende de su madre.

(Satisfied in Marriage, cont. from page 13)

“Although women in less/mixed religious couples have a 26% probability of ever having been the victim of violence in their relationship, compared to a 21% probability for women in highly religious couples, and a 23% probability for women in shared secular couples, none of these differences are statistically significant,” the authors note.

Religion’s and fertility

In terms of fertility, the study found that people aged 18-49 who attend religious services regularly have 0.27 more children than those who never, or practically never, attend, and thus “those with egalitarian gender role attitudes are less likely to be married and have slightly fewer children.”

The authors also examine a theory, which they say is common among academics in their field, that a shift in many societies toward greater gender equality, which often takes the form of married women continuing to seek work outside the home, may actually help to raise the fertility rate back to replacement levels in countries where it is especially low.

“In modern societies where women typically have high demands in the public (paid work) sphere of their lives, support from partners is necessary to make bearing two children commonplace,” the authors explained.

“We have shown that people of faith contribute toward sustainable fertility in modern low-fertility societies.”

June 2: St. Marcellinus and St. Peter, St. Eugene
todo este tiempo podemos reconciliarnos con esos opresores y luego los vemos como hermanos y hermanas", reflexionó.

El presidente Kiir indicó que el momento en que el Papa demostró su humildad fue inspirador para él como el líder del país.

“Los sentimientos que tenía en ese momento, a esa hora, eran que debíamos esforzarnos al máximo cuando regresara a Sudán del Sur. Debía hacer todo lo posible para llevar la paz a mi gente, para que las personas se reconcilien entre sí, y la gente no piense en luchar nuevamente”, dijo Kiir.

El mensaje de paz del Papa Francisco

Durante el encuentro en el Vaticano, el Papa Francisco insistió a los líderes de Sudán del Sur: “No me cansaré de repetir que la paz es posible”. “Les pido como hermanos, permanezcan en la paz, lo pido con el corazón, vamos hacía adelante, habrán tantos problemas, pero no se asusten, vayan hacia adelante, resuelvan los problemas, ustedes han comenzado un proceso, que termine bien”, le pidió el Obispo de Roma.

También los exhortó a “buscar lo que uno, a partir de la pertenencia al mismo pueblo y a superar todo lo que divide”. “Deseo de corazón que definitivamente cesen las hostilidades...”, precisó.

La respuesta del Episcopado de Sudán

En entrevista con ACI Prensa, Mons. Eduardo Hii-boro Kussala, Presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal de Sudán del Sur y Sudán, afirmó que el gesto de humildad que tuvo el Papa Francisco con los líderes políticos africanos, al besarse a los pies de los líderes, son cesiones que las partes puedan seguir haciendo, para seguir con el proceso de paz.

Asimismo, tras señalar que ya hubo suficiente tiempo para trabajar en la integración del territorio de paz, el Obispo explicó que se debe recordar que “considerando las décadas de mutua desconfianza que hay entre las distintas fuerzas, no es algo fácil hacerlo”.

“Creo que nos toca ser flexibles al ofrecer tiempo, no hay que esforzarse en hacer las cosas de modo brusco. El trabajo de la paz tiene que hacerse pacíficamente. Decimos a las partes que tienen que ver esto en busca de la unidad”, precisó.

Mons. Kiboro dijo que es necesario “trabajar para que las partes puedan defender la Constitución y no a su comandante o líder de turno”. “Debido a que es un trabajo de paz, debe hacerse pacíficamente. No hay una solución rápida para la paz”, afirmó.

Mons. Kussala también dijo que la Diócesis de Tombura-Yambio ha venido trabajando en los esfuerzos de reconciliación y consolidación de la paz. “Creemos que encontramos respuestas locales, soluciones locales a los problemas que surgen entre nosotros es el camino a seguir”. Esta diócesis se unió recientemente con otros grupos de la Iglesia para atraer a diez mil jóvenes combatientes de la selva; y de esta manera preparar a la comunidad para la reconciliación y el perdón.

¿Conocías Las Frases De Estos Santos En Honor a La Virgen María?

(ACI Prensa) - Desde el inicio del cristianismo, los santos han dejado notables frases que explican la importancia de la Virgen María como modelo a seguir en la historia de la salvación.

A continuación, varias frases de santos famosos sobre la Madre de Dios.

1. San Juan Pablo II
“Nos has dado a tu Madre como nuestra para que nos enseñe a meditar y adorar en el corazón. Ella, recibiendo la Palabra y poniéndola en práctica, se hizo la más perfecta Madre”, es una de las frases sobre María del Papa de la familia.

2. San Agustín de Hipona
“María fue bienaventurada, porque, antes de dar a luz a su maestro, lo llevó en su seno. María es dichosa también porque escuchó la palabra de Dios y la cumplió, llevó en su seno el cuerpo de Cristo, pero más aún guardó en su mente la verdad de Cristo”, dijo el Padre y Doctor de la Iglesia.

3. San Francisco de Asís
“Dios os salve, María, Madre de Dios. En vos estás y estuvo todo la plenitud de la gracia y todo bien”, dijo el fundador de los Franciscanos.

4. San Maximiliano Kolbe
“Nunca tengas miedo de amar demasiado a la Virgen. Jamás podrás amarla más que Jesús”.

5. Santa Teresa de Calcuta
La servidumbre de María reside en su humildad. Jesús, quien vivió en estrechísimo contacto con ella, parecía querer que nosotros aprendiéramos de él y de ella una lección solamente: ser mansos y humildes de corazón”.

6. San Pío de Pietrelcina
“Cuando se pasa ante una imagen de la Virgen hay que decir: Te saludo, María. Saluda a Jesús de mi parte”, dijo el santo de los estigmas.

7. Santa Teresa de Lisieux
“Gran cosa es lo que agrada a Nuestro Señor cualquier servicio que se haga a su Madre”, mística y Doctora de la Iglesia.

8. San Juan Bosco
“La devoción y el amor a María Santísima es una gran protección y un arma poderosa contra las asechanzas del demonio”, dijo el gran propagador de la devoción a María Auxiliadora.

9. Santa Teresa de Jesús
“Gran cosa es lo que agradó a Nuestro Señor cualquier servicio que se haga a su Madre”, mística y Doctora de la Iglesia.

10. San Juan María Vianney (Cura de Ars)
“Si yo no tuviera a la Madre de Dios que me defiende a cada paso de los peligros del alma, ya habría caído el poder de Satanás”.

11. San Buenaventura
“No temen tanto los soldados uncopioso ejército de enemigos como teme el poder del infierno al oir el nombre de María”.

12. San Francisco de Borja
“El Eterno se enamoró de vuestra incomparable hermosura, con tanta fuerza, que se hizo como despren-derse del seno del Padre y escoger esas virginales entrañas para hacerse Hijo vuestro, ¿Y yo, gusano de la tierra, no he de amaros? Sí, dulcísima Madre mía, quiero arder en vuestro amor y propongo exhor-tar a otros a que os amen también”, son las palabras del fundador de los Franciscanos.

13. San Francisco de Asís
“Dios os salve, María, Madre de Dios. En vos estás y estuvo todo la plenitud de la gracia y todo bien”, dijo el fundador de los Franciscanos.

10. San Juan María Vianney (Cura de Ars)
“Si yo no tuviera a la Madre de Dios que me defiende a cada paso de los peligros del alma, ya habría caído el poder de Satanás”.

11. San Buenaventura
“No temen tanto los soldados un copioso ejército de enemigos como teme el poder del infierno al oir el nombre de María”.

12. San Francisco de Borja
“El Eterno se enamoró de vuestra incomparable hermosura, con tanta fuerza, que se hizo como desprenderse del seno del Padre y escoger esas virginales entrañas para hacerse Hijo vuestro, ¿Y yo, gusano de la tierra, no he de amaros? Sí, dulcísima Madre mía, quiero arder en vuestro amor y propongo exhorr-tar a otros a que os amen también”, son las palabras del fundador de la Iglesia y patrono de confesores y moralistas.

13. San Luis María Gríñon de Montfort
“A quien Dios quiere hacer muy santo, lo hace devoto de la Virgen María”, dijo en una ocasión el autor de varios libros marianos entre los que se encuentra el Tratado de la verdadera devoción a la Virgen María.

(vea Noticias en Español, página 20)
14. San Bernardo de Claraval

“Si se levanta la tempestad de las tentaciones, si cae en el escelo de las tristezas, eleva tus ojos a la Estrella del Mar, invoca a María”, dijo este Doctor de la Iglesia.

15. San Ireneo

“El nudo de la desobediencia de Eva fue desatado por la obediencia de María; lo que ató la virgen Eva por la incredulidad, la virgen María lo desató por la fe,”, es una de las frases de este Padre de la Iglesia de los primeros siglos que combatió herejes.

16. Santa Teresa de los Andes

“María, eres la Madre del Universo. ¿Quién no se anima al amanecer tan tierno, tan compasivo, a descubrir sus íntimos tormentos? Si es pecador, tus caricias lo enternecen. Si es tu fiel devoto, tu presencia solamente enciende la llama viva del amor divino”, dijo la carmelita descalza latinoamericana.

17. San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer

“Antes, solo, no podías. Ahora, has acudido a la señora, y, con ella, ¡qué fácil!.”

“Necesitamos Una Sociedad Que Se Preocupe Por Fortalecer a Las Familias”, Expresa Obispo Quesada (ACI Prensa) - El Obispo de Ciudad Que-sada (Costa Rica), Mons. José Manuel Garita, afirmó que el país necesita políticas públicas a favor de la familia, y lamentó que al parecer la sociedad de hoy quiere negar la importancia de esta institución fundamental.

El Prelado hizo este llamado al reflexionar en su columna del 22 de mayo sobre el Día Internacional de las Familias, celebrado el miércoles 15 de mayo.

“Necesitamos políticas públicas que promuevan a la familia, que den opciones a los padres para salir adelante con la educación y manutención de sus hijos. Necesitamos una sociedad que se preocupe por fortalecer a las familias”, exhortó Mons. Garita.

El Obispo recordó que la celebración de esta fecha nació con el objetivo de “dar a conocer las cuestiones relativas a las familias y reflexionar acerca de cómo les afectan los procesos sociales, económicos y demográficos”, como fue declarado por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas desde 1993.

Asimismo, mencionó que de acuerdo con el ente, este día brinda la oportunidad de “reconocer, identificar y analizar cuestiones sociales, económicas y demográficas que afectan a su desarrollo y evolución”.

“Por este motivo, para celebrar este día se organizan actividades, tales como talleres, conferencias, programas de radio y televisión, entre otros, con el objetivo de fomentar y favorecer el mantenimiento y la mejora de la unidad familiar”, expresó Mons. Garita.

Sin embargo, el Prelado también señaló la poca cobertura de los medios de comunicación en este día, en el que “pareciera que no es noticia celebrar a la familia, unidad básica de la sociedad, como así se considera por parte de las Naciones Unidas, como es en realidad”.

“Parece que la sociedad de hoy quiere negar la importancia de la familia, puesto que, no es posible dedicar un día a pesar de los acuerdos mundiales para este fin, manifestó.

De igual manera, comentó que “no se ve” la promoción a la familia en Costa Rica y que “parece que muchos quisieran invisibilizar el papel fundamental de la familia y acabar con ella”.

También recordó las palabras del Papa Francisco en la Exhortación Apostólica Amoris laetitia, donde expresó que “el bien de la familia es decisivo para el futuro del mundo y de la Iglesia”, resaltando la importancia de la familia.

“En medio de las disensiones o de los pocos incentivos que hay para la familia, debemos volver nues-tra mirada a Dios, la familia tiene muchísimo para ofrecer a la sociedad como transmitir la fe, educar a sus hijos, promover verdaderos valores que dan sentido pleno a la vida”, manifestó el Obispo.

De acuerdo con el Prelado, desde la década de los ochenta las Naciones Unidas empezaron a centrarse en temas relacionados con la familia. Por ello, animó a no perder la esperanza frente a la realidad costar-ricense.

“Muchas familias hoy viven según el plan de Dios, viven en el amor cristiano de acoger, respetar y promover a sus integrantes. Hoy más que nunca, la familia debe recuperar su esencia en la sociedad que ha perdido valores y se mueve en la era del relativismo”, afirmó.

Asimismo, “hoy, más que nunca, la familia debe inspirarse en Dios, que es comúnión de personas, y cumplir el proyecto de amor que Él ha diseñado para este núcleo y célula fundamental de la sociedad, del mundo y de la Iglesia. “El Señor, que ha querido la familia, la bendiga y la guarde siempre en su amor”, puntualizó.

Denunciarán A Arzobispo Por Criticar “Matrimo-nio” Gay en México

CIUDAD DE MEXICO (ACI Prensa) - El presidente de la Red de Diversificadores Sociales, Paul Ibarra, anunció que denunciará al Arzobispo de San Luis Potosí (México), Mons. Jesús Carlos Cabrero Romero, por promover un “discurso de odio” contra la comunidad homosexual al manifestar el rechazo de la iglesia al mal llamado “matrimonio” gay.

La denuncia sería presentada ante la Secretaría de Asuntos Religiosos de la Secretaría de Gober-nación de México, exigiendo sanciones que podrían ir desde una llamada de atención hasta sanciones económicas.

El 16 de mayo, el Congreso estatal de San Luis Potosí aprobó la legalización del “matrimonio” gay. Ese mismo día, Mons. Jesús Carlos Cabrero Romero, por promover un “discurso de odio” contra la comunidad homosexual al manifestar el rechazo de la iglesia al mal llamado “matrimonio” gay.

“Desde los más remotos años, el matrimonio se entendió que se hacía efectivo entre dos partes opuestas, pero complementarias: hombre y mujer. Nunca, hasta hace muy pocos años, no entendemos por qué, esta milenaria institución jurídicamente se atacó y terminó por quedarla destruir”, señaló.

Sin embargo, precisó el Prelado mexicano, “lo que objetivamente es” el matrimonio “no se puede destruir”.

“El matrimonio, como se ha entendido siempre, es y será, entre dos partes contrarias. Una ley no puede ni podrá nunca destruir lo que es algo esencial”, subrayó.

El Arzobispo también invitó “a los que hoy se alegran por esta votación a que ejerzan lo que es, y debiera ser, la auténtica y verdadera tolerancia”, pues así como los católicos “respetamos su manera de pensar, pero entonces también exigimos que respeten con sinceridad lo que nuestra fe, nuestra forma de pensar y de creer, nos invita a vivir y a expresar”.

Según recoge el diario Pulso, el activista de la Red de Diversificadores Sociales dijo que los líderes religiosos “a veces olvidan que también están sujetos a una ley y que deben ser observantes de ésta y coadyuvar a un ambiente de sana convivencia y de respeto a los derechos de todas las personas”.

En diálogo con ACI Prensa, Marcial Padilla, director de la plataforma mexicana ConParticipación, señaló que “quienes piden tolerancia y respeto ahora han demostrado que lo que buscan es imponer una forma de pensar y de ver la sexualidad”.

“Con ConParticipación, como una red de ciudadanos que promovemos los valores fundamentales en la sociedad en un contexto democrático, respaldamos la libertad de expresión y de conciencia del Arzobispo de San Luis Potosí”, afirmó.

Además, indicó, “lamentamos que los grupos que piden respeto y tolerancia lo que estén haciendo es querer imponer a toda la sociedad una visión de la sexualidad que afecta a todos pero sobre todo a los niños”.

(The Spiritual Battle, cont. from page 14)

fastening the buttons on his clothing, used to say something like, “Jesus, fasten me to You!”

The trip to a nearby church lends itself to a period of inner and exterior silence with the recollection that the traffic situation allows. Before we begin, while fastening our seat belts, we may invoke our guardian angels, who are among those “unseen witnesses” and who are ever ready to help us. Then, the blessing for a trip recommended by St. Josemaría comes in handy: “Through the intercession of the Blessed Mary, may I have a good trip. May the Lord be in my journey; and may His angel accompany me!”

Waiting at a red light might be a challenge for us. Use this time as an opportunity to react supernaturally, perhaps saying to our Lord: “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, give us peace!” And at a green light: “Holy Mary, our hope, pray for us!”

Fr. John Portavella is an Opus Dei priest doing pastoral work at the University of Asia and the Pacific in Pasig City, Metro Manila. This article is an excerpt from Fr. Portavella’s The Little Manual for Spiritual Growth. It is available from Sophia Institute Press. 

(Spiritual Battle, cont. from page 14)

June 4: St. Francis Caracciolo

Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

(Noticias en Español, cont. de página 19)
Catholic Parish Dos and Don’ts from Millennials

By Tom Hoopes Apr 29 (Aleteia)

A Boston Herald story announced, "Millennials making their way back to church," and focused on Catholic parishes in Boston that are seeing more millennials at Mass. The report gave me an idea: Why not ask millennials that I know what attracts—or repels—them from parish life?

If my focus group ruled the world, here are the dos and don'ts of parish life that they would probably enforce.

First: Don't schedule daily parish Masses only for retirees.

"My generation hates when churches cater to the elderly and retired only," said one millennial. She cited Masses scheduled at 8 a.m. or later instead of before or after work hours. Millennials told me that a parish with an 8 a.m. or later daily Mass is saying, loud and clear: "We don't want working people to attend our Masses." Meanwhile, a recent Gallup poll that said membership in churches is continuing its 20-year drop (though religious sentiment is still strong). That is a natural consequence of church schedules that exclude working people.

Do schedule Mass such that working people can attend.

On the other hand, when a parish is willing to have an early or afternoon daily Mass, it sends its own message: "We will sacrifice to meet your needs, rather than demand you sacrifice for ours." A bonus tip for parishes from my focus group: Please, please, put your Mass times on your parish website, and make them "sticky" at the top of your Facebook page, particularly during special times like Holy Week.

Second: Don't make service opportunities the fiefdoms of previous generations.

Millennials also called out service opportunities at parishes. They tend to be run by older people who can't imagine doing something different from what was done before. That means that young people who don't want to sell baked goods or can't sew or can't meet on Wednesday afternoons have no way to participate—and the parish has no intention of changing this, because of who is in charge.

Do make the Church a place where millennials can serve their communities.

Meanwhile, one of the great benefits of church membership is that it serves as a kind of antidote to the self-centered and isolating social media culture. Religion not only bonds you to God, it bonds you to your community through service to others. If churches want to keep millennials, they need to "give them the keys to the car" and allow them to create parish service opportunities that suit their abilities and availability.

Third: Don't only offer confessions one hour a week.

Millennials tell me that the sacrament of confession feels like a sacrament built for them. It allows them to focus on their unique personal life story and how it intersects with God and the world, and get personalized help in making it better. But working people have a hard time getting to confession on a Saturday, the day when all their errands have to happen also. Those with children find it even harder.

Do offer confession in the evening.

My parish does a great job at this, offering confession on Wednesday after work. The popularity of the sacrament is obvious: You often see young people in line at the parish, and confession lines at Benedictine College, right next door, have quintupled in the last 10 years.

Fourth: Don't only offer fellowship for older people.

Often, the fellowship opportunities at a parish cater to particular categories of people—older people. The only women’s group might be a moms’ group, for instance, or a divorce support group. The only men’s group might be a service group made up mostly of retired men.

Do allow young people to create their style of fellowship.

The Boston Herald story offered one example of a Boston parish that offers a 7 p.m. Sunday Mass with a potluck dinner afterwards.

At my age (49), I would never go to such a Mass or such a potluck. But that's exactly the point. Millennials would and do.

"There's something about being at the table with a bunch of people and laughing and joking — that's the connection that people like," said a parish worker.

More of that, please!

Fifth: Don't try to be hip.

Several years ago I noticed an interesting generational divide in meetings about parish music. Young people wanted the traditional, "singable" hymns that are old chestnuts in our hymnals: "To Jesus Christ Our Sovereign King," "Holy God We Praise Thy Name," "Hail Holy Queen Enthroned Above," etc.

The 50 and older crowd wanted the hymns that were popular in the 1970s and 1980s: "On Eagle’s Wings," "I Am the Bread of Life," and "Here I Am, Lord." Often, when older people try to reach out to younger people, they ignore what younger people actually want, and default to the kinds of things they liked when they were young.

Instead, do try to be authentic.

"We want authenticity," one millennial told me. "When Catholic churches try to be youth-friendly — less smells and bells and more hip — it rings false."

She told me young people like Eucharistic adoration (make it available outside work hours!) and other traditional devotions, along with Bishop Robert Barron-style apologetics. This maybe sums up all of the advice my focus group gave me. Don't try to be who you aren't — be who you are, but be that for all.

June 24: The Birth of St. John the Baptist
**EVENTS CALENDAR**

**June 20th - 23rd**
*Youth On a Mission*
Participants must have completed freshman year, parent permission slip needed. Email for more information:
http://yoamnorcal.weebly.com

**June 26th - 28th**
*Steubenville NorCal*
Participants must have completed 8th grade. More information: https://steubenville-norcal.org/

**June 8th - 12th**
*Little Flower Diocese Youth Camp*
Participants between 9-16 year old, parent permission slip needed. More information: youth@srdiocese.org. Phone: 707-566-3371

**Ongoing in Santa Rosa**
*Catholic Charities’ Senior Transportation Program* is a free service for seniors 60+ living in Santa Rosa. Our dedicated and trained volunteer drivers take seniors to medical appointments, grocery shopping and other similar errands. Medical appointments are given priority. Our program operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To schedule a ride, call 707-528-2063 and leave a message with your ride request the week before you need your scheduled ride.

**Ongoing**
*Thursdays 5:30pm “Pray for Priests” Prayer Group*
*St. Sebastian Parish*
Is God calling you to enrich your prayer life in the very meaningful way? If so, you are welcome to come to our parish “Pray for Priests” prayer group on Thursdays, 7-8pm in St. Sebastian’s church. Weekly attendance is not a requirement; join us when you can.

**Youth and Young Adults**
Stay current on Youth & Young Adult ministry events in the diocese: www.sryouth.org & www.catholicya.org. Humboldt State Newman Center events:
Regina - rfosnaugh1@hotmail.com
http://www.hsunewmancenter.com

To have your calendar event listed please email us!
Srdiocese1@gmail.com

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**This Summer Let Young and Old Climb Aboard the Same Canoe!**

*By Sr. Constance Veit, l.s.p.*

My fondest memories of summer are the times spent with my favorite aunt at her cottage nestled in the Adirondack Mountains. As a middle school teacher, she had a gift for relating to kids in a way very different from parents, like a wise friend or a trusted confidante. My aunt patiently taught us how to knit and sew; she listened to our stories and nurtured our dreams as if each niece or nephew were the only one.

She took us on long walks in the woods, pointing out her favorite wildflowers and teaching us to recognize fresh bear tracks and other potential dangers.

She also taught us how to paddle her antique canoe around the nearby lake. As we got older, my aunt would sit on the dock reading a book as we took the canoe out to explore the lily pads along the shoreline or ride the waves created by the speeding motorboats. But she always kept one eye on us in case we got into trouble.

Although she never had children of her own, my aunt took a lively interest in all her nieces and nephews until the very end of her life. She never gave us lectures, expressed disapproval or told us how things should be done, but she always kept an eye on us. She remained creative and curious long after retiring and unassumingly shared her time, her talents and herself with others.

As I read Pope Francis’ recent post-synodal letter, *Christus Vivit*, in which he encourages the young and the old to form strong bonds, I realized what a blessing my aunt was to our family, for she personified the ideal of elders as wisdom figures and memory keepers.

“What do I ask of the elders among whom I count myself?” our Holy Father wrote. “I call us to be memory keepers…. I envision elders as a permanent choir of a great spiritual sanctuary, where prayers of supplication and songs of praise support the larger community that works and struggles in the field of life. It is a beautiful thing when “young men and maidens together, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord” (Ps 148:12-13).

When her life was coming to an end my aunt felt she had very little to leave us, but as my siblings and cousins came from all over the country to bid her farewell, it was obvious that because she had given us so much of herself, she would live on and even blossom in us.

“What can we elderly persons give to the young?” Pope Francis asked in *Christus Vivit*. “We can remind today’s young people, who have their own blend of heroic ambitions and insecurities, that a life without love is an arid life…. We can tell fearful young people that anxiety about the future can be overcome…. We can teach those young people, sometimes so focused on themselves, that there is more joy in giving than in receiving, and that love is not only shown in words, but also in actions.”

This is what my aunt taught us! The following words of our Holy Father brought her memory to life in a special way:

“During the Synod, one of the young auditors from the Samoan Islands spoke of the Church as a canoe, in which the elderly help to keep on course by judging the position of the stars, while the young keep rowing, imagining what waits for them ahead.” He concluded, “Let us all climb aboard the same canoe and together seek a better world, with the constantly renewed momentum of the Holy Spirit.”

So, this summer, be intentional about bringing the generations in your family or neighborhood together. Take time for long walks and slow canoe rides, and for sharing memories and dreams. You won’t be disappointed!

*Sister Constance Veit is director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor.*
Young Adults

“If you are a young adult between the ages of 18-40, come join our vibrant community! We will be starting a two-part faith study series on Monday June 10th, 7pm at the SSU Newman Center. The first series is from Pope Saint John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, presented by Br. Cassian DiRocco, and the second, The Wild Goose series presented by Fr. Dave Pivonka TOR, is all about the love that Jesus Christ has for all of us. If we let Him, the Holy Spirit will lead us to a place of mercy, healing, peace, and freedom in the Heart of God. Come join us as we learn what it means to live as truly authentic men and women, and grow and experience a new, deeper relationship with God and are transformed by His Love: the Holy Spirit! Our study series will continue on June 17th and 24th at the SSU Newman Center @ 7pm!

Upcoming Events:
JULY 6th - Swing Dance @ St. Elizabeth Seton, Rohnert Park.
JULY 8th, 15th, and 22nd - Theology of the Body and The Wild Goose series continued @ 7pm at the SSU Newman Center
JULY 27th - Day @ the coast”

Pro-Life Activist Conceived in Rape Addresses Alabama Abortion Law

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey recently signed the Human Life Protection Act into law. The legislation would make performing or attempting to perform an abortion a felony in the state.

The bill permits exceptions if the life of the mother is at risk, but controversially makes no exception for victims of rape or incest.

In an interview to air May 23 on EWTN Pro-Life Weekly, attorney and pro-life speaker Rebecca Kiessling said that she applauds Alabama for refusing to make such exceptions because they dehumanize people like her.

Kiessling is the founder and president of Save the 1, a pro-life advocacy group dedicated to supporting the rights of unborn children conceived in rape or incest, or with disabilities. She told Pro-Life Weekly host Catherine Hadro that she was conceived when her biological mother was abducted at knifepoint and raped, and that she owes her birth to abortion having been illegal at the time.

Adopted at birth, Kiessling met her biological mother for the first time when she was 19 years old. While her birth mother “was happy to meet me,” Kiessling said her mother told her that she would have had an abortion if the procedure had been legal at the time.

(see Pro-Life Activist, page 24)

Walk in the Footsteps of Christ

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Fr. Thomas Diaz
April 14th to April 30th, 2020
$4,495 per person on dbl. occupancy
*$998 extra per single room
For more information contact:
www.holylandtoursandtravel.com
Click onto Upcoming Tours and scroll down to the tour, or contact Fr. Tom at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Rohnert Park, CA (707) 585-3708 for more details.
Religious Freedom Week 2019: Strength in Hope takes place from June 22 to 29. The Week begins with the Feast of Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More, ends with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, and includes the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. This year’s Religious Freedom Week is also notable in that it includes the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) and the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Parish resources are available at the USCCB website: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/religious-freedom-week featuring an animated video promoting Religious Freedom Week, a bulletin insert for June 9 and 16, 2019, the two Sundays before Religious Freedom Week begins, as well as other materials to notify Catholics about this initiative.

During Religious Freedom Week, Catholics are encouraged to pray and act each day for religious freedom. The Pray-Reflect-Act series aims to help Catholics build solidarity with people of faith who are persecuted abroad and find strength to carry out the mission of the Church here in the United States. Social media downloads with the prayer intention for each day of Religious Freedom Week are available. Please distribute these materials through your channels where appropriate.

More Spanish materials are being prepared and will appear on the website as soon as they are available. Lectionary notes for Sunday, June 23 (Corpus Christi) and for Sunday, June 30 (Sunday before Independence Day) can be found at the Religious Freedom Week website. Please check www.usccb.org/ReligiousFreedomWeek for updates, blog posts, and podcasts. All materials except the talking points are or will be available at the website.

Kate Scanlon is a producer for EWTN Pro-Life (Pro-Life Activist, cont. from page 23)

“She said, ‘it should have been my right,’” Kiessling said.

But, Kiessling said, her mother has since undergone a change of heart, and the pair are now both “thankful that we were protected by Michigan law at the time.”

Asked about the Alabama law and its lack of a rape exception, Kiessling said state Rep. Terri Collins, who introduced the bill, was defending the lives of people like her.

“He really went to bat for us,” Kiessling said, while noting that the rhetoric around the debate had been distressing for her and others like her.

“It really hurts when our people group are under attack,” Kiessling said, adding that Save the 1 has eight hundred members who were either conceived in rape or became mothers after rape.

Shortly after Gov. Ivey approved the bill, President Donald Trump opined on Twitter that although he considers himself “strongly Pro-Life,” he believes in “three exceptions - Rape, Incest and protecting the Life of the mother.” Trump did not name Alabama, although the tweet was widely interpreted as commentary on the bill.

Asked about the president’s tweet, Kiessling called Trump “the most pro-life president we’ve had by far,” but that this only made his comments about rape exceptions “hurt so much more.”

“You want somebody like that to be willing to defend you,” Kiessling said.

Asked how pro-life advocates can discuss such a sensitive topic, Kiessling said that it is important to “appreciate people’s concern for rape victims who become pregnant, without dismissing the humanity of the unborn children involved.

Kiessling said pro-life advocates should “appeal to the sense of justice, that we do not punish innocent people for someone else’s crime.”

“People respect that answer,” she said. “And I did not deserve the death penalty for the crime of my biological father.”

Kiessling said Save the 1 has “made a lot of progress” in working to terminate the parental rights of rapists.

“I tell people, look if you really care about rape victims who become pregnant, please, protect them from the rapist and the abortion,” she said. “The baby is not the scary enemy.”

Kiessling’s full interview will air Thursday, May 23rd at 10:00 PM Eastern.