POPE BEATIFIES 124 KOREAN MARTYRS

SEOUL—Pope Francis spent August 14-18 in Korea, the nation with the one of the fastest growing Catholic populations in Asia.

In 1950, the peninsular country had 150,000 Catholics. By the 1970s, that number had grown to over 1 million. Today it is over 5.4 million, accounting for roughly 11 percent of the population. In 2012 alone, over 85,000 people became Catholic. Furthermore, polls consistently show the Church is the most respected institution in Korean society.

The official reason for His Holiness’ visit was to speak with the attendees of the sixth Asian Youth Day. The Pope also used the trip, however, to beatify 124 Korean martyrs, including the first Korean Christian and the nation’s first missionary priest, a Chinese national.

Upon arriving in Seoul, the Holy Father addressed the country’s secular leaders and underlined the importance of transmitting values to the next generation and said peace is achieved through diplomacy and dialogue rather than the “fruitless” use of force.

Addressing state authorities in English at the presidential palace August 14, the Holy Father said it was a “great joy” to come to Korea and praised the country’s rich cultural heritage. He noted the “land of morning calm” has been “tested through the years by violence, persecution, and war,” but he said that despite these trials, the country has “an undiminished hope for justice, peace, and unity.”

“What a gift hope is,” the Pope said. “We cannot become discouraged in our pursuit of these goals, which are for the good not only of the Korean people, but of the entire region and the whole world.”

In his address to Christian youth on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, His Holiness emphasized the need to respond joyfully to God’s call in order to carry the hope of Christ to a world that desperately needs it.

“Dear young friends, in this generation the Lord is counting on you!” he told throngs of young people from across the Asian continent. “Are you ready to say ‘yes’ to Him? Are you ready?”

Just as the Lord made His glory shine forth in the heroic witness of the martyrs, so too He wants to make His glory shine in your lives, and through you, to light up the life of this vast continent,” the Pope encouraged.

“He calls you to rise, to be wide awake and alert, and to see the things in life that really matter. What is more, He is asking you to go out on the highways and byways of this world, knocking on the doors of other people’s hearts, inviting them to welcome him into their lives.”

The Pope thanked the young people for their joy and enthusiasm, as well as for the testimonies, hopes, and challenges some of the individuals presented to him at the meeting.

“This great gathering of Asian young people also allows us to see something of what the Church herself is meant to be in God’s eternal plan,” he said. “Together with young people everywhere, you want to help build a world where we all live together in peace and friendship, overcoming barriers, healing divisions, rejecting violence and prejudice.”

God intends the Church to be “a seed of unity for the whole human family,” the Holy Father explained. “In Christ, all nations and peoples are called to a unity which does not destroy diversity but acknowledges, reconciles, and enriches it.”

But when we look at the world today, and even when we examine our own hearts, we see selfishness, injustice, and hostility, he said, pointing to the problems of poverty and “an idolatry of wealth, power, and pleasure which come at a high cost to human lives,” as well as “spiritual poverty, loneliness, and quiet despair.”

“God seems to be removed from the picture. It is almost as though a spiritual desert is beginning to spread throughout our world,” he lamented. “It affects the young, too, robbing them of hope and even, in all too many cases, of life itself.”

Yet this is the world into which you are called to go forth and bear witness to the gospel of hope, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the promise of His kingdom.

Two-thirds of the way through his prepared remarks, the Pope announced he wished to speak to the young people spontaneously and from the heart but was not comfortable doing so in English. Encouraged by the eager applause of those present, he set aside his text and began speaking in Italian.

He responded to a question posed by one young woman about whether she should continue on a path of education or return home to her family. Pope Francis said that when the Lord calls us, he always calls us to honor Him, whether it is through ordained ministry or marriage.

“You don’t choose the road you take. God chooses for you,” he said, explaining we must simply listen for which path He calls us to take.

He invited the young people to pray with him three times, “Lord, what do you want from me?”

Addressing the priests present, the Holy Father asked that they might be merciful to returning sinners, in imitation of God’s constant desire to embrace us despite our sins.

“We must never be afraid to return to God. And God will celebrate,” he said. “God is never tired of waiting for us. He is never tired of welcoming us back home again.”

At Mass later that day, Francis said the Virgin Mary’s Assumption “shows us our own destiny as God’s adoptive children and members of the Body of Christ.”

“Like Mary our Mother, we are called to share fully in the Lord’s victory over sin and death and to reign with Him in His eternal kingdom,” he said.

The Pope also discussed St. Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians, saying it taught Christ’s obedience to God the
HOW SHALL I REPAY THE LORD?

When asked how I chose "my" vocation, I sometimes am tempted to respond, "I did not choose it; it chose me."

While that answer may sound a little too passive, it does in reality convey the truth. I can recall praying a post-Communion prayer which was in the old Missals. Keep in mind, this was in the days before the Mass we currently use, which went into effect around 1978.

In Latin, for those who might remember, the prayer was: "Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quaee retribuibil mihi? Calicem salutaris accipiam, et nomen Domini invocabo. Laudans invoco Dominum, et ab immicis meis salvis ero.”

This was translated in my Daily Missal's neighboring column, and later discovered it was Psalm 116:12–13, 18–19:

Laudans invocabo Dominum, et ab inimicis meis salvis ero.

En términos de hoy creo que podríamos decir que yo "también" tenía una "relación personal con Jesús. " ¡Imagínese eso! Que alguien "elegido por mi".

¿Cómo pagaré al Señor? /questiondown.cap

After the passage of much time, I comprehended the "taking up of the cup of salvation" was directly tied to the priesthood. The priest was the one who took up the cup, the chalice of salvation. The priest was the one who lived a vowed life. The priest was the one who lived out his vows in the midst of the people for their sake.

My personal response to the call to follow Christ was directly tied to my recitation of this prayer. In that sense, since I prayed that prayer with generosity and not necessarily with a conscious or direct view to the priesthood, the answer chose me. I did not choose the answer.

I was and am grateful to the Lord for the many marvelous gifts He has bestowed upon me. I am particularly grateful for the gift of Jesus Himself. My prayer of gratitude deepened my devotion. My devotion deepened my appreciation for the greatness of the gift. My appreciation opened my heart to a fuller response, and that openness allowed me to hear and heed an invitation to follow the Lord.

Having heeded the invitation, I am now challenged to pray again: What return can I make to the Lord for the many marvelous gifts He has given to me?

I hope your prayer challenges you as well.

From the Bishop

Bishop Robert F. Vasa is the bishop of the Diocese of Santa Rosa

¿CÓMO PAGARÉ AL SEÑOR?

Cuando me preguntan cómo elegí ‘mi’ vocación, a veces me siento tentado a responder: "Yo no la elegí; ella me eligió a mí."

Mientras que la respuesta puede sonar demasiado pasiva, en realidad transmite la verdad. Puedo recordar rezando una oración después de la Comunión, que estaba en los viejos misales. Tengo en cuenta, que esto fue en los días antes de la Misa que utilizamos actualmente, que entró en vigor alrededor de 1970.

En Latín, para los que tal vez recuerden, la oración era: “Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quaee retribuibil mihi? Calicem salutaris accipiam, et nomen Domini invocabo. Laudans invoco Dominum, et ab immicis Meiis salvis ero.”

En cualquier caso, ese Salmo era muy personal para mí: "¿Qué retorno podría hacer para el Señor?" ¿Qué debo hacer entonc a El?"

Estas preguntas deben hacer un llamamiento a cada uno de nosotros también. Específicamente para aquellos de nosotros en el perdón de los pecados: Tengan la valentía de orar a la Iglesia para que vuestra y su amigo lo eligieran a Él.

Fifty years ago in the Catholic Church someone could claim a "personal relationship with Jesus." To hear people today one would believe such a thing could not have existed prior to 1976 and that the concept was invented "elsewhere."

In today’s terms I guess we would say I did have a "personal relationship with Jesus. " Imagine that! That return could I make to the Lord for the greatness of the gift of Himself He had so generously and mercifully given me?

En mi vida he recibido de Dios "haz de esta vida" un ofrecimiento de gratitud. Mi devoción se profundizó mi aprecio por la grandeza del don. Mi oración de gratitud profundizó mi devoción. Mi devoción se profundizó mi aprecio por la grandeza del don.

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A Deacon's To-Do List

by Deacon Miguel Torrado

July to-do list: Assist at a funeral for three teenagers killed in an accident. Preach the homily because Father doesn't speak Spanish. Preach the homily for the outgoing pastor to dinner to thank him for years of parish service and personal friendship. Assist the new pastor at a funeral service for a recently deceased English-speaking parishioner. Thank God for Father's mariahttps://www.srdiocese.org/ Diocese of Santa Rosa.

Walk Father through our facilities and administrative procedures. Bless a new Mexican restaurant. Drive to Los Angeles for a family gathering. All I'll have to do this weekend is say grace at the family miaturno and "Mas Allá Del Sol."

It was translated in my Daily Missal's neighboring column, and I later discovered it was Psalm 116:12–13, 18–19:

Laudans invocabo Dominum, et ab inimicis meis salvis ero.

En any event, that Psalm was very personal for me: "What return could I make to the Lord?" ¿Qué debo hacer entonc a El?"

For me, the Psalmist's answer became my answer, and perhaps it will resonate in your heart too: "The cup of salva­tion I will take up, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. My vows to the Lord I will fulfill in the presence of His people.”

¿Qué rentabilidad puedo hacer al Señor por la grandeza de El?"

En cualquier caso, ese Salmo era muy personal para mí: "¿Qué retorno podría hacer para el Señor?" ¿Qué debo hacer entonc a El?"

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St. Helena—if you’re looking for proof that miracles still happen, Fr. Gordon Kalil says you should look no further than the St. Helena Catholic School, where scores of volunteers recently donated time, skills, and materials to give the school a long-overdue facelift.

The Catholic school’s financial focus is on tuition assistance, not facilities. But something needed to be done with the aging school, with its asphalt yard and 1960s-style cinder blocks that “made it look like a prison,” Kalil said.

In a bind, Kalil put out a “wish list” of improvements like stucco, landscaping and an improved outdoor play area.

Matt Moye, a new Catholic school parent, put him in touch with his father, Jeff, who works for Cen Cal Plastering out of Lathrop, near Stockton.

Jeff Moye met with Kalil, who said he wanted a stucco treatment to give the school more of a Spanish mission look and to make its appearance more inviting. Kalil asked about money, and Moye offered to look for vendors who would be willing to give the school a break.

“He promised to give me a good price I couldn’t refuse,” Kalil said.

That price turned out to be zero. Vendors offered to donate materials. Jorge Vera, who supervises Cen Cal’s team of laborers, said he had more than 40 workers who were willing to spend a few Saturdays doing the job—for free.

For five Saturdays in a row, the all-Latino crew made the nearly three-hour drive from the Stockton area in their own cars, burning their own gas, leaving at 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. so they could get to work early. They would work all day, giving up a weekend day they could have spent at home or earning time-and-a-half on a paid job.

The crew “did all this for families and children they will never meet, out of the goodness of their hearts,” Kalil said.

Parishioners, school families and a local restaurant provided lunch, but the workers asked for nothing in return for their labor, other than a few prayers from Kalil.

More than 40 showed up on the first Saturday, when the bulk of the work got done. Fewer were required on subsequent Saturdays. Kalil estimates that 70 or 80 different people contributed to the project over the five Saturdays.

Jeff Moye said he considers the donation an investment in the future of his grandchildren, who will be attending the school.

But beyond that, “it was just the right thing to do,” said Moye. He praised the laborers who donated their Saturdays, even though they don’t have a vested interest in the school’s future.

But the miracles weren’t over yet. Matt Moye told Kalil he knew a Stockton-based drywall and painter, Robert Woehrle, who might be willing to repaint the gym for a good price. Kalil said Woehrle gave the church “an incredible deal.”

“It was another huge gift,” Kalil said. “There were all these miracles of people who wanted to give, and when you ask them why they say, ‘We just want to give back.’ It’s a whole attitude of giving.”

The donations and discounts—North Bay Plywood also gave the school a great deal on materials—that got the school’s remodeling project off to a roaring start. Private donations helped pay for remodeled bathrooms, repainted classrooms, new computers and phones, and landscape improvements, including the planting of cypress and Chinese pistache trees and a curving strip of green that will add some character to the vast expanse of asphalt on the school’s north side. A remodeled front entrance, is planned for next year.

“You read so many horrific things going on in the world because … that’s what sells press and media,” Kalil added. “But there are also millions and millions of acts of kindness every day being done by the majority of people.”

Editor’s note: Please take the time to say a Rosary, or even one Hail Mary, for these good volunteers.

Reprinted with the kind permission of the St. Helena Star.

Volunteers working to renovate St. Helena’s...
It was a recent Saturday around my house when my wife declared war against “all this mess.” (Me: “Mess! What mess?”)

My eldest daughter was cleaning the downstairs hallway when she asked me what I wanted to do with a copy of Our Sunday Visitor newspaper.

This cover prominently featured a picture of a wailing, mother refugee. I have been writing about the plight of the Christians in Iraq since 2003. Before then, Iraq was home to one of the greatest number of births. Therefore it follows there will be a family that loves each other so much they would be willing to fight and die so that you will follow Him wherever He calls.”

Vocations… each of us has one. The root of the word—voca—is Latin for “call.” So our vocation is the state in life to which God calls us. That means our vocation isn’t necessarily a choice but an observing of what He wants from us and how much we want and know what is best for us. That is why I always tell my children, “Don’t pray to know whether you are called to a religious or married life. Pray for generosity of heart so that you will follow Him wherever He calls.”

As for baptism, September is statistically the month with the greatest number of births. Therefore it follows there will be many baptisms over the next several weeks. Hopefully what is in this issue will help readers not only better understand the sacrament but will give them some great ideas on how to celebrate it in the most joyful way possible.

(Pope beatifies 124 Korean martyrs, cont.)

Father “has overthrown the reign of sin and bondage and inaugurated the reign of life and freedom.”

“True freedom is found in our loving embrace of the Father’s will. From Mary, Full of Grace, we learn Christian freedom is more than liberation from sin. It is freedom for a new, spiritual way of seeing earthly realities. It is the freedom to love God and our neighbors with a pure heart and to live a life of joyful hope for the coming of Christ’s kingdom.”

Pope Francis said Catholics look to Mary as “our Mother of Hope.... In her, all God’s promises have been proved trustworthy.”

He said the hope of the gospel is “the antidote to the spirit of despair that seems to grow like a cancer in societies which are outwardly affluent, yet often experience inner sadness and emptiness. Upon how many of our young has this despair taken its toll? May...the young who surround us these days with their joy and confidence—never be robbed of this hope!”

In addition, he touched on the temptations of materialism, emphasizing that if you try to buy happiness, you will find it only an illusion. The happiness of love is the only joy that will last, he said.

In the early evening he visited a home for the disabled children (“Village of Flowers”).

During the visit, the Holy Father and his entourage stopped for a moment and prayed in silence in front of hundreds of small white crosses representing victims of abortion. The “Cemetry for Aborted Children” is located behind his residence.

On Saturday Pope Francis beatified Korean martyrs Paul Yun Ji-chung, the first Korean Christian, who was baptized around 1784, as well as 123 companions, praising their “great sacrifices” and their call “to put Christ first.”

“All of them lived and died for Christ, and now they reign with Him in joy and in glory,” the Pope said during Mass at Seoul’s Gwanghwamun Gate.

“The victory of the martyrs, their witness to the power of God’s love, continues to bear fruit today in Korea, in the Church, which received growth from their sacrifice,” the Holy Father told the congregation.

With his recent visit to North Korea, the first pope to visit the country since the end of the Korean War, the Pope said that the prayers of the faithful can bring “peace and reconciliation” so that the nation can move from the “division to unity.”

Korean Catholic authorities began to persecute Christians and prohibited Catholic books.

Paul Yun Ji-chung and James Kwong Sang-yon, both Catholics from a noble background, were beheaded in 1791 for violating Confucian rituals. Their execution marked the beginning of the second persecution. Statistically the month with the most number of births. Therefore it follows there will be many baptisms over the next several weeks. Hopefully what is in this issue will help readers not only better understand the sacrament but will give them some great ideas on how to celebrate it in the most joyful way possible.

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Later that day in a meeting with Catholic lay leaders, Pope Francis noted the modern breakdown of families should spur greater outreach and catechists to married couples and their children.

At a time of great crisis for family life, our Christian communities are called to support married couples and families in fulfilling their proper mission in the life of the Church and society,” he said.

“The family remains the basic unit of society and the first school in which children learn the human, spiritual and moral

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(continued on p. 7)
CIRCLE OF GRACE: DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?

As part of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, each diocese across the United States is to implement a “safe environment” program. This must include training for children and adults on ways to make and maintain a safe environment. For the last two years, the Diocese of Santa Rosa has been using the Circle of Grace program, which was developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha.

The Circle of Grace program is meant to supplement and be integrated into the excellent programs currently being used in our Catholic schools and religious education programs. The aim is to arm and equip children and young people with essential knowledge and skills grounded in the richness of our faith. This program helps children and other young people to understand every human person’s dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

The Catholic Church teaches God has created each of us as unique and special. Genesis 1:27 tells us we are created “male and female in God’s image,” and that God saw this as “very good.” In that goodness, we are meant to respect ourselves and everyone else as persons created and loved by God. Through this program, children and young people are taught to understand every human person’s dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

The program goes on to help children learn healthy boundaries in relationships, unsafe circumstances, and how to talk to a trusted adult about situations that make them uncomfortable. Each grade builds on what was taught the year before, so as the children progress through the program, they learn about bullying, Internet safety, and maintaining respectful boundaries when they begin dating.

I like to describe it as learning what you should let into your Circle of Grace and what to keep out. It can be a more concrete way to think about the gift that God is always with us. It comes from a beautiful and loving perspective: “He’s there because He loves you,” rather than an attitude of “He’s always watching!”

If your children have been involved in our schools or religious education programs—including youth group—ask them about this program. They should be able to describe their Circle of Grace to you. If not, find out if the program was taught to them. If it wasn’t, make sure it is taught to them this year! If you want more information about the program, contact the Safe Environment Coordinators at your parish or school.

If you don’t get a satisfactory response there, please contact me. You can’t say too much to children about our good God and His love. I don’t think you can “over-talk” to our children about the importance of safety, being smart in today’s world, and reporting back to you about things that don’t seem right. Although, if you do “over-talk” this one, if your children are anything like mine, they will let you know! It’s okay. Persevere. Learn about the program, and talk to them about it. Keep that door open! ☞

Clarification

We received criticism for our listing of good Catholic colleges in last month’s issue. It gave some the impression that its implicit criticisms of the Catholicity found at most Catholic institutions of higher learning was actually a subtle (or not-so-subtle) dig on all Catholic education, including our own parochial schools. Nothing could be further from the truth, and we apologize to any who may have taken it this way.

Others criticized the fact that no source was given for the list. This was a studied omission, one we now see as imprudent. The list came from two different directories published by the National Catholic Register and the Cardinal Newman Society. If a college was listed in one directory but not the other, we did not include it.

The editors of both directories not only considered a school’s academic reputation and standards but how well each retains its Catholic identity, and how well each meets the criteria set for Catholic colleges and universities by St. John Paul II in his apostolic constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae (From the Heart of the Church).

It is a very tight, rigorous list, one that is tough to make, which is why so few schools were on it. And obviously not everyone will agree with its findings. ☞

CATHOLIC CURSILLO NEWS

Santa Rosa—The Catholic Cursillo Movement of Santa Rosa (CCMSR) has added another Ultreya, which will take place the first Wednesday of each month at St. Eugene Cathedral’s Faith Room from 7-9pm beginning September 3, 2014. All Catholics are welcome.

Ultreyas are regular monthly gatherings where Catholics come together to share their faith in the gospel, hear a short witness talk, and spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Ultreyas also take place at St. Elizabeth Seton Church in Rohnert Park on the third Saturday of the month from 2-4pm and on the last Saturday of the month at Holy Family Church in American Canyon from 10am-12pm.

For more information on CCMSR, call Debbie Simonson 763-1070 or Deacon Olsen 536-7312. The CCMSR operates under the National Cursillo guidelines and is a lay movement that serves under Bishop Robert Vasa. It is governed by an organizational structure called the Secretariat.

Priestly Ordination Anniversaries—September 2014

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<td>Fr. Wilfred Sheehy</td>
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Editor’s note: The Knights of Columbus has provided a way for people to donate money for the relief of our Iraqi brethren. The Knights have placed an initial $500,000 and will match an additional $500,000 in donations from the public. Visit www.kofc.org/iraq or send checks or money orders to: K of C Christian Refugee Relief, Knights of Columbus Charities, P.O. Box 1966, New Haven, CT 06509-1966.

October 1-5
St. Mary of the Angels Church in Ukiah will hold its annual parish festival this week, which will feature: a showing of the film Mary of Nazareth; wine and food tasting; 40-hours devotion with recollection; “Treasures of the World” yard sale; International Rosary and procession to commemorate October as the month of Most Holy Rosary “Sweet Shoppe” Bake Sale; feast day celebrations of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the Guardian Angels, and St. Francis of Assisi (with a blessing of the animals); International Food Sale; and “Tournament of the Angels” soccer games. Join us in Ukiah for this memorable week of “Faith, Family, Friends, and Fun!”

October 4
SAVE THE DATE!
Santa Rosa Religious Education Congress Location: Cardinal Newman High School Call Carmen Anenlson 707-566-3366 or e-mail dre@srdiocese.org.

October 12
Italian Catholic Federation Branch 52 Healdsburg First Annual Golf Tournament and Dinner For more information, e-mail icf52@aol.com.

Calendar items must be submitted at least six weeks in advance. Send them to dioceseofsantarosa@yahoo.com.
When people learn I am Vocations director for the Diocese of Santa Rosa, they intuitively understand my primary role is to promote vocations. What they may not understand is how this goal is accomplished.

My job as director takes me to different parishes, youth groups, confirmation groups, and schools where I speak on how God calls each of us to holiness. I tell people our first calling from God is to be a saint. Our second calling is to the priesthood, consecrated life, or the married life. Naturally, I focus my talk more on the priesthood. Unfortunately, I did not give my talk a lot last year because of my responsibilities at Cardinal Newman High School (CNHS). For this coming year, thanks be to God, I have Fr. Bernard D’Sa to help me at CNHS, which will help lighten (CNHS). For this coming year, thanks be to God, I have Fr. Bernard D’Sa to help me at CNHS, which will help lighten of my responsibilities at Cardinal Newman High School.

I also plan to visit more youth groups in the diocese. Even though I did not get to visit many youth groups this past school year, I am happy to say we have three new seminarians beginning this year, giving us a total of eight. God is good. Another thing I do as Vocations director is meet with prospective candidates. If I feel he might have a calling to the priesthood, I have him meet with Director of Seminarians Fr. Frank Epperson and me. If we both feel the candidate might have a vocation, we have him meet with Bishop Vasa.

If His Excellency also approves of him, the candidate goes through the application process. This involves having a psychological evaluation, taking a physical exam, and completing a lengthy application.

Next, if he is accepted, the decision is made as to which seminary the young man should attend. The choice depends in part on whether or not he has a bachelor’s degree or any college education.

Of course, I am not the only Vocations director in the diocese. I believe all priests serve in this capacity. We promote priestly vocations by living out our calling as priests by being joyful, zealous, faithful, prayerful, and enthusiastic. Therefore it is important that each of us regularly shares his vocation story with his parishioners.

In addition to serving as Vocations director, Fr. Lemus serves as curate at St. Eugene Cathedral.

September 2014 — Prayers for Priests Calendar

Join daily by saying at least one prayer for the Priest of the day.

Loving Father, bless our Priests and let the Radiance of your love embrace Father ______________________.

❖

O Lord, our God, with love and care you provided companions to the apostles to assist them in teaching and proclaiming that you are with us.

❖

But above all I commend to You the priests closest to me: the priest who baptized me; the priest who absolved me from my sins; the priest at whose altar I received Holy Communion; the priest who taught me how to say my prayers; the priest who taught me how to celebrate Mass; the priest who taught me how to study the Bible; the priest who taught me how to pray; the priest who taught me how to love Jesus; the priest who taught me how to love my brothers and sisters.

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A Prayer for Priests

O almighty and eternal God, look upon the face of Your Christ and for love of Him Who is the eternal high priest, have pity on Your priests. Remember, O most compassionate God, that they are but weak and frail human beings. Stir up in them the grace of their vocation which in them by the imposition of the Bishop’s hands. Keep them close to You, lest the enemy prevail against them, so that they may never do anything in the slightest degree unworthy of their sublime vocation.

O Jesus, I pray You for Your faithful and fervent priests; for Your unfaithful and tepid priests; for Your priests laboring at home or abroad in distant mission fields; for Your tempted priests; for Your lonely and desolate priests; for Your sick priests; for Your aged priests, for Your dying priests; for the souls of Your priests in purgatory.

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LEARNING THE LIFE OF A SEMINARIAN
by Andrew Pacheco

"It takes six to seven years to become a priest?"
I frequently receive this response—often accompanied by a look of shock and bewilderment—when people inquire about my life as a seminarian.

Some of these individuals look even more puzzled when I say that I need every minute of those years. Often—especially with non-practicing Catholics and those outside of the Church—they are shocked because their notion of the seminary differs little from that of any other university. They think it’s just classes, textbooks, and exams.

It surprises them to learn that the seminary involves a process of formation that usually takes at least six years. It interests them to learn that spiritual direction, formation advising, field education, and other important aspects are part of the formation program.

Personally, I’m glad to have these conversations; they are important. They dispel the false notion of the seminary as merely a university or “priest-factory” that efficiently produces priests to staff our parishes in a short amount of time.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI described the seminary in part as “a community journeying towards priestly ministry,” emphasizing that it takes time and that the seminarian needs the help of others along the way, for “one does not become a priest on one’s own.”

The seminary is structured to form us according to the “four pillars”—spiritual, intellectual, human, and pastoral—of priestly formation, but only so much of this can be taught in the classroom and learned through personal study, as essential as these are.

Rather, we can only fully grow in each of these areas through guidance and the experience of others in the community. An example of this can be easily seen in regard to the pastoral pillar. We take classes such as parish management, catechetics, homiletics, and pastoral counseling. All are important for our pastoral formation. Yet this can only take us so far. Just as beneficial are the actual experience and the ability to learn through the example of the priests and faithful at work in our parishes.

Two ways that this experience is made possible for us seminarians are through our field education assignments during the academic year (such as helping teach in nearby parishes, visiting the sick in the hospital and those in prison, assisting in the diocesan chancery offices, etc.), and through our summer assignments in the diocese.

This summer, for example, I served at St. Rose Church in Santa Rosa. This gave me an opportunity to learn from experience, gain valuable advice, and simply observe how things are organized and implemented in a parish.

Assignments and experiences such as these constitute an important part of seminary formation. Time with a parish community provides seminarians with a lens through which to view our studies, as well as a context in which we can apply what we learn in the classroom to practical situations. Now that I’ve returned to the seminary, I have a renewed appreciation for the many aspects of formation and my journey towards the priesthood.

A Seminarian’s Typical Day

Rise, get ready for the day, personal prayer 5:00 a.m.
Lauds (Morning Prayer) 7:30 a.m.
Holy Mass 8:00 a.m.
Breakfast 8:30 a.m.
Classes/study: 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Lunch 12:30–1:30 p.m.
Classes/study/recreation: 1:30–5:00 p.m.
Vespers (Evening Prayer), followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: 5:10 p.m.
Dinner 6:00 p.m.
Rosary/study
Compline (Night Prayer)/sleep

(Pope beatifies 124 Korean martyrs, cont. from p. 4)

values that enable them to be a beacon of goodness, integrity and justice in our communities,” the Pope emphasized.

“Dear friends,” he added, “whatever your particular contribution to the Church’s mission, I ask you to continue to promote in your communities a more complete formation of the lay faithful through ongoing catechesis and spiritual direction.”

The Pope went on to point out the “outstanding contribution” made especially by Catholic Korean women to the Church’s mission in their roles as mothers, catechists, teachers “and in countless other ways.”

“Similarly,” he added, “I can only stress the importance of the witness given by Christian families.”

“Your contribution is essential, for the future of the Church in Korea—as throughout Asia—will depend in large part on the development of an ecclesial vision grounded in a spirituality of communion, participation, and the sharing of gifts.”

On Sunday morning, August 17, at the Vatican’s nunciature in Seoul, the Holy Father baptized 62-year-old Lee Ho-Jin, the father of one of the victims from the Sewol Ferry tragedy earlier this year in which close to 280 mostly young students were killed. Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, recounted how during a meeting with survivors of the ferry victims, Lee approached the Pope, “having made a long pilgrimage carrying a cross and praying for his young son who died on the ferry.”

Lombardi underscored that Lee “solicited baptism. Obviously, he was not Christian, and that is why he asked for it. But it is clear that he has had preparation with prayer, and with this pilgrimage that he made, we can say that he has been on a spiritual journey.”

At the concluding Mass of his historical trip, Pope Francis urged the faithful to embrace Christ’s message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

“This … is the message I leave you,” the Pope told the congregation gathered at the August 18 Mass held at Seoul’s Myeong-dong Cathedral. “Trust in the power of Christ’s cross! Welcome its reconciling grace into your own hearts, and share that grace with others!”

“I ask you to bear convincing witness to Christ’s message of forgiveness in your homes, in your communities, and at every level of national life.”

In a press conference held aboard his plane on the trip home, Pope Francis said he supports international intervention in Iraq and is willing to go to there personally if it will help end the violence against Christians and other religious minorities.

“In these cases where there is an unjust aggression, I can only say that it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor,” Pope Francis told reporters aboard the August 18 plane flight back to Italy from South Korea.

“I underscore the verb ‘stop’. I don’t say ‘to bomb’ or ‘make war,’ [but] ‘stop it.’”

This article incorporates reports by CNA and EWTN News.

...the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them.”

—John 16:2b-4a
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CONSECRATED WOMAN

by a Marian Sister of Santa Rosa

“I arise to put on Christ crucified, Whom my heart loves and in Whom my soul rejoices.”

The Sister blesses herself before rising from her bed. She then kneels down and offers to the God the Father through the Immaculate Heart of Mary all she thinks, says, and does this day.

Upon rising the Sister’s mind prepares for her morning meditation before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. She quickly dresses and then heads to chapel for time with her God the Father, Pope Francis, praying particularly for his sanctity of souls, first her own.

After Mass the Sisters gather for breakfast. It is simple fare, consisting mostly of cereal, toast, yogurt, and juice. While the Sisters nourish their bodies, their souls are fed through audio spiritual talks that get played during their meal time.

With breakfast complete and prayers of thanksgiving seep into their souls. The Sisters divide into two choirs and guidance of Holy Mother Church. After prayers it is time to build community and learn about each other’s day.

The time after Vespers is allotted for spiritual reading or lectio divina. Lectio Divina is a way of praying the Bible, usually a chapter or two, reflecting slowly to allow the Holy Word of God to seep into their souls. The Sisters divide into two choirs responding back-and-forth to one another as they are the Church offering her prayers of praise and adoration to the Father.

The day after Vespers is allotted for spiritual reading or lectio divina. Lectio Divina is a way of praying with Scripture or, if you prefer, reading Scripture in a prayerful way.

The bell rings and the Sisters meet in the refectory (i.e., dining room) for dinner. Before dinner the Angelus is again offered. The Angelus, Examination of Conscience, and Rosary are prayed. The Rosary is offered for all the intentions entrusted to the Church offering her prayers of praise and adoration to the Father.

At noon, the Sisters break for prayers. The Angelus, Examination of Conscience, and Rosary are prayed. The Rosary is offered for all the intentions entrusted to the Church offering her prayers of praise and adoration to the Father.

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ST. JOSEPH CHURCH, FORTUNA: 105 YEARS OLD!

by Fr. Michael W. Cloney

Founded in 1909, St. Joseph Church in Fortuna has a wealth of history. For instance, on September 31, 1911 an article appeared in The Eureka Herald datelined Fortuna stating that as of August 31, "The splendid new Catholic church is now completed and will be opened by a special High Mass, Sunday, September 3, 1911. A delegation of the Knights of Columbus will attend from Eureka. Rev. Ellis of Sacramento will attend. Special music will be furnished by the St. Bernard's church choir of Eureka and conducted by N.A. McMillan. The local Catholic parish includes the towns of Rohnerville, Table Bluff and Scotia. Rev. James Gaffney will have charge of the church.

"The Catholic Bishop of California [i.e., Bishop Thomas Grace of Sacramento, 1896–1921, †1921] will perform the formal dedication one year from now. The church is at 14th and Park Streets. The tower is 100 feet high with a large cross of gold. The bell is 40 inches in diameter. The church is of Gothic architecture with the interior finished in Oregon slotted pine. Mission oak is used in the lower furnishings and the walls are finished in buff colored plaster. The beauti ful choir loft is large enough to accommodate seventy-five singers in comfort. The beautiful altar was designed by Miss Clara Friedenbach. The church has a solid concrete foundation. It will seat 400 persons and it cost $6,000 [$147,815 in today's dollars]. The plans were drawn by Ackerman and Reese of Eureka and constructed by Bauer and Reese of this town. The painting was done by Bailey Brothers. Earlier history mentions Mt. St. Joseph College (Institute) was built by the Precious Blood Fathers of Carthage, Ohio, in 1869 and classes began in 1872 in Rohnerville, just south of Fortuna. All the priests spoke German except Fr. Patrick Henneberry, C.P.P.S, who asked for English-speaking teachers. It was built on 30 acres of ranch land donated by James Degnan. The church eventually deteriorated until it became unusable.

Significant events in St. Joseph Church's history
• 1868—The Table Bluff Catholic Church was built near the present day cemetery where my father, Leland Cloney, took catechism studies for First Holy Communion.
• 1871—The Rohnerville Cemetery was established and the Church of Immaculate Conception was built on the cemetery property. It was land donated by James Degnan. The church eventually deteriorated until it became unusable.
• 1909—Fr. Michael Kiely of Ferndale asked Bishop Grace for a second pastor; and young Fr. Michael Gaffney of Ireland was appointed the first pastor of Fortuna.
• 1911—The church was dedicated on September 4, 1911, with Fr. Gaffney celebrating.
• 1925—Fr. Gaffney served St. Patrick Church, the new church in Loleta, California. It is still in usable condition.
• 1930—Scotia became an independent parish and also took as its patron St. Patrick.
• 1957—Redwood Memorial Hospital in Fortuna opened its doors March 19 with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange.
• 1962—The Diocese of Santa Rosa was formed, with Bishop Leo T. Maher as its first ordinary. He later served as bishop of San Diego.
• 1963—St. Joseph School was built on Newburg Road, with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange serving as its teachers.
• 1980—The Pantry Shelf for food for the poor was established.
• 1984—Bishop Mark Hurley presided over the parish's seventy-fifth anniversary with Bernice McWhorter, chairperson.

Pastors of St. Joseph Church
• Fr. James Kiely served as parish priest from 1911–1921. (Note: He later served as bishop of San Diego.)
• Fr. John Rogers served as pastor from 1925–1931.
• Fr. James Gaffney served as pastor from 1931–1940.
• Fr. Michael Meehan served as pastor from 1940–1952.
• Fr. John Rogers served as pastor from 1952–1963.
• Fr. Emeric Kish served as pastor from 1963–1973.
• Fr. Timothy O'Sullivan (1985–1988)

Other priests who served the parish:
• Fr. Emeric Kish, Fr. James Gabriel, Fr. John Rogers, and others

DANCING WITH JESUS

by Steve Morris

Recently some very close friends endured one of the worst tragedies imaginable. They lost their two-year-old daughter in a drowning accident. The loss of a child is a nightmare every parent dreads, and it comes with a vast amount of confusion and "what if"s and "whys." However, there simply aren't answers or the "right words" to comprehend such a heartbreaking event. Last month I wrote on the theme of the song, "Where I Belong" by Building 429: Our constant progression toward heaven and communion with Christ rather than "this" world. The shattering loss of my friends' child was a reminder that while her great joy and life was celebrated in this world, she is now "home," dancing at the feet of Christ.

The strength of her parents to not only embrace this concept but to evangelize to their family and friends was deeply moving. Their daughter was now where she belonged—with Christ.

Their pastor shared a similar idea in his homily during Mass or Adoration. He told us how, when he was a boy, he would bounce a ball against a wall. He noticed that every time the ball hit the wall, it left a mark on the wall and the wall left a mark on the ball, and yet the ball would return to his hand to make the next throw every time. He portrayed the ball as us, the wall as the world, and God the thrower.

He said we are sent into the world to leave an impression for Jesus during Mass or Adoration. One individual, a complete stranger to the family, shared how, as he was constantly tucked in the rear of the church trying to quietly discipline his toddlers, he would notice the little angel lifting her hands up to mimic the priest during the consecration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Whatever the story or connection to the family, the funeral drew people who had been impressed. Presence, the way we are just "there for each other," is a blessed and underestimated gift. This little girl's last efforts on this earth brought together the most loving and faithful of people to "be there" for one another.

The homily concluded by addressing the questions and condition that grip us at such times: "If, why, how... such sadness." Contemplation is always good. However, when we reflect on tragedies with no hope or reasons or answers, we perpetuate sadness and heartbreak. There is no truth to be gained. Instead, let us focus on truth: God's love and the joy this little girl brought to our lives. In truth we have life, and it is in truth that we can be consoled that she is dancing with Jesus.
NO VOCATION IS A VACATION

by Mara Russo

I remember years ago heading to the cry room just before Mass with my first-born son, Robbie.

At the time, he was unrelentingly testing my skills as a greased-crocodile wrangler. He was not yet three, but at a solid four pounds, he proved a worthy adversary.

As I tried to retain my last shred of dignity that my sweet baby boy was determined to destroy (not to mention my left earlobe, which was reluctant to release the earring being pulled from it), a lovely woman approached me and glowingly looked at the child writhing in my arms.

"He's so cuuuute!" she cooed.

Sure, lady, cute like an octopus on meth. Was she joking? Her manner of speaking began to calm Robbie, however. I determined there and then I was going to stick near this woman if I had to pin her down by forcing her into a pew and sitting on her lap.

She continued to engage him quietly and just before Mass began, she whispered, "Robbie, I am going to pray that you become a priest!"

I remember letting the hope and joy of her prayer wash over me. To have a son as a priest! What greater honor is there?

From that moment I prayed even more for his vocation, whether priest, religious, married, or single. I have also come to more fully understand what is meant by "vocation."

A vocation is the manner in which a soul is called to follow Our Lord. Many times, when people speak of "vocation," they mean the priesthood and religious life. I believe this is one of many reasons for our shortage of priests and religious.

If our vocation is the means by which we follow Jesus, and Jesus tells us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him (Matt 16:24), our vocation is the manner in which we carry our cross, and anyone who is married can attest to the fact that marriage can be a cross!

In a world where sex is viewed as mere recreation, and where an unwanted pregnancy is more easily terminated than a cold, couples spend more time preparing for the wedding than they do the marriage. The priesthood and religious life are mercilessly caricatured in the media and Hollywood and are often reduced to nothing more than the vow of celibacy.

Our best chance of increasing priestly and religious vocations is to see the beauty, holiness, suffering, and sacrifice in all vocations. Holy marriages give us holy priests and religious. We are all called to carry the cross, whatever our vocation may be.

I sometimes joke that if I had been told before my wedding all that would befoul my husband and me, I would have run screaming down the aisle out of the church and hightailed it to the nearest Dominican convent. This of course is a JOKE. I wouldn't trade this life for anything, because joy comes amidst the suffering. Isn't that what the cross is? 

ST. HELENANS REACH OUT TO SICK CHILDREN IN HAITI

by Judy Barrett

Port au Prince, Haiti—Last year St. Helena Church in Napa County welcomed Fr. Rick Frechette, CP, who has spent the past 23 years as a visiting missionary priest in Haiti.

Initially sent there to establish a home for orphaned and abandoned children, he soon recognized the great need for medical care and started a clinic that has grown into St. Damien Pediatric Hospital, arguably the premier pediatric hospital in Haiti. Along the way he completed medical school.

Some parishioners and friends from neighboring Napa Valley parishes were so moved by Fr. Frechette’s message about the plight of the “poorest of the poor” in Haiti that they organized an informal group to provide ongoing financial support for St. Damien under the guidance of Msgr. John Brenkle, St. Helena Church’s retired pastor. The group meets every other month for a brief social hour, update about the hospital, and sharing of ideas and information. Through July 2014, the group has donated $128,072 to the hospital.

Additionally, during the 2013–14 school year, seventh and eighth grade students at St. Helena School raised roughly $250 to help sick children treated at the hospital.

A few facts that moved the group to adopt St. Damien as an ongoing project include these:

• Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. Over 80 percent of the population lives on less than $2 per day.
• In Haiti there is 1 doctor for every 15,000 people; in the United States there is 1 doctor for every 500 people.
• One Haitian child in four is moderately to severely malnourished. Malnutrition is the leading cause of death in children.
• 10 percent of Haitian children die before their fifth birthday, largely from treatable diseases.

To join the St. Helena “Friends of Haiti” group, contact Msgr. John Brenkle at 707-968-9375 or Judy Barrett at 707-942-6143. The next meeting is at 5pm on September 8. The only requirement is your concern for poor children in Haiti and a willingness to make a monthly or quarterly gift in any amount.

For information about St. Damien Pediatric Hospital, visit www.nphusa.org/stdamien. St. Damien is operated by Nuestros Pequenos Hermanos (NPH; Spanish for “Our Little Brothers and Sisters”), an organization that serves orphaned, abandoned, and disadvantaged children in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Dr. Brad Bishop examines a tiny patient at St. Damien Pediatric hospital in Haiti (Giles Ashford, courtesy of NPH USA)
News Briefs

**DIOCESAN**

**Was it something we said?**

On Tuesday, August 5, a window in the chancery’s conference room blew out. Several curial staff were in the adjoining break room and others were in their offices across the hall. No one had done anything for the glass to shatter, nor was anyone observed in the vicinity. Nonetheless, according to Mr. Kelly Righetti, diocesan property manager, because of the nature of tempered glass, this sort of thing can happen.

The window was quickly replaced.

**Walk like a man, talk a man …**

The Second Annual Sonoma County Catholic Men’s Conference will take place Saturday, October 18, at St. Eugene Cathedral in the Becker Center. The conference begins at 8:30am and concludes at 4:30pm.

Knights of Columbus Council 4930 will again host the event, which will feature Tim Staples, the convert from Pentecostalism and superstar speaker and author who is well-known to listeners of Catholic radio for the inspiring way he teaches others to defend the Faith.

Another speaker is Bill May, executive director of Catholics for the Common Good. He will discuss societal problems that arise when men don’t fulfill their roles.

The conference will also feature Michael Norman and Karlo Broussard, a compelling Catholic writer and speaker who will address the role of men as husbands and fathers.

Bishop Robert F. Vasa, the Diocese of Santa Rosa’s ordinary, will celebrate Mass at the beginning of the conference.

“Our first conference was last year, and we had over 100 men in attendance,” said conference organizer Greg Harder. “This year we expect even more. We’re excited to create this opportunity for Catholic men to grow in their understanding of faith and how to be a good husband, a good father, and what it really means to be a man.” Attendees can pre-register at www.nccmc.net. The cost is $35 in advance ($45 at the door) and includes lunch.

For more information, call 707-546-4211.

**Diocesan man leads college students**

Omar Paz, Jr., a parishioner at St. Leo the Great Church in Boyes Hot Springs, was recently elected as president of the Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC), which “advocates for the rights of students attending 112 community colleges around the state,” according to Santa Rosa’s Press Democrat newspaper.

This is not his first foray into school politics, either. He was senior class president at Sonoma Valley High School, and served last year as president of the Santa Rosa Junior College Associated Students.

This commitment to service was likely learned at home since his family are incredibly active within their parish. Sources at St. Leo could not say enough good things about them.

The PD reported Paz will soon have his associate’s degree. “He hopes to transfer next year to UC Santa Cruz in environmental studies and then become a high school or college teacher and possibly a restaurateur.”

**NATIONAL**

**Satanists return stolen consecrated Host**

Oklahoma City (CNA/EWTN News)—Oklahoma City’s archbishop voiced relief that satanists organizing a black mass in the city returned a stolen Host which was to be desecrated, restating his contentions that the event should not happen at all.

The Host was given to a priest August 21 by an attorney representing Adam Daniels, who organized the black mass in the city returned a stolen Host which was to be desecrated, restating his contentions that the event should not happen at all.

The Host was given to a priest August 21 by an attorney representing Adam Daniels, who organized the black mass.

“I am relieved that we have been able to secure the return of the sacred Host, and that we have prevented its desecration as part of a planned satanic ritual,” Archbishop Paul Coakley said.
"I remain concerned about the dark powers that this satanic worship invites into our community and the spiritual danger that this poses to all who are involved in it, directly or indirectly."

The occult group Dakhma of Angra Mainyu has scheduled a black mass at the Oklahoma City Civic Center Music Hall Sept. 21. A black mass is a sacrilegious ceremony that invokes Satan and invokes the Mass, involving the desecration of the Eucharist, generally by stealing a consecrated Host from a Catholic church and using it in a profane, sexual ritual.

Daniels' decision to return the Host quickly followed upon the August 20 filing of a lawsuit filed on behalf of the archdiocese charging that the Host had been stolen from the Church. The archbishop has repeatedly asked that civic leaders cancel the satanic event.

In July, an official with the Oklahoma City music hall defended the decision to permit the black mass there, citing the hall’s neutrality policy. She told CNA that as long as no laws were broken during the event itself, the city hall was not concerned with whether laws may be broken in obtaining a consecrated host ahead of time. She said that similar events scheduled in previous years had poor or no attendance.

Domino's release pastoral analysis on Communion for divorced-remarried

A Dominican-led group of eight theologians recently released a 30-page analysis of recent proposals regarding the pastoral care of divorced and remarried persons. The theological assessment appears shortly before the October meeting of the Synod of Bishops, which has as its theme "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization." As such, the text serves as a preparatory study on certain issues likely to arise during the Synod. The document has been made freely available at http://nvjournal.net/files/essays-front-page/

The Giffords' attorney, Jim Trainor, told LifeSiteNews that the two-year-legal drama and resulting fines all stemmed from a single brief phone call in 2012 that caught his clients off guard.

"After communicating the fact that they chose not to hold same-sex marriage ceremonies at the farm because to do so would violate the Giffords’ sincerely held beliefs (that God intended marriage to be between a man and a woman only), Mrs. Gifford invited the couple to visit the farm to discuss handling their wedding reception, which the couple refused."

The Giffords draw a line, Trainor explained, between a ceremony that solemnizes a homosexual relationship and a reception that celebrates the union after the fact. To participate in the former, they argue, would be a violation of their own religious beliefs, especially because marriage ceremonies on the farm typically take place in and around the couple's home, where they live full-time and are raising their two children.

But the Giffords would serve gay couples in other ways. For example, they allowed another lesbian couple to throw a birthday party for their adopted child on the farm. But trainor said he believes the decision by DHR goes too far in that it seeks to regulate what the Giffords can or cannot do in their own private home, even though state law only requires “places of public accommodation” to adhere to anti-discrimination laws.

"They consider the farm their home," Trainor said. "They live there, they work there, they raise their kids there."

Gates Foundation will no longer fund abortions

Seattle — The foundation run by Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his wife Melinda will no longer fund abortions. Mrs. Gates explained the decision in a recent blog post.

“When I was in Canada … an issue came up that worries me. I sat with Prime Minister Harper for media interviews in Toronto, and while most of the conversation had to do with the impact of Canada’s commitment to RMNCH, every journalist also focused on Canada’s policy on abortion. ‘Let me tell you what this issue worries me. ‘Around the world there is a deep, broad, and powerful consensus: We should provide all women the information and tools to time and space their pregnancies in a safe and healthy way that works for them. This approach is simple, it works, and it saves lives. ‘The question of abortion should be dealt with separately. But in the United States and around the world the emotional and personal debate about abortion is threatening to get in the way of the lifesaving consensus regarding basic family planning.

I understand why there is so much emotion, but conflating these issues will slow down progress for tens of millions of women. That is why when I get asked about my views on abortion, I say that, like everyone, I struggle with the issue, but I’ve decided not to engage on it publicly—and the Gates Foundation has decided not to fund abortion.”

INTERNATIONAL

European court shocks observers

In mid-July, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), akin to our Supreme Court, took action that surprised liberal and conservative observers alike when it ruled in favor of traditional marriage.

According to its own news release, “The applicant, Heli Hämäläinen, is a Finnish national who was born in 1963 and lives in Helsinki. ‘Ms. Hämäläinen was born a male and married a woman in 1996. The couple had a child in 2002. In September 2009, Ms. Hämäläinen underwent male-to-female gender reassignment surgery. ‘Although she changed her first name in June 2006, she could not have her identity number changed to indicate her female gender in her official documents. Hämäläinen’s request to be registered as female at the local registry office was therefore refused.

‘Ms. Hämäläinen brought administrative proceedings before the national courts which, in May 2008, and February 2009, rejected her appeal against the refusal to register her as a female. The courts found in particular that legislation on confirming the gender of transsexuals in Finland did not intend to change the fact that only a man and a woman could currently marry under Finnish law. The Supreme Administrative Court refused her extraordinary appeal in August 2010.

‘Ms. Hämäläinen complained that making the full recognition of her new gender conditional on the transformation of her marriage into a civil partnership violated her rights under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life). Article 12 (right to marry) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).”

As Dr. John Paul Shimke, who teaches Theology and Philosophy at Silver Lake College of the Holy Family in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, noted, “This meant that the court ruling maintained that a contracting state of the European Union (EU) could refuse to acknowledge same-sex marriage without violating the Union’s code of human rights. In fact, ‘The Court reiterated that the Convention did not impose an obligation on States to allow same-sex marriage.’ No EU member nation can be forced to accept same-sex marriage because the European Convention enshrines the traditional concept of marriage as being between a man and a woman.”

“Moreover, whereas U.S.-based agitators for same-sex marriage have pulled off their boldest accomplishments through the judicial usurpation of politics, the European high court has challenged that angle of approach. In its...
ruling, it declared that no member nation can be forced to accept same-sex marriage. At least at the European level, the question about the legalization of same-sex marriage must remain a democratic or political question.

"For this reason, the court handed questions about same-sex marriage and gender issues back to Finland. In the court’s statement, it observed that, ‘In such absence of a consensus, and given the sensitive moral and ethical issues at stake, Finland had to be given a wide room for maneuver (‘margin of appreciation’), both in deciding on legal recognition of the new gender of post-operative transsexuals and in the way to balance competing public and private [i.e., marriage] interests.’"

"But, what is perhaps most striking about the court’s ruling is its revelation that ‘the differences between a marriage and a registered partnership did not involve an essential change in the applicant’s legal situation. ’ And, as a matter of fact, ‘those who converted to civil partnership continued to enjoy the same level of legal protection. ’"

Vietnamese bishop joyful to lead, evangelize new flock
My Tho, Vietnam (CNA/EWTN News)—The newly appointed ordinary of the Diocese of My Tho, Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Kham, has voiced enthusiasm for evangelizing and forming the faithful in his diocese so they can better participate in the life of the Church.

"Evangelization must be the great task and challenge for my ministry in the coming years," Bishop Nguyen told CNA July 30 via e-mail.

He noted his appointment comes at a time
The results of the study suggest that fasting may mitigate some of the collateral damage to the immune system. The research, which prompted stem cells to create brand new white blood cells, becomes less effective as they age, making it harder for sufferers from damaged immune systems, such as cancer patients, to fight off infections.

"Fasting for as little as three days can regenerate the entire immune system," said Heiner Bielemfeldt, the US special rapporteur on freedom of religion, at the conclusion of the official visit to Vietnam, which ended on August 1.

"As reported to Fides by the NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide" (CSW), which followed the visit, during the scheduled visit in the provinces of An Giang, Gia Lai, and Kon Tum, some witnesses, representatives, and activists who wanted to meet with the UN rapporteur have been intimidated, harassed or blocked by the police."

In the three provinces, religious freedom violations— including attacks against Catholics and Protestants in Kon Tum in 2012 and 2013—were recorded.

At the conclusion of his visit, Bielemfeld referred to the "generally contemptuous, negative attitude towards the rights of minorities and individuals who practice their religion outside of institutional channels," the "limitation in the field of human rights," as well as "vague formulations within the Criminal Code regarding the abuse of democratic freedoms."

While acknowledging progress, the Special Rapporteur noted that "serious violations" happen even today. "Bielemfeld will submit a report containing his findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council in 2015. CSW, sharing the concerns expressed by the rapporteur, called on the Vietnamese government to ensure that none of the witnesses who talked with Bielemfeld is penalized.

Los obispos mexicanos: "Reunificación familiar para los niños inmigrantes" 

Ciudad de México (Agencia Fides)—Urgen considerar el concepto legal de "reunificación familiar" para los niños inmigrantes que, de Centro y Sudamérica, cruzan las fronteras de los Estados Unidos en busca de una vida mejor y que tienen ya a sus padres residiendo en los Estados Unidos: lo han pedido los obispos mexicanos durante la visita al clero de California Jerry Brown, que está visitando durante cuatro días México.

Como informa una nota enviada a la Agencia Fides por la Conferencia Episcopal Mexicana (CEM), el gobernador Brown ha pasado el segundo día de su visita, con los obispos de México, Estados Unidos, El Salvador, y representantes diplomáticos de otros países centroamericanos, para abordar el problema de los niños detenidos en la frontera. El fenómeno es considerado ya como emergencia humanitaria en la región (véase Fides 24/07/2014).

"Una de las razones principales—por las que sólo de octubre a diciembre pasado, han cruzado a México más de 57 mil niños indocumentados a Estados Unidos, la mayoría centroamericanos—la falsa información sobre una emigración reformatoria," explicaba la nota de los obispos, afirmando que esto ha sido aprovechado por traficantes de personas para llevarse y abandonar en la frontera a cientos de chicos.

El obispo mexicano Mons. Guillermo Rodrigo Teodoro Ortiz Mondragón, de la diócesis de Cuautitlán y responsable de la comisión para la movilidad humana de la Conferencia Episcopal Mexicana, ha dado a Fides más información acerca de las denuncias respecto a "estancamiento" en el que se encuentra en el Congreso americano la iniciativa de reforma migratoria, que abriría la vía a la ciudadanía a 11 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados que viven, estudian y trabajan en ese país.

Los obispos, junto al gobernador, han acordado el iniciar una "iniciativa de información veraz sobre las leyes migratorias en Estados Unidos, y al mismo tiempo considerar la legalización de la reunificación de las familias de los menores migrantes" en la frontera que ya tiene a sus padres en los Estados Unidos.

"We are ready, if they wish, to facilitate their asylum on our soil. We are in constant contact with local and national authorities to ensure everything is done to protect them," both ministers said.

UN denounces minority persecution

ISIL has ordered Christian families to convert to Islam or leave the city, prompting the mass exodus.

The ultimatum given to these communities in Mosul by ISIL is the latest tragic example of the terrible threat that jihadist groups in Iraq, but also in Syria and elsewhere, pose to these populations that are historically an integral part of this region, they added, referring to the Islamic State’s former name of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

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France: We welcome Iraqi Christians

(Editors’ note: The following is amalgam of accounts by several news sources.)

Paris—France has said it is ready to welcome Christians fleeing the area of Iraq controlled by Islamic State group’s fighters, saying it is “outraged” by their persecution, according to Al Jazeera English.

The French president and leaders seized the results of northern Iraq last month, prompting Christian families in Mosul to flee a city which has hosted the faith since its earliest years.

France is outraged by these abuses that it condemns with the utmost firmness,” Laurent Fabius, France’s foreign minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, the interior minister, said in a joint statement.

The ultimatum given to these communities in Mosul by ISIL is the latest tragic example of the terrible threat that jihadist groups in Iraq, but also in Syria and elsewhere, pose to these populations that are historically an integral part of this region.

Those who failed to comply were threatened with execution, and the property of those who left was forfeited to the Islamic State, AFP reported a statement from the group as saying.

The United Nations Security Council has already denounced the persecution of minorities in Iraq, warning such actions can be considered crimes against humanity.

The French government, urged by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has said that it will not tolerate such abuses.

ISIL has also persecuted the Yazidis (followers of a small, ancient religion), Iraq’s majority Shia Muslims in areas under their control, as well as Sunni Muslims that oppose the group’s ideology.

Iraq’s [now former] Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki condemned the treatment of the Christians and instructed the government to help those made homeless.

Before the 2003 US-led invasion, more than a million Christians lived in Iraq, including more than 600,000 in Baghdad and 60,000 in Mosul, as well as a substantial number in Kirkuk and in Basra.

Meanwhile a United States congressman took to the House floor to chastise others in the West for their inaction.

"I believe what is happening to the Christian community in Iraq is genocide. I also believe it is a crime against humanity," Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) said.

"Where is the [United Nations]? Where is the Obama administration? Where is the Congress? The silence is deafening.

Around the same time, US Secretary of State John Kerry was raising his voice for religious freedom on behalf of an Iranian Protestant.

"In Iran, US Iranian citizen Pastor Saeed Abedini remains imprisoned. The Iranian authorities sentenced him to eight years behind bars simply because of his religious beliefs," said Kerry in a July 28 report on international religious freedom.

Kerry said the US “will continue to call for his release, and we will continue to work for it,” uniting with efforts of other governments and government officials, including President Barack Obama.

Subsequently, in advance of a day of prayer that he requested to take place on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration, His Beatitude Louis Sako, patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, wrote Pope Francis.
According to AsiaNews.it, His Beatitude called for an "appeal to your heart," looking for a "solution that is only in the hands of the international community," in particular of the "superpowers" who have a "human and moral responsibility."

"In Iraq, for Christians the situation is getting worse as they flee their homes from Mosul, and now from other cities toward the north in the plain of Nineveh, like Sinjar, Telkef, Batnaya, and Telleskuf.

"Sunni Islamist militias have imposed strict sharia rule and a de facto Caliphate, forcing minorities to flee or pay jizya, the poll tax normally exacted from 'infidels'."

"Fearing for a never-ending tragedy, the patriarch of Baghdad addresses directly world powers, asking them to drop their 'self-interest' and join together to achieve a 'peaceful political solution' that alone can put an end to the conflict."

"These 'powers,' which Mar Sako does not mention directly, should vigorously exercise their 'pressure' on those who provide 'economic support' and entertain 'military ties' with the Israelis. The objective is to 'cut the roots of violence and radicalization.'"

"Mar Sako also appealed to the Islamic world, saying he was 'shocked and outraged' by the lack of a 'strong stance' by Muslims and the leaders against the terrorist movement, which he warns is a 'threat to Muslims themselves.'"

"His Beatitude noted that Iraqi Christians have a 'vital need for emergency humanitarian aid' as well as 'real, effective, and permanent protection.'"

"In his letter, the Chaldean patriarch pointedly noted to the lack of cooperation among the central and the Kurdish regional governments, which favors ISIS's advance and compounds the problems caused by the new government's lack of experience.

"Lastly, Mar Sako called on 'all our brothers and sisters throughout the world' to be 'very supportive' during this difficult time.

"He also called for 'a communion of hearts and prayers' and reaffirms once again his 'belief in dialogue, exchange, and peaceful and civilized co-existence.'"

Anglican Vicar of Baghdad: 'Child I baptized cut in half by ISIS'

Baghdad—In early August, the Anglican Communion News Service carried an account from the Anglican Vicar of Baghdad Andrew White. In it he reported that a five-year-old boy whom he had baptized was "cut in half during an attack by ISIS on the Christian town of Qaraqosh."

It also reported "the child's parents had named the lad Andrew after him."

"The boy's family had moved to the north in recent years. "Though the move north should have proved safer for the family, the lack of cooperation among the central and the Kurdish regional governments, which favors ISIS's advance and compounds the problems caused by the new government's lack of experience."

"Lastly, Mar Sako called on 'all our brothers and sisters throughout the world' to be 'very supportive' during this difficult time.

"He also called for 'a communion of hearts and prayers' and reaffirms once again his 'belief in dialogue, exchange, and peaceful and civilized co-existence.'"
Mgr. Martinelli sums up the situation of the Christian community in Libya, “in Cyrenaica there are no sums while the majority of Filipinos are leaving the region, who are the heart of the Christian community in Libya. In Tripoli, there is still a good presence of Filipinos but even here many of them are leaving.”

“The Church lives in relationship with this presence of lays, who acts, despite their health sector and given the situation this is really a time of strong ordeal. I do not know where we will end up but I am confident that a group of people will be here to serve the Church,” said Bishop Martinelli.

“Freedom has to be had, but the situation remains precarious. The airport is closed and people start boarding ships. Even the journey overland to the Tunisian border has become impossible.”

“I still have confidence in the future of Libya but we are in God’s hands,” says Bishop Martinelli, who says he does not want to leave the country. “I cannot leave the few remaining Christians,” concluded Bishop Martinelli who launches an appeal to prayer, because “prayer alone can solve difficult situations like the one in Libya today.”

Muslims behead Syrian and American Christians

According to a recent story in the Christian Post, “A Christian man in Syria recently had his head brutally hacked off by Islamic militants after being forced to deny his faith and salute Muhammad as ‘the messenger of God.’”

“The incident was caught on video for the world to see and broadcast as a warning to everyone. It is ‘inexcusable’ because ‘it was pushed to YouTube with translated captions, the helpless Christian man is surrounded by armed militants wearing masks, and he is heard reciting as instructed, ‘There is no God but God, and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.’”

“An apparent group of militants is then heard instructing the group, ‘No one will shoot him now, do you understand? He will not be killed by shooting because it is merciful for him.’”

“‘He will be beheaded because he is kafr [i.e., non-Muslim, infidel], sided [with] the government, and was not praying at all. This man will have the same end, beheading,’ said the militant.”

“A militant armed with a machete then grabs the defenseless man by the hair and begins to cut his head from his body as instructed, ‘There is no God but God, and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.’”

“An apparent group of militants is then heard instructing the group, ‘No one will shoot him now, do you understand? He will not be killed by shooting because it is merciful for him.’”

Major control of the epidemic of the virus chikungunya

Cidade de México (Agencia Fides)—Las autoridades sanitarias locales han decidido reforzar la vigilancia de la epidemia para la detección temprana de los casos de chikungunya y la disposición de un micrositio en la página web de la Secretaría de Salud con información al respecto, aunque en México se ha registrado un solo caso importado del virus.

A partir del 1 de agosto estará disponible el sitio para la formación del personal médico de todas las instituciones de los sectores público y privado de forma que sirva para un control inmediato de los pacientes con un cuadro clínico asociado a la enfermedad y, basándose en esto, se pueda garantizar una atención médica adecuada.

“Estas iniciativas se han adoptado como consecuencia de los acuerdos alcanzados durante la Reunión Nacional sobre el virus de Chikungunya realizada en Guadalajara, Jalisco, donde los participantes han discutido sobre la manera de fortalecer la capacidad del personal operativo, armonizar los criterios y definir las actividades de promoción de la salud, vigilancia epidemiológica, diagnóstico de laboratorio, atención médica y control del insecto vector. Dados de la Organización Panamericana de la Salud sobre el virus chikungunya señalan que al 25 de julio de 2014, en el continente americano han sido confirmados 5 mil 260 casos autóctonos en 29 países, 643 casos importa- dos en 26 países, y se han detectado 26 vectores de chikungunya en 12 países, con 155 muertes.”

Letters to the Editor

Your recent editorial asked, “What’s wrong with us?”

Well, here is my take on the question. First, take a survey and see how many priests and deacons give a homily on or offer a prayer for the unborn at Mass.

When was the last time a priest or deacon spoke about the evil of abortion? The indifference and complacency with these individuals as well as the religious is very apparent in regards to abortion.

As some bishops and the Holy See have said, education on sin/confession and the Eucharist needs reinforcing by the clergy.

My second observation is we have lost reverence for the Eucharist. Look at the behavior of people entering church for Mass. When was there a talk on not to use Mass as a social event by talking and not observing reverence and solemnity with silent respect?

John Isola
St. James Church, Petaluma

Letters Policy

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FORMATION SEMINARIANS INTO PRIESTS

by Father Frank Epperson

In the Diocese of Santa Rosa, we have a unique and dynamic team that works to further vocations to the priesthood: the Vocations director and the director of Seminarians.

I have the honor of being the director of Seminarians. This position carries the great responsibility of assisting a young man in discerning his vocation, discerning if he is being called by God, he would either speak with me or Fr. Raúl Lemus, the Vocations director. As Fr. Lemus has described, there would be a team that works to further vocations to the priesthood: the Vocations director and the director of Seminarians.

Once a man has discerned he is being called by God, he would either speak with me or Fr. Raúl Lemus, the Vocations director. As Fr. Lemus has described, there would be a team that works to further vocations to the priesthood: the Vocations director and the director of Seminarians.

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Today most of us will go about our daily duties and not wonder whether we will safely return home. On Sunday, we will attend Mass without worrying about whether it will get us in trouble. And such is how it should be for this is how man should live.

But as recent developments in the Middle East have proven, much of the world doesn’t have any assurance of rest, of peace, of security, or even of life. And while the lack of these things are certainly making the headlines today, the story of Bl. Pascual Torres Lloret, a Spanish layman, shows this is nothing new.

Born in Carcaixent, Spain, in 1885, to a humble, Christian family, he married Leonor Pérez Canet in 1911, and the couple had four children. Each day began with Mass and ended with the family’s recitation of the Rosary.

Pascual was very involved with his parish, and he assisted his pastor in his apostolic works, so much so that Father considered him his “right hand man.” Torres also took an active role in the establishment of several lay groups, such as Catholic Action (somewhat like a cross between the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Action for the Common Good), the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Catholic Legion of Parents, and the Nocturnal Adoration League (a worldwide movement that, as its name suggests, aims to adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at night and in communion with the Church). He also selflessly worked with lepers of Fontilles, Spain.

To support his family, he worked as a construction foreman. He never took the customary 10 percent cut of his workers’ wages as other foremen did at the time. On the contrary he helped many workers with his own modest wages. Even though they struggled financially, his wife supported him in this.

Leonor told their children he had devoted his life to the cause of religion and that he taught them to receive Communion on their hearts, “That with your saints and chosen [i.e., martyrs], I pray you forever and ever.”

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War began between the Nationalists, who favored the Church, and the Stalinist communists who were called Republicans. This latter group not only did not favor the Church, it vehemently forbade priests from wearing their clerics at a time when it was unheard of for clergy to wear civilian clothing.

Pascual was deeply concerned with what he said was a “partial paraplegia” (impairment of the lower extremities).

That wasn’t the worst of it, though. On May 14, communists desecrated the Dominican convent’s cemetery, removing buried corpses and exposing them until dusk. Two days later municipal authorities had construction workers board up the doors of the burned churches and forborne priests from wearing their clerics at a time when it was unheard of for clergy to wear civilian clothing.

When the communists proclaimed the Republic in 1931, Pascual was deeply concerned with what he said was a “looming chaos.” So after this, his daughter later recounted “my father redoubled his prayers along with us at home asking the Lord for peace and doing penance to obtain it.”

His pastor increasingly relied on Pascual to preserve the Eucharist from desecration, because he knew it would rest in good hands. A tabernacle was installed and carefully hidden in Pascual’s house. He with his wife alternated in keeping a never-ending vigil before the Blessed Sacrament where they transformed their sufferings into prayer. And when the pastor was waylaid or too closely guarded to bring Communion to the sick, it was Pascual who did so.

His son José remembers how his father once “hid the Hosts in a cloth napkin, which he left inside a purifier. On one occasion, this piece of cloth made it possible to have our father with us a bit longer [so to speak], because the Hosts, which were well wrapped, did not scatter after being handled by one of the militiamen, who dug through our belongings in search of money.”

“Hosts’ activity did not go unnoticed by the militiamen so three times the communists called him and tried to intimidate him into stopping his apostolic work.

He refused. Indeed, he continued to hide in his house the vestments and sacred vessels entrusted to him. He sheltered any male or female religious who sought a hiding place from the persecution.

On July 25, authorities arrested Pascual when they found him acting as altar server at an illegal Mass. Four days later they released him but placed him under house arrest. Nonetheless, even though he couldn’t go past his own threshold, he remained a reference point for the entire village.

At noon on September 5, the militiamen returned to his home, banged on his door, and arrested him. Although he had suffered all night because of colic from kidneys stones, he thought not of his own comfort but how to move the Blessed Sacrament to another safe house without being detected and thus save it from desecration.

His then-8-year-old son José “remembers his father getting into a dark car outside his home, and his mother, in the background crying to the militiamen, ‘Please don’t take him.’” José had just returned from buying soda water for his father’s [kidney stones].

That evening one of Pascual’s daughters went to visit him at the boarding school-turned-prison to bring him food and clothing. To her, he looked strong and peaceful though tired from the sometimes violent ordeal imposed upon him by his captors. He told her he needed nothing but her prayers and bid her go home.

That evening, sometime after midnight, the communists marched him and other Christians to the village cemetery where they shot them in the back of the head. It was later learned Pascual led the men by exhorting them to be brave, to trust God, and to think upon their eternal reward.

On July 27, the government ordered the bodies to be moved to the local cemetery, removing buried corpses and exposing them until dusk. Two days later municipal authorities had construction workers board up the doors of the burned churches and forbade priests from wearing their clerics at a time when it was unheard of for clergy to wear civilian clothing.

Some of his relics have been gifted to a seminary in Hong Kong and parishes in Venezuela, Mexico, Tanzania, Japan, and Brazil.

B. PASCUAL TORRES LLORET, LAICO, ESPOSO, PADRE, Y MÁRTIR

Memorial: Septiembre 6

Martirologio Romano: En Carcaixent, de la provincia de Valencia, también en España, beato Pascual Torres Lloret, mártir, que, siendo padre de familia, recibió el premio celestial portando la cruz de Cristo. (1885-1936).

Martyrdom in Carcaixent, in the sense of a modest family andchristian. In 1911 he casé con Leonor Pérez Canet y tuvo cuatro hijos. Asistido a la parroquia, colaboró con los sacerdotes en las obras apostólicas y a él se debió en parte el establecimiento de la Acción Católica. Pertenece también a la Adoración Nocturna, a la Legión Católica de Padres de Familia, a las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl.

Trabajó desinteresadamente con los leprosos de Fontilles. Trabajaba como maestro de obras y no permitió nunca que se le diera el 10 ciento del jornal de los trabajadores que era suyos. Trabajaba como maestro de obras y no permitió nunca que se le diera el 10 ciento del jornal de los trabajadores que era suyos. El día que un obrero perdió su mano, él mismo fue el que se encargó de llevarla al hospital. (1885-1936).

Familia, a las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl. Familia, a las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl. A Los Hermanos de la Adoración Nocturna, a la Legión Católica de Padres de Familia, a las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl.

Memorial: Septiembre 9

❖ 9/23 St. “Padre” Pio of Pietrelcina, OFM Cap

❖ 9/24 Our Lady of Ransom / Nuestra Señora de la Merced; St. Pascual of San Severino

❖ 9/25 St. Agnes of Rome

❖ 9/26 St. Mary Magdalene

❖ 9/27 The Martyrs of Aigues-Mortes, France

❖ 9/28 St. Augustine of Hippo

❖ 9/29 St. Mary Magdalene

❖ 9/30 Sts. Peter and Paul

❖ 10/1 St. Agatha, St. Dorothy

❖ 10/2 St. Matthew

❖ 10/3 St. John the Evangelist

❖ 10/4 St. Philip

❖ 10/5 Sts. Benedict and Scholastica

❖ 10/6 St. John Vianney

❖ 10/7 St. Francis de Sales

❖ 10/8 St. Rose of Lima

❖ 10/9 St. John the Baptist

❖ 10/10 St. Francis Xavier

❖ 10/11 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

❖ 10/12 St. Cecilia

❖ 10/13 St. Francis of Assisi

❖ 10/14 St. Francis of Assisi

❖ 10/15 Our Lady of the Rosary

❖ 10/16 St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

❖ 10/17 St. Ignatius of Loyola

❖ 10/18 St. Thérèse of Lisieux

❖ 10/19 St. Thomas More

❖ 10/20 St. John Nepomucene

❖ 10/21 St. Francis of Assisi

❖ 10/22 St. Ignatius of Loyola

❖ 10/23 St. Francis of Assisi

❖ 10/24 St. Rose of Lima

❖ 10/25 St. Martin

❖ 10/26 Sts. Peter and Paul

❖ 10/27 St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

❖ 10/28 St. John Vianney

❖ 10/29 St. John Paul II

❖ 10/30 Sts. Peter and Paul

❖ 10/31 St. Francis of Assisi

Fuente: oremosjuntos.com

BL. PASCUAL TORRES LLORET, LAYMAN, HUSBAND, FATHER, AND MARTYR

Memorial: September 6
I Love Being a Priest Because…

...in spite of my own imperfections, I can offer salvation through the sacraments of the Church in persona Christi, knowing that He is using me as a channel for His saving grace.

Fr. Frank Eppard

I Love Being a Religious Woman Because…

...through this vocation I can give myself as a gift to Christ and to all those He loves and wishes to save.

Mother Teresa Christe Johnson, MSSR

I Love Being a Male Religious Because…

...the vocation brings life to my deepest longings and gives substance to my daily efforts to be closer to Jesus Christ. Religious life seeks to draw out God’s presence in me and in others through a specific charism and ministry. And that is quite enough of a task, something worth giving one’s life to.

Br. George Van Grieken, FSC

… it allows me daily the honor to not only see so many facets of God’s love and God’s mercy, but to humbly, undeservedly have a part in them.

Fr. Ron Serban

… there is never a day that goes by that the Lord doesn’t show me His special love, whether it’s through the people I am with or the beauty of where we are blessed to live. How spoiled I am—one of God’s spoiled brats.

Fr. Gordon Kalil

So when our spouse does something that really annoys us, it’s really God calling us to act like Jesus would in that situation, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, to give of ourselves until it hurts. Our Lord says that if we want to be His disciples and follow Him, we must pick up our crosses daily. Crosses, not featherbeds—tools of execution. In other words, Christ wants us to die to ourselves and live for others.

Priests do this with their flocks if they’re good priests. Religious do this with their students or those they serve if they are good religious. Spouses do this with each other if they are good spouses and want their marriage to last.

The problem for many—at least 50 percent, if we believe the divorce statistics—is that the things our spouses do aren’t seen as an opportunity to grow in virtue and holiness. Rather, they’re something she (or he) does to me after all I do for her (or him).

This isn’t to say we should be doormats. We should work at communicating our needs to our betrothed and strive to fix the problems in our relationship. There are always two ways to react to the things that are wrong. One will lead to less holiness; one will lead to greater holiness. Which way is which? If you don’t know, talk with your priest or spiritual director.

From an earthly perspective, all of this is impossible. Even the disciples thought so. When Jesus told them in Matthew 19:8–9 that anyone who divorces his or her spouse and remarries (‘except for unchastity’) commits adultery, His followers responded, ‘If such is the case… it is not expedient to marry.’

G.K. Chesterton was right when he wrote, ‘If Americans can be divorced for “incompatibility of temper” I cannot conceive why they are not all divorced. I have known many happy marriages, but never a compatible one. The aim of marriage is to fight through and survive the instant when incompatibility becomes unquestionable. For a man and a woman, as such, are incompatible.’

So again, marriage, strictly speaking, is impossible! And yet with God all things are possible. The sacrament brings couples graces. They receive graces every time they have recourse to the nuptial embrace. They obtain graces by praying and going to Mass together. These graces help their union persevere and thrive, even when, humanly speaking, it should be yet another family court’s case docket number. Or as the Second Vatican Council put it, ‘Spouses are penetrated with the spirit of Christ and their whole life is suffused by faith, hope, and charity; thus they increasingly further their own perfection and their mutual sanctification, and together they render glory to God’ (Gaudium et Spes, no. 48).

By then, men and women meet the mirror to the totally self-giving, sacrificial love that exists within the Trinity. To the extent that your marriage isn’t mirroring that, take the actions necessary so that it will. Is your trusting your fertility, your unwillingness to bend on time spent playing golf, or a lack of financial accountability? Marriage isn’t 50–50. It’s 100–100. Make it so.

In marriage, God gives each spouse to each other to serve as His instrument to and for Him. Are you acting like that with your spouse? If not, why? What needs to happen for you to change?

Nothing threatens marriage more than sin. Do you regularly give in to discord and contention? That is Satan trying to undermine your union. Resist him. Ask God to rebuke him. Are you striving (even if only virtually)? Again, Satan wants your marriage to fail. The quickest way to put him in his place is to confess your sins. Who cares if it has been 15 or more years? Get to the confessional. And don’t be afraid to bring Mary into the picture.

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She will offer peace and protection for you two.

When Ephesians 5 is read at Mass or at weddings, some women’s hackles go up. “Wives, submit to your husbands.” What everyone seems to conveniently ignore is that men have it even worse: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church.” How did Christ love the Church? Look at a crucifix and then ask that question. Husbands, are you loving your wives as Christ would? Are you acting in consideration of where we are blessed to live. How spoiled I am—one of God's spoiled brats.

Fr. Thomas DeVereaux

MARRIAGE: THE SACRAMENT AND THE VOCATION

A vocation, simply put, is the way we prayerfully discern the way God is calling us to become holy. Some will discern that He wants them to become holy through the priestly or religious life.

Most, however, will discern that this call to become a saint—that’s what being holy is—will come from entering into matrimony.

If you have been married for more than three months, though, you know that is so much easier said than done, isn’t it? The reason, if we are honest with ourselves, is that marriage calls each of us to give up that which is hardest to discard: our own selfishness. As one man said, “This being married thing is pretty easy as long as you’re willing to not be selfish.”

God intends this vocation to be the way of men and women with one another, because one’s spouse becomes the means by which the lack of sanctity—pride, arrogance, anger, self-centeredness, etc.—slowly gets chipped away.

Ven. Fulton Sheen put it this way:

Matrimony crushes selfishness, first of all, because it merges individuals into a corporate life in which neither lives for self but for the other; it crushes selfishness also because the very permanence of marriage is destructive to those fleeting infatuations, which are born with the moment and die with it; it destroys selfishness, furthermore, because the mutual love of husband and wife takes them out of themselves into the incarnation of their mutual love, their other selves, their children; and finally it narrows selfishness because the rearing of children demands sacrifice, without which, like unwatered flowers, they will wither and die.

So when our spouse does something that really annoys us, it’s really God calling us to act like Jesus would in that situation, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, to give of ourselves until it hurts. Our Lord says that if we want to be His disciples and follow Him, we must pick up our crosses daily. Crosses, not featherbeds—instruments of execution. In other words, Christ wants us to die to ourselves and live for others.

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Considering all this, you might be wondering why we didn’t all save ourselves the hassle and just become priests, monks, or Sisters. And yet, if God has called you to this state, this is how He wills for you to become holy. It’s not easy. Like Jesus told us, “For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction...but small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life” (Matt 7:13–14).

By making the choice for holiness each and every time, it becomes less difficult and more of a habit, and that makes life—no matter what your vocation—so much easier.

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BOOK REVIEW:

MEDITATIONS ON VATICAN ART

by Fr. Mark Haydu, LC, STL
Liguori Publications, $29.99

by Deacon Gary Moore

Meditations on Vatican Art is a beautifully illustrated book that can be proudly displayed within any home. Written by Fr. Mark Haydu, LC, is the international coordinator of the Patrons of the Arts at the Vatican Museums. His depth of background in working with the wonders of art contained within the Vatican, combined with his degrees in theology and philosophy provide unparalleled expertise in creating this book.

Make no mistake: This is far more than a coffee table book of impressive art. It enables readers to experience masterpieces from the Vatican while reflecting upon them and inspiring the faithful readers to pray.

Each image is accompanied by a poetic overview of the piece and a short description of its background. This is followed by a passage from Scripture that has been specially selected to build upon the work’s visual beauty. Next the reader is guided to reflect and meditate on the art image and Scripture passage. Each section ends with a prayer, accompanied by questions to ponder and ways in which the lesson can be applied to our daily lives.

Everyone is busy, overwhelmed with the noises and the demands of our days. The hectic pace makes it difficult if not impossible to not only see but also experience the beauty around us. With this book’s help, though, you can step away from the chaos and create your own retreat based on its various segments.

The true strength of this book, however, is we can use it to enhance our worship and help us see God’s presence in our lives. The structured, spiritually centered meditations Fr. Haydu has selected provide us a wonderful tool with which to pray and appreciate all we have and relate the beauty of God to our everyday world.

The exquisitely rendered pages make this book ideal to be used prayerfully either by individuals or family members or dear friends. This is one book that will not sit on a coffee table collecting dust.

Readers can order Meditations on Vatican Art and other great titles from our diocesan Catholic stores: Simply Sacred Books & Gifts, 707-528-7749; Cathedral Books & Gifts, 707-542-0250, giftshop@steugenes.com; and Saint Joseph Store, 707-224-8754, joe@saintjosephstore.com.

WHAT A HOLOCAUST SCHOLAR CAN TEACH US ABOUT THE MORAL COST OF ADMITTING THE DIVORCED AND REMARRIED TO HOLY COMMUNION

by Dawn Eden

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum recently hosted an exhibit on collaboration and complicity in The Holocaust. The words set the tone for the exhibit, which is, in the words of the museum’s special-exhibits curator, intended to make visitors “think about their individual choices.” And as a child of divorce and a survivor of childhood sexual abuse—abuse which is exponentially more prevalent in broken homes—they succeeded in making me think about how parents’ choices affect their children.

It is an issue worth pondering at this time when some Catholic bishops, during the run-up to the Extraordinary Synod on the Family, are suggesting the Church should admit civilly divorced-and-remarried Catholics to Holy Communion.

Robert Spaemann writes in the latest issue of Nova et Vetera by a team of theologians analyzing “Recent Proposals for the Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried,” observes that some arguments for admitting the divorced-and-remarried Catholics to Holy Communion are based on “a broad version of ‘fundamental option’ theory, which claims that one can distinguish a person’s concrete behavior from his or her basic orientation towards or away from God.”

They add that even if one accepts fundamental-option theory on its own terms, a fundamental option is likely in play when one makes basic decisions about the orientation of one’s life. A decision regularly to engage in disordered self-interest have no human costs:

minors without sufficient regard for the victims. The
same pattern is repeating itself here. Has anyone ever
mentioned the victims? Is anyone talking about the
woman whose husband has abandoned her and their
four children? She might be willing to take him back,
only to ensure that the children are provided for, but
he has a new family and has no intention of returning.

Another new article on the topic, this one in the jour-
nal Nova et Vetera by a team of theologians analyzing
“Recent Proposals for the Pastoral Care of the Divorced
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ting the divorced-and-remarried Catholics to Holy Communion are based on “a broad version of ‘fundamental option’ theory, which claims that one can distinguish a person’s concrete behavior from his or her basic orientation towards or away from God.”

Another article’s authors respond that:

St. John Paul II’s encyclical letter Veritatis Splendor
condemns just such a “fundamental option” approach,
denying that one “could, by virtue of a fundamental
option, remain faithful to God independently of whether
or not certain of his choices and his acts are in confor-
mity with specific moral norms.” “With every freely
committed mortal sin, [one] offends God... [If] even if he
perseveres in faith, he loses ‘sanctifying grace,’ ‘charity,’
and ‘eternal happiness.’”

In other words, at crucial junctures, every individual makes decisions, and every decision is individual—and every decision says something about who we really are.

Dawn Eden is a cancer survivor, convert from Judaism, American Catholic journalist, and author of The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfillment While Keeping Your Clothes On and My Peace I Give You.
ST. HELENA SCHOOL WELCOMES FIVE NEW TEACHERS

St. Helena—St. Helena School's faculty has several new faces this fall.
The first is Joy Powell, who teaches transitional K and kindergarten.
She holds a multiple-subject credential, a bachelor of arts in English, and a master's in education.
She has a teaching credential from Sonoma State University in early childhood education.

Calistoga resident and Modesto native Mary Galas will serve as teacher for the third and fourth graders. A 2010 graduate of California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, where she obtained her teaching credential, Mary has a profound appreciation for how much her parents sacrificed so she and her siblings could receive a Catholic education. Her passions are teaching and agriculture.

Those in grades seven and eight will be in good hands with Mary Herboth. She holds a bachelor's degree in theology and a master's in Catholic education. She brings a wide variety of experiences plus a love for art and poetry with Mary Herboth. She holds a bachelor's degree in theology and a master's in Catholic education. Her passions are teaching and agriculture.

They join the returning Geoffrey Say, music teacher, and Maria Phelps, who will teach grades five and six.

Let us pray for these dedicated instructors at St. Helena School that God may touch their students through them.

BUILDING BETTER BAPTISMS

In the Catholic Church, we know all about traditions, don't we? There are traditions for Christmas, for Easter, for Lent, for Advent, for weddings, for First Communion, and so much more.

But traditions for baptism? Other than passing down baptismal gowns, not so much.

That is not to say they do not exist, however. Some are native to certain cultures, while others were created by individual families.

If you or someone you know is planning a christening in the near future, here are some wonderful customs that will make the meaning and power of the day even more apparent.

Before the blessed event

For many Vietnamese parents, picking their child's name is easy since the child usually receives the godfather's or godmother's baptismal name. Even if the parents determine to call their child "Star Blossom" or "Ace," though, the name used at baptism should be that of a saint. Much like the name chosen at confirmation, doing this implicitly puts the baby under that saint's patronage. After all, this holy person is someone who has already made it to heaven. And isn't the point of baptism to get people started on that road to holiness that will one day lead to their also being in the Beatific Vision?

In Italy, the godfather carries the child to the church. If it is a girl, he carries her in his left arm. If it is a boy, he does so in his right "and never looks behind him [in order] to ensure the child grows up strong and courageous and not fearful." In his fascinating article on certain Slavic customs, Michael Roman writes, "Before the baptismal party left for church, either the midwife or the godfather said to the parents of the infant, 'We shall bring back our newest Christian.' Prior to their departure, in some households, an egg and a prayer book were placed in the threshold so that the child would become as firm as the egg and a good Christian."

Of course, before all this could happen, parents had to choose the godparents. Being a godparent isn't an honorific that will one day lead to their also being in the Beatific Vision; it is a tremendous commitment. Parents should therefore choose someone who will pledge to nurture the child's faith throughout their life. If someone has asked you to be a godparent, plan on your regular Mass attendance, ideally with your godchild, teaching them about the Faith, and encouraging your charge to participate in religious education and youth ministry programs. Also set reminders to call or otherwise contact the child on holidays, holy days, birthdays, and on his or her name day (a name day is the feast day for the saint after whom they were named).

Who pays for what when it comes to baptism? In some cultures, the parents pay for everything. In others, most of the burden falls on the godparents, while some others, there is a division of costs. And in still others, there is no hard and fast rule.

For instance, with Byzantine Christians, the godparents traditionally pay for the christening gown and a cross necklace for the child that is meant to be kept for life. If someone has asked you to be a godparent, you could pay for the customary candoled almands and the martyriska (or witness, "martyr" coming from the Greek word for "witness") pins, which are little crosses adorned with ribbons that attach to the child's outfit.

The parents of the child usually pay for the post-baptismal reception and the "remembrance" or gratuity given the priest or any charges for use of the church.

How much should the gratuity be? In urban areas, it is usually more, since the dollar has to stretch further. For instance New York priests can receive $10-300. In other areas, it could range from $10 to $75. Maybe ask couples who have done this before.

And if you aren't comfortable tipping? Give them a gift or buy something appropriate for the church. The point is doing something nice.

Also, parents, don't forget the godparents. It is usual to give them a small gift. If they take their responsibilities seriously, those godparents have taken on a huge commitment. The present mustn't be large. It can be a picture of the child or something for their home that matches their tastes. Some parents give a religious gift such as an icon.

Finally because the baptismal rite is defined by the rubrics, it does not lend itself to adlibbing. That does not mean however that appropriate prayers cannot be said before the liturgy.

For instance, many Irish families will invoke St. Brigid of Kildare, patroness of newborns. There is also this beautiful, traditional Irish prayer:

Dearest Father in Heaven, bless this child and bless this day of new beginnings. Smile upon this child and surround this child, Lord, with the soft mantle of Your love. Teach this child to follow in Your footsteps and to live life in the ways of love, faith, hope, and charity.

During the blessed event

There are even some personalized touches that can be added to the baptismal rite.

For instance, one non-diocesan family interviewed for this article said an "aunt visited the Holy Land and brought back water from the River Jordan. Now all our babies get baptized with water from the same river as Jesus!"

Another woman wrote, "I have the bonnet I wore at my christening which was created from the handkerchief my mom carried at her wedding. I carried this on my wedding day. All of my children have worn it for their baptisms. When it comes time for them to marry, I will turn it back into a kerchief."

"Also, I have the godmother buy a white rosary, and it is placed on my baby. They use the same rosary for their First..."
Baptism is one of the Church’s most beautiful and touching sacraments. It is also possibly one of the least understood and therefore the least appreciated, at least relative to its beauty and power. For what other act do we make in our life that washes away all sin and all temporal punishment due to sin, or that confers upon us Christ and makes us a part of His Body, while at the same time leaving on us an indelible mark, like a supernatural permanent marker? Many words have been written about the sacrament, many wonderful ways to describe it have been used. But perhaps none have done a better job than the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

1213–1214 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit...and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word”... “To baptize (Greek baptizein) means to “plunge” or “immerse”; the “plunge” into the water symbolizes the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he rises up by resurrection with Him as “a new creature.”

1223 Jesus...begins his public life after having Himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan. After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

1226 From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism. Indeed St. Peter declares to the crowd astounded by his preaching, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The apostles and their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus.... Always, baptism is seen as connected with faith: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” St. Paul declared to his jailer “you and your household, “ St. Paul declared to his jailer in Jesus…. Always, baptism is seen as connected with their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus. Their task is a truly ecclesial function.... The godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to serve them in the communion of the Church, and to obey and submit to the Church’s leaders, holding them in respect and affection. Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.

1228–1229 Hence baptism is a bath of water in which the “imperishable seed” of the Word of God produces its life-giving effect. From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the gospel containing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

1234–1239 The meaning and grace of the sacrament of Baptism are clearly seen in the rites of its celebration. The sign of the cross, on the threshold of the celebration, marks with the imprint of Christ the one who is going to belong to Him and signifies the grace of the redemption Christ won for us by His cross. The proclamations of the Word of God enlightens the candidates and the assembly with the revealed truth and elicits the response of faith which is inseparable from Baptism. Since Baptism signifies liberation from sins and from its instigator the devil, one or more exorcisms are pronounced over the candidate. The celebrant then anoints him with the oil of catechumens or lays his hands on him, and he explicitly renounces Satan. Thus prepared, he is able to confess the faith of the Church, to which he will be “entrusted” by Baptism. The baptismal water is consecrated by a prayer.... The Church asks God that through His Son the power of the Holy Spirit may be sent upon the water, so that those who will be baptized in it may be “born of water and of the Spirit.” The word and the water are connected in Baptism as inseparably as bread and wine in Holy Communion. It signifies and actually brings about death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity.... Baptism is performed...by triple immersion in the baptismal water...or by pouring the water three times over the candidate’s head.

1241 The anointing with sacred chrism, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian....

1243 The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has “put on Christ,” has risen with Christ. The candle, lit from the Easter candle, signifies Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In Him the baptized are “the light of the world.”

1245 The solemn blessing concludes the celebration of Baptism. At the Baptism of newborns the blessing of the mother occupies a special place.

1253–1255 Baptism is the sacrament of faith, but faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. The catechumen or the godparent is asked, “What do you ask of God’s Church?” The response is, “Faith!” For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of baptismal promises. Preparation for baptism leads only to the threshold of new life. Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth. For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents’ help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized child or adult on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial function.... The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.

1267–1269 Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: “Therefore...we are members one of another.” Baptism incorporates us into the Church. From the baptismal font is born the one People of God of the New Covenant: “For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” The baptized share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. Baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers. Having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us. From now on, he is called to be subject to others, to serve them in the communion of the Church, and to “obey and submit” to the Church’s leaders, holding them in respect and affection. Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.

1271–1272 Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church.... Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark.... Baptism cannot be repeated.

1274 The Holy Spirit has marked us with the seal of the Lord... “for the day of redemption.” “Baptism indeed is the seal of eternal life.” The faithful Christian who has “kept the seal” until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his Baptism, will be able to depart this life “marked with the sign of faith”...in the hope of resurrection.
Baptismal Gift Ideas

If you have ever shopped for First Holy Communion or confirmation gifts, you know a plethora of choices exist.

What to give the child or person about to be baptized, however? Gift ideas for this sacrament seem hard to come by. With a little ingenuity, however, a great present can be easily had.

One great idea would be to give the family a nice crucifix with an engraved plaque on the back stating the baptized individual’s name, date of birth, and date of baptism.

A popular item are little crosses, pink for girls, blue for boys that hang on the wall. Or you might consider a saint’s medal, a child’s wooden rosary, or a picture frame. Judging by sales, many Hispanics tend to favor little baptismal sets that contain a candle, holy water font, and other items.

You can also choose from a range of board books, children’s Bibles, saints’ pictures, book ends, religious statues, and crib medals. According to one website, crib medals “are an old tradition among Catholic parents who place the baby in the care of Guardian Angels or the Blessed Mother while they sleep. In some cultures, an image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is preferred.”

Why not give the family a special bag—possibly handmade—that they take with them to church and fill with board books and other special things for Mass? Of course, if the baptized is a small baby, they won’t be able to personally use any gift for some time. Parents, however, are a different story. For instance, one book that is good for those who are very religious and those who might not even attend Mass after their child’s baptism is Anthony DeStefano’s *Angels All Around Us*. This sort of work is especially good for the husband or wife who is not being supported by their spouse in their efforts to bring the child up in the Faith.

If the parents—or godparents—don’t know much about the sacraments or Church teaching, a good option is the CD set *Growth by Oath* or its book form *Swear to God*, both by popular speaker Scott Hahn.

There are also great how-to parenting books by Dr. Meg Meeker and Dr. Ray Guarendi.

What about children’s books with religious or spiritual themes that a parent could read to the child? Or a family movie on DVD or Blu-ray? Ignatius Press has an impressive variety of these.

If the family of the baptized are of Irish descent, gift ideas include a vector plated Celtic rosary bracelet, a silver or ceramic caddagh baby cup, a framed Irish baptismal prayer, an Irish crib medal, or a “St. Brigid, Patron of Babies” pendant.

Another website notes, “One longstanding Irish christening tradition for baby girls is for the mother to give a caddagh ring to her daughter to use as a wedding band with the saying, “With these hands I give you my heart, and I crown it with my love.”

In Poland, it is customary for the godmother to give the baby a tiny gold cross on a chain. A unique present is a really nice wood box so the parents have something in which to keep all the mementos from the day of their baby’s christening and possibly the other sacraments the child receives along the way. There is also something called “My Christian Passport,” which allows the parent or child to note their life’s journey as a Catholic.

If you want to give the family something truly spectacular, consider giving them “The Miracle of Life Sonogram Frame.” This features a poem with a pro-life message that doesn’t hit the viewer over the head, and holds a standard sized sonogram photo. For these and other gift ideas, contact our diocesan Catholic stores: Simply Sacred Books & Gifts, 707-528-7749; Cathedral Books & Gifts, 707-542-0250, giftshop@steugenes.com; and Saint Joseph Store, 707-224-8754, joes@saintjosephstore.com.
Building Better Baptisms, cont.

Communion, and if they get married the girls will have it in their wedding bouquet or, if it’s my son’s wedding, their bride will use it.

Often every child in the family will wear the same baptismal gown, and after each baptism, someone embroiders the child’s name and date of the sacrament’s reception on the back.

Parents will often keep the baptismal candle and use that for the unity candle at their offspring’s wedding. Conversely some parents use the unity candle from their wedding as the baptismal candle.

Other families take the blessed baptism water home. They then freeze most of it for future blessings from dad and mom on the day of the child’s First Holy Communion, nuptials, and other major life events.

A very small but growing number of young couples want their child christened using the form of baptism employed before the Second Vatican Council’s reforms in the late 1960s.

One such couple is Juan Pablo and Kate González of St. Joseph Church in Crescent City.

“We wanted the old, Latin-language form because it uses an extended prayer of exorcism. [Editor’s note: The new form of baptism uses a very mild prayer of exorcism.] There is also the blessed salt the priest places on the baby’s tongue.”

As with salty and sweet food, salt “is the symbol of that wisdom which gives a relish for the sweetness of divine nourishment,” as one commentary notes. Salt is also a preservative, so it symbolizes how the Gospels’ teachings preserve the faithful “from the corruption of sin.” Just as salt sown on soil will prevent any vegetation from growing on that ground, it symbolizes the hope that the Christian life will prevent “evil passions from growing in men’s souls.”

Another reason the González family has chosen to have their babies baptized in this fashion is they believe “Everything about that rite is beautiful.” They like that it begins outside the church, symbolizing that the soul is not yet a member of the elect. Then after the part of the rite begins outside the church, symbolizing that the soul is not prevent “evil passions from growing in men’s souls.”

Ground, it symbolizes the hope that the Christian life will prevent “evils from the corruption of sin.” And just as salt sown on soil will prevent any vegetation from growing on that ground, it symbolizes the hope that the Christian life will prevent “evil passions from growing in men’s souls.”

One website reports, “After the wedding night, the couple saves the top tier of their wedding cake until the christening of their first child (which in the early days was usually within a year of their marriage). At the Irish christening reception, the new parents serve the cake and sprinkle crumbs on their baby’s head as a symbolic wish for a long and prosperous life for the newest addition to the family. According to Bridget Haggerty’s book, The Traditional Irish Wedding, it’s customary to “save” a bottle of cham- pagne from your wedding to open at the reception of your firstborn’s christening, using it to ‘ eget the baby’s head.’”

Several types of Eastern Christians serve guests little bags called bombonieres, which “are symbolic of life with their bitter-sweet taste.” Basically these are Jordan almonds, and the “sugar coating represents the hope that life will be blessed with more sweetness than bitterness. The egg shape of the almond represents fertility, the whiteness of the almond symbolizes purity.”

Furthermore, bombonieres “are always filled with an odd and an indivisible number of almonds (i.e., 7, 11 or 13 almonds). The traditional amount is five almonds, which symbolizes health, happiness, fertility, wealth, and good fortune.”

“Sometimes seven almonds are used. The sixth and seventh almonds represent purity and partner- ship and unity with Christ. “Favors cannot be filled with nine almonds, as nine is a divisible number.”

Typically receptions take place in the child’s home. Historically this has not only happened because of budgetary considerations but because doing so symbolizes “safety and protection from the outside world.”

What to serve the attendees? Christening recep- tions typically take place in mid-afternoon, so it is appropriate to serve lunch-type fare. However, depending on the budget and time available, this could be a simple tea, cake and ice cream service, or a complete, catered meal.

Whatever is done, it should be special. As one Latina blogger writes, “Baptisms can be celebrated in a big way because they only happen once in a child’s life, unlike a birthday.” Indeed, whether fami- lies have a relatively simple reception or a lavish to-do, everything used should be the best, in keep- ing with the spirit of the day.

Also try to incorporate traditional dishes repre- sentative of the family’s ethnicity. For some great recipe ideas, see http://www.christeningideas.co.uk/.

None of this should distract, of course, from the day’s purpose: Welcoming and incorporating a soul into the Body of Christ, the Church. However, done right, customs can bring out this truth for the edifi- cation and building of everyone in holiness. ☃