The dedication of over 5000 generous donors during the past five years is bearing fruit. Since 2014, the Diocese of Santa Rosa, in cooperation with the parishes, has been operating Professing our Faith, Walking in Hope, Building God’s Kingdom, a capital campaign inspired by Pope Francis’ call to action. This campaign was designed to provide direct financial support to parishes; expand the infrastructure of Catholic Charities; provide support for our seminarians, deacons, and priests; increase access to Catholic education in the Catholic schools of our Diocese; strengthen and expand crucial ministries to address the needs and challenges to faith and family life; and to support the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa. Several parishes took the opportunity to operate the campaign as a combined campaign to fund specific parish building, debt reduction, and renovation projects.

The campaign was designed to allocate 35% of all funds generated before expenses to the parishes. However, as is shown in the data below, owing to the combined campaigns, funds restricted for parish use, and earthquake relief, the parishes received 45% of total funds.

Professing our Faith ~ Walking in Hope ~ Building God’s Kingdom

Five years of Fidelity Bear Fruit for our Diocese

Since the discovery of the funds found in Father Oscar Diaz’s car on the evening of June 19 I have spent countless hours writing notes, talking and praying about how best to deal with this very challenging and complex problem. Based on the information I have gathered I have drawn conclusions and have now made certain decisions which I sincerely wish I did not have to make. First of all, I need you to know that this is one of the most emotionally draining and difficult situations I have ever encountered. I recognize that Oscar Diaz has been for me and perhaps for many, if not all, of you a loved and trusted priest of the Diocese of Santa Rosa. It is now absolutely clear from solid evidence that he has been systematically stealing from parishes and parishioners for at least the past 15 years.

Oscar was born in Mexico. He is 56 years old and was ordained for the Diocese in July of 1994. He celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest on July 14.

On Wednesday, June 19, 2019 Father Oscar was involved in an automobile accident which caused a broken hip and other injuries. When asked by the medics if there was anything in the car which he needed he said there were bags of money which he described as his salary. Since the volume of cash was very great the police became involved that same Wednesday evening when a hospital employee, who was uncomfortable with the volume of cash which came to the emergency room with Father Oscar, called the police. The police immediately contacted me. I instructed them to take custody of the cash and to account for it for possible criminal prosecution. Some days later when the money was turned over to the Diocese, it was counted and found to total $18,305.86. This money was contained in the security bags (5-6 of them) associated with the Parish Collections at Resurrection Parish. Some of the bags were still sealed. Some had dates and some indicated whether the collection was a ‘first’ or ‘second’ collection. At that moment I decided to allow the police to pursue the case wherever it went and to allow, and even participate in, the criminal prosecution of Father Oscar. After a brief investigation and several interviews, the police determined that the protocols surrounding collection accounting were so poor that it would be very difficult if not impossible to arrive at proof of theft. It was then that the money was

“My wish is that all of us, after these days of grace, will have the courage, yes, the courage, to walk in the presence of the Lord, with the Lord’s Cross; to build the Church on the Lord’s blood which was poured out on the Cross; and to profess the one glory: Christ crucified. And in this way, the Church will go forward.” – Pope Francis
Hope for the Future

For the past five years the Diocese of Santa Rosa has continued to send statements and reminders to the thousands of generous members of the Diocese who made pledges and commitments in the 2014 Diocesan Capital Campaign. In this issue of the North Coast Catholic we give a status report on the progress of that Campaign as we prepare for its conclusion.

First of all it is important to acknowledge with great gratitude the generosity of those who made pledges and have faithfully contributed over the course of these five years to fulfill those pledges. This is both edifying and exemplary. Thank you. While this public notice is important, I hope that the notes sent from this office, some of which have been personally signed by me, are a sign to you that your gifts are not taken for granted. I can assure you that I do not take your gifts for granted.

As the report points out the funds received have been carefully accounted for and have been directed to the purposes stated on the original Campaign material. The reports point out that approximately 35% of all the funds raised were devoted to the parishes from which they came. The ‘Diocesan’ share, approximately 65%, has been distributed to the various categories as designated in the Campaign documents. While the amounts are significant and help strengthen the financial stability of the Diocese the funds created do not provide for all the needs of the various ministries of the Diocese.

The Annual Ministry Appeal continues to be the annual ‘life blood’ of the Diocese. The Capital Campaign funds will continue to provide a supplement to the proceeds of the Annual Ministry Appeal for our Diocesan Offices and Departments.

The fruit of the Capital Campaign is already visible in making it possible for the Diocese to consider the establishment of a Family Life Office. This Office, now in its beginning stages, is very much needed as a vehicle for the fostering and strengthening of married life in our Diocese. The initial work of the Office has focused on a review and revamping of the Diocesan Marriage Preparation Policy and that Policy is set to take full effect in January of 2020. This is in response to Saint John Paul’s Apostolic Exhortation on the Family which was reiterated by Pope Francis’ Exhortation, Amoris Laetitia. Both of these documents insist upon the need for solid and systematic preparation for marriage. This preparation is not simply ‘wedding’ preparation but a preparation for the realities of self-sacrificing family life. Whether young people recognize it or not, they are being prepared for marriage by a culture and society which has lost its sense of self-sacrifice, commitment, perseverance and appreciation of the worth and dignity of the human person, especially the person newly conceived in the womb of its mother. Thus, preparation for Catholic Marriage must include, as the papal documents insist, remote preparation. That is, preparation for marriage which begins years before any actual intention for marriage is considered. Young people are being pre-pared or formed for marriage by the culture in which they live and, sadly, a major portion of that formation is not consistent with the Catholic understanding of marriage. Thus, the importance of the Family Life Office.

The amount of good already brought about, as well as the greatly increased potential for good throughout the Diocese made possible by the generosity to the Capital Campaign is most significant. Only God knows how far and wide this good will spread but we all know that the credit for whatever good is achieved goes to those who have contributed and continue to contribute to this effort.

The plan is to conclude the sending of Pledge Reminders in December so that a final accounting can be provided in January of 2020. While it is bold of me to mention, I encourage those who have made pledges to persevere through December of 2019 and, if possible, to make a generous effort to complete the pledge in its entirety.

The needs of the Diocese and the financial fragility which is a part of our history will continue but this Capital Campaign effort has done much to strengthen us and provides a more secure hope for the future. Again, thank you to all who have contributed so generously and selflessly to this Campaign and may God, who sees all, reward you most abundantly!

From the Bishop

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

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ROME July 25 By Claire Giangravè Crux.com

For years the credibility of the Eastern European Marian pilgrimage site of Medjugorje and the miraculous happenings that allegedly occur there, have been the subject of questioning and doubt. But its continued following and devotion have pushed the Vatican into recognizing its validity.

Well, sort of.

"Medjugorje is an international reference point for prayer where extraordinary spiritual fruits can be touched by hand," said Polish Archbishop Henryk Hoser, the Holy See’s Special Envoy to Medjugorje, in a July 22 interview with the publication of the Italian bishops, Avvenire.

The prelate pointed to the number of conversions, vocations and sacraments that take place at the pilgrimage site as an example of the positive effects that this place has on the Catholic community, adding that he doesn’t believe "there are traces of heresy."

Hoser, 76, was appointed to his role by Pope Francis in February 2017 and is today in charge of administering to the pastoral needs of pilgrims and serving as a liaison between the local Franciscan community and the Catholic hierarchy.

One year after his appointment, the Polish prelate announced that pilgrimages were allowed once again to Medjugorje, the last step of an ongoing debate regarding how much official Vatican backing should be given to the popular—albeit ambiguous—site.

“People claim to feel the presence of Mary,” Hoser said, “but allowing pilgrimages must not be interpreted as an authentication of the known events tied to the name Medjugorje.”

He continued to state that the site is “a place, blessed by God, of encounter and dialogue with the Lord through the Virgin.”

Beloved by Catholic faithful, especially from Italy and Eastern Europe, this Marian site is Europe’s third most popular pilgrimage destination after Lourdes, France, and Fatima, Portugal. According to media reports, over 30 million believers have come to Medjugorje since the first apparitions were reported.

On June 24, 1981, six youths between the ages of 10 and 16 claimed to have witnessed the apparitions of the Virgin Mary on the Podbrdo hill in Medjugorje, Southern Bosnia. They said that Mary introduced herself as the “Queen of Peace” and that she continues to speak to them cyclically.

Hoser said that the witnesses are older today, with wives and children, and many of them have dedicated themselves to the welcoming of pilgrims. “When I spoke to one of them, he started crying like a child because he believed to have been wounded by so many voices,” he said.

Three of the visionaries claim that Mary appears to them each day, while the remaining three say they have the same experience once a year. Following three diocesan commissions, the then-Yugoslavian bishops decided that it was “impossible to determine whether we are dealing with apparition or supranatural revelations” in a 1991 declaration in Zara.

The local bishop clashed with the Franciscans who had been associated with the visionaries, and the friars were expelled in 1999. In 2008, the spiritual director for the visionaries was suspended “for the diffusion of dubious doctrine, manipulation of sciences, suspicious mysticism, disobedience toward legitimately issued orders.”

Despite these setbacks, the apparition site continued to attract up to 1 million pilgrims each year.

Another probe to determine the validity of the pilgrimage site was launched in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI and led by the former Vicar of Rome Cardinal Camillo Ruini. The commission finished its work in 2014 and handed in their results to the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The results of the inquiry were kept secret and Francis sent Hoser to oversee Medjugorje, waiting on the decision of whether or not to sanction the pilgrimage site. Still, the Argentinian pontiff known for being partial to popular devotions, expressed a few concerns about the Marian site.

“Personally, I am more skeptical,” Francis said aboard the papal plane returning from the Marian shrine at Lourdes in June 2015. “I prefer Our Lady to be a Mother, our Mother, and not a telegraph operator who sends out a message every day at a certain time… this is not the mother of Jesus.”

“Who thinks that Our Lady would say: ‘Come tomorrow at this time and I will give a message to that seer.’ No,” he added.

The pope said that the Ruini report expressed the need for more investigation on the original apparitions and “expressed doubts” concerning the yearly apparitions that have occurred since. But Francis added that the “real core” of the report was the spiritual devotions elicited by the pilgrimage site.

“For this there is no magic wand, this spiritual-pastoral fact cannot be denied,” he said.

The papal representative to Medjugorje seconded that feeling by illustrating the many cases where miracles occur on the Marian site without having to refer to the supernatural. In the past weeks, 400 priests gathered in Medjugorje for an international clerical retreat. Near the site, the “Village of the Mother” hosts orphans, women in crisis, the disabled, drug addicts and all those in need.

“I can testify that at Medjugorje the Mother of God is at the heart of everything, independently from eventual supernatural occurrences,” said the Vatican’s Apostolic Nunzio to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Archbishop Luigi Pezzuto, in the same Avvenire story.

“The farsighted decision of the pope to disconnect the closeness to the pilgrims to the recognition or not of the alleged visions shows the care that the Church has toward all those who entrust themselves with a sincere heart to the maternal intercession of Mary, also by going to this small town in Herzegovina.”

In the coming days two close papal allies will be visiting Medjugorje. Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, who heads the Italian episcopal conference and is currently at the Marian site, while the Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, will be inaugurating the International Youth Festival there on August 1.
I learned of the accident and the presence of the money on Wednesday evening. I was with many of our priests in Ukiah at our annual Priest Assembly and on Thursday morning, June 20 I informed those present of both the accident and the unexplained cash found in the car. I expressed at that time my conviction that I needed to pursue criminal prosecution for this theft. On Friday, June 21, I sent the Pastoral Bulletin in which I encouraged greater attention to the collection counting protocols.

I felt a whole series of emotions which range from fierce anger, to sadness, to confusion, to shock and even to fear. Now, over four weeks later these same feeling are present. Since Father Oscar had a broken hip the first need was for him to have surgery and to begin a process of physical recuperation. Since he was in the hospital, I did not press him for the details of the apparent theft but did pursue an investigation of the possibility of other stashes of cash.

On Saturday and Sunday, June 22 and June 23 I went to Resurrection Parish where I celebrated Mass for the community and prayed for the well being of Father Oscar. I did not publicly announce anything about the money found in the car but I did talk with a couple of key parishioners about the matter and the concerns which the apparent theft raised. Since I had not yet had a thorough discussion with Father Oscar I did not want to compromise either a possible future police investigation or Father Oscar’s reputation.

On Monday morning, June 24 I went to Resurrection Parish to see how the protocols for counting the weekly collection were handled. The persons involved in the counting were and are conscientious but there were some serious gaps in the following of Diocesan procedures. I have often said that, “Only those you trust can steal from you” and that appears to be the case here. None of us had any reason to mistrust Father Oscar and so no one questioned or at least no one had sufficient suspicion to report inconsistencies to the Diocese.

While I was at the Parish on Monday, I was informed that Father Oscar had called and reported to one of the Parish Staff that he had some collection bags in his Parish Office which he had not yet had the opportunity to deposit and that these should be processed and deposited. Staff reported to me that there were 10 to 12 sealed and unsealed Security bags in his office from various collections in 2019. In addition, a stack of mostly 100 dollar bills ($10,083) was found in a sealed #10 envelope in his desk drawer. I warned that there might be additional money at the rectory where Father Oscar lived, Monsignor Daniel Whelton and I went to the house and found there a large number of additional sets of the Security bags containing cash. The bags, some of which were dated, show systematic theft at Resurrection Parish from September 2018 through June 2019. The total value of the cash found in the car, the Office and the house is in excess of $95,000.

There is also documentary evidence that theft, over the course of many years, included an undeterminable number of checks made out to parishes and deposited to Father Oscar’s personal account. I will not mention all of the details since there is no justifiable reason for me to do so. I have revealed this much so that you understand that my decision regarding the need for public exposure is not unfounded.

All of this is certainly horribly distressing and so I hope you can understand the anger, outrage, sadness, grief and confusion which this has created for me. I suspect you are now feeling this same range of emotions. My determination to have the police involved and to proceed with a criminal investigation, arrest and charges was secure. On Friday, June 29 Monsignor Whelton and I went to see Father Oscar so that I could inform him of all that we knew up to that point and further inform him of my full intention to have him prosecuted for his (alleged) crimes. At that time I placed him on Administrative Leave essentially removing him from Parish. There was a discussion and an accounting of the Diocesan duties. I informed him that I could not see any possibility for future ministry for him in any capacity. While I have wavered on this conclusion over the weeks, I now have now come to the conclusion that I simply cannot expose anyone or any entity of the Diocese to the strong possibility of additional theft. This is a cause of serious grief for me! Father Oscar admitted that he had taken the Collection bags and had been doing so for some time. He made other admissions as well. I expressed to him my deep sadness, anger and dismay that he had so seriously violated the trust given to him by the Diocese, by the Parishes, and by the parishioners. I was even more determined at that time to proceed with filing charges and proceeding with a criminal prosecution.

The information gathered was again discussed with the police and there was still a reluctance to pursue a criminal investigation. I was advised that the Diocese should hire a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) to go to Cotati, Clearlake, Lakeport, Ukiah and Resurrection. I have no idea what such an investigation would cost. While I am willing to have Father Oscar face prosecution I do not know that I want to expend additional money for a prosecution which brings no additional benefit to either the Diocese or the victims of his crimes. I am very interested in determining a full accounting of the theft for possible Insurance purposes and in order to do this I initially thought that a criminal complaint by me and a police investigation would be the only way to access Father Oscar’s Banking Records. To his credit, Father Oscar has been very cooperative with me in obtaining the records I need to establish some estimate of the full extent of theft.

I am told to the police, I need to add that they have been most cooperative with and helpful to me and have manifested a strong desire to do what is right. The unintentional delays and necessary requests on their part, however, have allowed me the added time that I have needed to deal with all of the emotions which this discovery has generated for me. The anger, shock, grief, sadness and, confusion are still present but they are slightly diminished. This time has allowed me to look at this from a variety of perspectives and most importantly, it has allowed me to consider this matter in the light of the Gospel, in prayer and in meditation. I do not expect that anyone reading this narrative will immediately have all of their anger, shock, grief, sadness and confusion eliminated, that has not yet happened for me, but I do hope that my ‘journey’ in this case can be your ‘journey’ as well. Our journey must be a journey from anger to peace. Our journey must be a journey from shock to understanding. Our journey must be a journey from grief to acceptance. Our journey must be a journey from confusion to compassion. Our journey must be a journey of concern for the spiritual wellbeing of Oscar despite the fact that actions must be taken which are extremely difficult.

My goal is some semblance of justice, repairation, and at least spiritual restitution. Criminal prosecution is not incompatible with the Gospel but our goal must be both mercy and justice. I am not opposed to punishment but rather the opportunity forMercy. I have soul searching I have begun to question whether my desire to have police involvement is a genuine desire for justice or much more akin to an angry response. I am still very angry and it is almost impossible to set that anger aside and mercifully discern the path forward. I have asked myself repeatedly what ‘good’ could come from Father Oscar’s prosecution and possible imprisonment. What does ‘justice’ look like in this particular case?

One reason for pursuing prosecution would be to send a message to any in the Church who may be tempted to do what Father Oscar has done. Thus, punishment is seen as a deterrent. It is the fear of punishment after all which causes most of us to stop at Stop signs and red lights. Yet, Father Oscar can be suitably punished by the Church in a way which will send an equally strong message. He can be, and has been temporarily removed from active ministry. The extent of further ecclesiastical penalties needs to be determined. What he has done constitutes a definitive act contrary to the Church. The public exposure, which is a very much abbreviated version of this fuller notice for your benefit is certainly a punishment which sends a strong message. Initially, I had the fear of being accused of ‘cover-up’ which is very much a theme directed at the Church as She continues to deal with allegations of child sexual abuse. Yet, after further reflection it occurred to me that the transparencies which my public parish memo and Press Release on Monday, July 22, manifest that I have absolutely no intention or desire to engage in any form of ‘cover-up’. In fact, this exposure is probably more comprehensive than the exposure which a trial would bring. The Eighth Commandment prohibits spreading demeaning rumors, whether true or false, but allows exposing the truth even if that truth is unsavory and even ugly provided there is a good and substantial reason for doing so. In this case, I have received the permission of Father Oscar to tell this story. He has read it and while neither he nor I desire to do this, is nonetheless necessary for the good of the Church. Any other action would expose the Church to future allegations of ‘cover-up’.

Until this weekend we have allowed the fact that Father Oscar was recuperating from surgery following his accident to stand as the reason for his absence from public ministry. That has been true. However, people are legitimately asking when he can return to the Parish and I will not fabricate an alternative story. I will not hide this ugly truth. I have no desire to be defamatory. What we, as a Church, do at this juncture needs to be healing, restorative and transparent. This public declaration is a way in which Father Oscar can be made accountable for his actions. Unfortunately, (see Anger to Peace, page 5)
(Anger to Peace cont. from page 4)
given the length of time over which theft occurred, the variety of methods and the total dollars involved, I cannot envision any possible future ministry. This will need to be discerned further.

It may happen that the individual parishes involved may desire to file charges and pursue prosecution. I could not oppose such an action. It is the parish’s right to do so. I would however advocate for mercy. As for the diocese, before prosecution, the task at hand is the commitment to weigh serious ecclesiastical penalties first.

I have seriously considered this matter from a variety of perspectives but that does not mean that I am convinced that I am right. I know and fully understand that Father Oscar’s actions have only indirectly touched me. Others have been more strongly affected, either directly or indirectly. I am aware that my brothers in the priesthood have felt this theft as a violation of fraternity and a betrayal of both trust and friendship. I cannot speak for our priest’s ability, desire, or will to forgive. I can only acknowledge that I am aware of these feelings.

Other individuals have been betrayed as well; mostly the lay faithful. Our laity have been asked so often to understand and forgive and I can assure you that I take my responsibility to speak on behalf of the Church, which is all of us, most seriously. I speak in the name of the Church but the individual parishes where Father Oscar has served have a voice as well. I do not envision that any individual parish will seek to pursue criminal prosecution but I fully understand the hurt and anger which undoubtedly will be stirred up in light of this theft and betrayal. I ask you to try to turn this moment from one of hurt and anger to a desire for healing, compassion and ultimately forgiveness. I am not negating the seriousness of the crime, I am suggesting a way forward which is more fully consistent with a good and merciful God.

I assure you I wish I could see another, more merciful, way to deal with this horribly distressing situation but full public disclosure seemed to be absolutely necessary. ❖

Amid Global Christian Persecution, This Coptic Archbishop Urges Unity
July 24th CNA

A leading Coptic archbishop said that Christians must “walk in the shoes” of those facing global Christian persecution, while overcoming a “false” divide between churches of the East and the West.

“As Christians, we believe in the example of Christ, who came and walked in our shoes, the humanity, to be our advocate.”

“And if we’re going to advocate for others, we’re going to need to walk in their shoes as well, whether they be in the Middle East or sub-Saharan Africa or Southeast Asia or anywhere else,” Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London and an international religious freedom advocate, told CNA in an interview last week.

“I think one of the false barriers we have is this ‘Christians of the East and Christians of the West’ mentality. A Christian is a Christian. The Body of Christ is the Body of Christ,” he added.

Archbishop Angaelos talked with CNA at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, hosted by the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. from July 15-19. The meeting - the second of its kind - featured religious and civic leaders from around the world, as well as delegations from 106 countries, meeting to discuss religious persecution and strategies to promote and defend religious freedom.

The archbishop, who spoke at the Ministerial, is the first Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, appointed to the role in 2017 after having served as General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom since 1999. He has also been recognized by Queen Elizabeth II as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his “Services to International Religious Freedom.”

The beheading of 20 Coptic Christians and one Ghanaian Christian by ISIS militants on the shores of Libya in February of 2015, filmed for global distribution by ISIS, was a “turning point” in global consciousness of Christian persecution, the archbishop said.

“I think they captured the imagination of people. I think it was one red line too many that was crossed,” he said. “They saw that these men were brutally killed for no other reason than they were Christians, and the grace with which they reacted was iconic.”

Also, he said, the refugee crisis used to be a “distant” phenomenon, he said, but now “Western countries have had to deal with the situation, and so it’s become more prevalent, more understood.” He also credited Pope Francis with helping bring international attention to the refugee crisis.

Christians are persecuted in more countries than any other religious group, according to the Pew Research Center, being harassed, detained, imprisoned, tortured, or killed for their faith in 144 different countries.

Christians in the West must actively “engage with” their persecuted brethren elsewhere, “speak with the people on the ground, see what they need, see how they want to be helped rather than how we think they should be helped,” he said.

“We’ve got to make sure this isn’t about us and our conscience, that we just feel like we’ve done something well. It’s actually about standing with people who are facing existential challenges,” he said.

Coptic Christians in Egypt continue to face harassment and acts of violence by their neighbors, but also face a quiet persecution of marginalization in the country with only “a few token appointments” to government positions, and “no significant appointments.”

This persecution is not a recent phenomenon, he said; the modern persecution dates back to the revolution in the 1950s with the revolution and the gradual radicalization of Egypt.

“We’ve started to see a change in Egypt, but it’s going to take a long time, it’s going to have to be intentional and programmatic,” he said.

The archbishop praised Pope Francis’ work to draw attention to the plight of persecuted Christians.

In 2013, Pope Francis referenced an “ecumenism of blood” that can unite Christians. Archbishop Angaelos noted that heard Pope Francis say that “before any of the major attacks had happened.”

“I think if you look at our history and our tradition, we have shared a history of martyrdom, a history of people dying for their faith,” he said.

“And so I am very thankful to His Holiness Pope Francis for having been a wonderful and clear and courageous and gracious voice, and I am thankful for the relationship he has with Pope Tawadros.” ❖

August 8: St. Dominic

August 9: Beheading of John the Baptist
Look to Jesus

By Chris Lyford

I just spent a week talking to reporters from nearly a dozen TV and News outlets regarding the revelation of systematic theft from one of our diocesan priests. Most of them I had already spent time with exactly six months ago when the names of other priests in our diocese who had been accused of sexual abuse were released to the media. I have to admit, many of the reporters greeted me with a look that said: “Hello again. Yikes! You guys are really going through it. I’m so sorry, but I have to do my job.” I told them that I looked forward to a time when I would greet them as they came to report on something good. These are professionals who work for organizations that often embrace the motto: “if it bleeds, it leads” regarding the daily news cycle. So they were their tenacious selves, wanting desperately to get some good interviews, but were only able to stop a few, humble parishioners who expressed calm reflections on the news of the day.

In the end, with each of them, I felt like I had been able to actually make a positive difference by treating the matters with respect and truth, and by so doing gave them a just glimpse of the heart of Jesus. My job is to intercept the circling sharks, protect the faithful, and perhaps, through the grace of God, make progress on converting some of the sharks, not to mention get the facts straight (which is not always the case).

As Catholics we are called to be in the world, but not of it. When the crowd raises its voice in anger, and the spirit of accusation breaks out along with the pitchforks, there is an un tempered momentum that wants to achieve an end. When tempers flare, our body ‘floods’ physiologically, causing the fight or flight response. Within our autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic nervous system functions like a gas pedal in a car. It triggers the fight-or-flight response, providing the body with a burst of energy so that it can respond to perceived dangers. Our body needs at least 20 minutes to recover from a stressful situation, and up to an hour to stabilize from an adrenal gland release. Just like your grandpa’s old ford pick-up, the only option when the engine is ‘flooded’ because someone pumped the gas pedal to vigorously, is to let it sit quietly for a time.

More and more we are finding out that the secular news media wants to create stories that cause all its listeners to have a visceral, physiological response to their ‘top story’. The hope is that people make an emotional connection with the ‘eyewitness news on channel “X” and become a huge crowd of faithful listeners, which will bring in big advertising bucks when the quarterly ratings come in. This dynamic is true with any entertainment source on the TV, web, or radio: they want to get you excited, lock them in, and see how much money they can make. They don’t really care if you leave.

If we think about the problems in the Catholic Church today, we may be tempted to lose our perspective; scandals by leaders; decline of the Church in the West; growth in the “nones” who have no faith at all; closing of parishes, etc., we might even get flooded ourselves. But no decision is a prudent decision when we’re flooded. For those of us who might be tempted to fight, or fly from the Church in the face of the many emotion inducing news from our church, we would do well to turn our gaze on Jesus for a time.

We all need to remember that Jesus understands the problems of this world much better than we ever will. The fact is, Jesus taught us, through his life, the strategies we need to be living out, in order to fulfill his command to “go and make disciples of all nations”. Jesus valued individuals over crowds.

Jesus spent time with those far from God. Jesus asked a lot of questions and listened in order to understand, not necessarily agree. Jesus knew that the problems can’t be solved through human power alone. Jesus preached Good News and invited a response whenever he determined someone might be open to responding to it. He is the foundation of renewal that can fix all of our problems. As we journey onward in our diocese, in our homes, and in our own spiritual lives, let us remember the simple phrase, “Look to Jesus” and become signs of hope for every person we encounter in our lives. ✩

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

Letters to the Editor

It is understandable that, as parishioners, we are outraged at the latest church scandal involving a priest. This time it is a pastor who has violated the trust of his parishioners and embezzled funds from not just one parish but multiple parishes in our diocese. We feel that we have been betrayed more time by the Catholic Church, and we are hurting.

But let us pause for just a moment and acknowledge that we are not the only ones who are hurting. What about all of the good priests in our diocese? The ones that, after spending a lifetime of dedication and sacrifice to answer God’s call, and who have never molested anyone or embezzled church funds, must once again stand before the accusing eyes of their congregation and try to explain how this latest scandal occurred.

These good priests are hurting in ways that we can only imagine! Maybe we need to consider how we as individuals can let them know that we understand their pain, and that they continue to have our trust, respect, and love.

—Bette Ann Fleischaker
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

I am a loyal parishioner and a member of St. Mary’s finance committee.

After Patrick Ziemann left and it was revealed that his boyfriend preceded him with a large sum of church monies, we never felt that the church gave us back that which was taken: trust, atonement, retribution, and ultimately forgiveness. To live a life in the footsteps of Christ requires a great deal of thought.

Here we go again, if Oscar Diaz is a God fearing man, he should be allowed to meet those he gave advice to. His friends feel betrayed. Money is of this Earth. Let us see, by example, how we should meet His challenges, His guidances. Bring Oscar before us.

—David Marks
St. Mary of the Angels Parish, Ukiah

I would like to express my complete disgust in how you are handling Father Oscar. I am appalled that no charges have been made and that you are going to advocate for mercy if any charges are filed. What is the message here? Once again the message is that a priest can get away with ANYTHING and nothing will happen to them. A priest can be a pedophile and not go to jail, a priest can steal from innocent people, low income Hispanic people, who believe deeply, give faithfully for every little “fake” collection he made up and NOTHING happens to him. The fact that he is not in custody today tells me that you are giving him every opportunity to “escape to Mexico” to live with his family, without any danger of impunity. That is absolutely disgusting. I am embarrassed to say I am a Catholic, because of the pedophiles, bit now this, and still nothing happens?! What’s next? Murderers without punishment! I am appalled that there will be no charges pressed and appalled that the message the Catholic Church is sending out is that “we take care of our own NO MATTER what crime they commit. Which by the way, He committed A CRIME! He should be in jail!!! I am very disappointed in the message that my faith is sending to the community.

—Adriana Call
Resurrection Parish, Santa Rosa

Letters Policy

Email: srdiocese1@gmail.com
Write: Letters to the Editor
North Coast Catholic
985 Airway Ct., Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Name, hometown, and daytime phone number for verification required. Short letters only, no more than 150 words. Letters may be edited for clarity or space.

NOTE: Views of correspondents do not necessarily reflect those of this publication.

www.srdioceses.org
Welcome The Chance to Be Part of the Solution

By Julie Sparacio

Recently, I have had the chance to review some of the policies we put in place when I started in 2003. It has been interesting to look back and to see the growth in our Victim Assistance and Safe Environment programs over the years. Continued research has demonstrated the long term effects of child sexual abuse and has expanded and deepened our understanding of this evil. With the changes in our world, and culture, vigilance has been necessary in order to keep our policies current and appropriate. I found statistics that claim in March of 2003—9.7% of the world’s population used the internet as compared to March 2019—56.8% of the world’s population uses the internet! No wonder it has felt like we need to constantly evolve in our policies, to keep up with a changing world!!

Originally, we asked that all clergy, and all employees and volunteers who have regular contact with children must be fingerprinted and trained. We then added all employees, and started asking our parishes and schools to look at their volunteers from the perspective of the child. Would the child think this individual was safe? I remember an FBI agent who told the story of the elementary aged child who was saved from an attempted abduction. This child had been told repeatedly not to talk to strangers, and yet, got in the car with someone they did not know. (The puppy lure) When the child was rescued, they were asked why they got in the car or talked to the stranger. The child responded that the man was not a stranger—he sat in his parked car for weeks, and waved at him whenever he walked home from school! From that child’s perspective, a friendly person they saw often was not the scary stranger they should stay away from.

One of the first things to consider when looking at the perspective of the child is how or where they met the person. Meeting people who sit next to you in Mass, who serve at the pancake breakfast, who pass the collection baskets, who are working in the office, all could have a level of familiarity that would be perceived as ‘safe’ by various ages of children and even the parents. So we expanded our requirements to include all volunteers that children would view as safe.

A few years ago, we added Eucharistic Ministers to the homebound when it was discovered that an inappropriate individual had slipped through and had been taking communion to a vulnerable adult. This last year we added all finance volunteers—asking that they also be background checked. Eucharistic Ministers and Finance Volunteers do not have to complete the training, but they must be fingerprinted. In June of 2018, the Bishops revised the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, now requiring that all volunteers who have contact with children (not regular contact, just contact) must be background checked.

It has always been the prerogative of the pastor to add any additional people to this list. Many of our pastors have decided that anyone who represents the parish in any kind of public ministry must be fingerprinted and trained. I applaud these pastors! They are looking at the people around them with a true awareness of the world we live in. They are laying a foundation of safety for the children in their parish. Over the next year, this expanded view is something that this office will look at carefully, keeping in mind the perspective of the child. It will be strongly encouraged that all volunteers at a parish or school be fingerprinted, as an added layer of reassurance to our families that anyone who is a ‘face’ of our parishes and schools has completed that background check.

I want to encourage each of you, if you are asked to complete a background check, to jump at the opportunity to support a truly safe environment for all of our children. If your pastor (or his designee—the Safe Environment Coordinator) tells you it needs to be done, welcome the chance to be part of the solution. I know that we all want to protect children, to ensure that our parishes and schools are a safe place for all.

“She Had a Heart for Souls”: The Life and Cause of Servant of God Maria Esperanza De Bianchini

“Maria Esperanza exemplified the beatitudes,” says Fr. Timothy Byerley, “and therefore was continually reconciling people with God and with one another.” Servant of God Maria Esperanza de Bianchini (1928-2004), a mystic and visionary from Barrancas, Venezuela, claimed her first mystical experience at the age of five, saying she had a vision of St. Therese of Lisieux giving her a rose. When she was twelve years old she reported having an apparition of the Blessed Mother at Betania, a home in Venezuela. Her title was “Mary, Virgin and Mother, Reconciler of all Peoples and Nations.” The diocesan bishop, Msgr. Pio Bello Ricardo, approved the apparition in 1987, in consultation with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (the future Pope Benedict XVI), who was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time.

She died after a long illness in a home on Long Beach Island, New Jersey, in 2004. In 2010, Bishop Paul Bookoski of the Diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey, opened her cause for canonization at the Cathedral of St. Francis of Assisi in Metuchen, with 1,100 faithful present.

Fr. Timothy Byerley, pastor of St. Peter Church in Merchantville of the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, is serving as vice postulator for the Beatification and Canonization Cause of Servant of God Maria Esperanza. He is also author of the 2014 book, Maria Esperanza and the Grace of Betania (Mary Mother Reconciler Foundation, 2014). He was ordained to the priesthood in 1985; his brother, Joseph, is also a (see Maria Esperanza, page 8)
On 24-26 June 2019, a preparatory meeting for the Amazon Synod was held in secret. Among the main persons involved are Cardinals Hummes, Barreto, Kasper, Baldiisieri...

In 1986, John Paul II in Assisi opened the door of the Church to paganism. He implemented Vatican II's document about reverence for pagans—de facto reverence for demons to whom they sacrifice. The archheretic Bergoglio abuses the papacy and promotes a pagan spirit in the Liturgy by introducing animistic elements. Thus instead of offering sacrifices to God, the devil and pagan demons will be covertly worshipped. Another point of the Amazon Synod is the cunning abolition of priestly celibacy, and thus the creation of chaos in order to avoid true repentance. They hypocritically refer to the Eastern Churches. But the abolition of celibacy is not the end. Bergoglio and his heretical team aim to introduce women's ordination to the priesthood. The precedent for the so-called restoration of the Church is to be the ordination of indigenous witches in Amazonia. It is another step towards the transition to the New Age Church of Antichrist. Bergoglio's anti-Church becomes the synagouge of Satan and drags people to hell. The words of St Paul are true about Bergoglio and the Cardinals having the same spirit of Satanism: "They are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." (2Cor. 11:13-14)

Bergoglio says that he fully implements Vatican II. The team of false apostles, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ, are digging a grave for the Church along with Bergoglio. God permits this state so that we may truthfully admit that the poisonous root of mass apostasy is Vatican II. The destruction process will not stop until an orthodox Pope is elected who will condemn heresies and the spirit of Modernism and syncretism of Vatican III! It is not enough to perform a "face-lift" like Bishop Schneider who draws an absurd conclusion that the heretical Pope Bergoglio must remain in office at all costs.

God wants one thing from us at this time, and that is true repentance. We need to return to the sound roots of our faith! These roots are the Gospel and the Apostolic Tradition also associated with the martyrdom of the Apostles and millions of martyrs. We must be ready even to lay down our lives for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. If we lose our life for Jesus Christ, we will obtain eternal life. Jesus clearly speaks of the radicalness of the Gospel: "For whoever desires to save his soul (life) will lose it, but whoever loses his soul (life) for My sake and the Gospel's will save it. " (Mt 16:25)

True repentance above all means to call a sin a sin, a heresy a heresy, a betrayal a betrayal. It is purposeful manipulation to emphasize marginal problems such as ecology or abolition of celibacy instead of repentance leading to salvation. To argue by the need to provide the Eucharist for the indigenous population and at the same time to require the preservation of indigenous cults is harmful antimission! The plan to misuse the Liturgy by merging it with the spirit of animism leads to a supreme blasphemy against God. Religious deceivers, headed by Bergoglio, promote the Amazon model as a programme of Satan, the angel of light, for the whole Church.

As for married priests, we, the Bishops of the Eastern Church, are well familiar with this issue. We can therefore say with all responsibility that today the abolition of celibacy in the Western Church will cause disruptive chaos. It will then be no possible to beg the necessary reform of the Church. The reform must be based on true repentance and on the return to the Gospel and its Spirit.

There is a religious society in the Czech Republic that has abolished celibacy. It was established 100 years ago by Catholic priests who were adherents of Modernism. After the abolition of celibacy, they soon began to ordain women as priests. The statistics about broken families of divorced men and women priests is very painful. It is by no means a model for true restoration of the Church. The catechism of this Church from the time of its founding is penetrated by Modernism and liberalism. It is the same spirit which was introduced at the Council by the Modernist Roncalli and has assumed power in the Catholic Church. Bergoglio has this spirit in full.

The true solution

The specific means of restoring priesthood is the formation of priestly fellowship. A group of 4-7 priests meet at an appointed place on Sunday evening. They spend one and a half days according to the model of the early Christians. The basic principles of the Christian community in Jerusalem are: 1) prayers, 2) apostolic teaching, 3) fellowship, and 4) the Eucharist (Acts 2:42). Interior prayer always takes one hour with short breaks. We focus our minds on the most fundamental truths of the faith. (http://vkpatrickahat.org/en/?p=11486). It is a struggle with mental distraction and physical weakness, especially when we are to kneel or stand.

It is useful to have our hands lifted up at times, at least when experiencing our self-surrender to God (1Tim 2). In perfect contrition, we confess our sins and have them covered by the power of the blood of Christ. We can slowly call upon the name of Jesus (Yehoshua) with faith. “If we walk in the light, the blood of Christ cleanses us from every sin.” (1Jn 1:7) In interior prayer, we also reflect on the reality of our death, the judgment of God and the question of happy or unhappy eternity. Then we experience spiritual union with Christ by being crucified with Him (Rom 6, Gal 2:20)

We consider the testament of Jesus from the cross in the words: "Behold, your mother.

Interior prayer involves inward and outward self-denial. The one who prays thus receives the power of God's Spirit and from Him the light and strength for the spiritual battle against sin and lies. One hour of prayer is followed by fellowship. We share our experience from the prayer with each other. The one-hour prayer followed by testimony is repeated four times on Monday.

During one of these four hours, it is useful to reflect on the texts of Scripture. We can use them in prayer as the source for a topical prophetic word for our Sunday sermon. The meeting ends with lunch on Tuesday noon.

A priest who will have the experience of fellowship and prayers will then train disciples in his parish who will have the same Spirit and bring a healthy programme of restoration of the family and true Christianity. The reform must start from the very beginning, from the first year in the seminary. The basic thing is to acquire a habit of interior prayer. One should devote it to two hours every day. Prayer is connected with the formation of fellowship.

To deal with the crisis in the Church by ecology or by the abolition of celibacy is nonsense.

—Elijah
Patriarch of the Byzantine Catholic Patriarchate

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Letters to the Editor, cont. from page 6

I found her to be a loving mother, a joyful woman and apostolic. She visited my parish and many others; yet despite her mission to save souls, her seven children and husband never felt deprived of her love and attention. They only recall great moments of joy and unity: her splendid meals, family singing and her undivided attention when they needed her counsel.

CWR: Do you have any favorite stories about Maria Esperanza?
Fr. Byerley: Once she was in Phoenix for a series of conferences. She had some free time one day, so (see Maria Esperanza, page 9)
We hope you are all enjoying your summer. We are loving the warm, sunny days and so is our garden! We have been enjoying fresh green beans and lots of zucchini (well, maybe Deacon Dave not so much on the zucchini). Tomatoes and eggplant are almost ready to pick and we can’t wait for the peaches to ripen. Just like a garden, we have to be nurtured in our faith to keep it alive and growing. As you have been reading these past months, we have “planted” the new updated Marriage Preparation Policy and have been having meetings and workshops up and down the Diocese for persons involved in marriage prep in their parish. All the components in the updated policy help engaged couples about the beauty of our Catholic faith, what it means to get married in the Catholic Church, and how to live out the faith in their vocation of marriage. We are hoping to “reap the fruit” of strong, faith-filled families in the years to come as these couples live out their marriage vocation.

We have shared with you in previous articles some details within the updated policy of the components for engaged couples to accomplish during their time of marriage preparation. We will conclude our discussion with this article.

One of the most beautiful (and misunderstood) teachings of the Church is that of Natural Family Planning (NFP) or Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs). Each of us are perfectly made in God’s image to fulfill His command to “be fruitful and multiply.” When an engaged couple learns how wonderfully a woman’s body is made and how easy it is to learn and recognize her days of fertility, they, as a married couple, can use that knowledge to plan or postpone a pregnancy. One of the components of the marriage prep policy is to provide each engaged couple a 2-hour class as a short overview of St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, the science behind modern NFP methods, and how the human body expresses the signs of fertility. The Diocese of Santa Rosa currently has teachers in two different methods of NFP: the Billings Ovulation Method and the Sympo-Thermo Method. These methods of fertility awareness do have some side-effects: strong marriages and a divorce rate of 2% or less! Who wouldn’t want that?

Another component for engaged couples is attendance in a “God Is! A One Day Journey Closer to God” retreat. This retreat has been presented at different parishes throughout the diocese and has been very positively received. It is an opportunity to renew your relationship with God by walking through the sacraments and ending the day with Mass. Every Catholic who is engaged should take the opportunity to go to confession before receiving the Sacrament of Marriage and that is provided in this retreat. The God Is! retreat is to be offered throughout the diocese and is open to anyone to participate, not just engaged couples. So please watch your bulletins, the North Coast Catholic, and the Diocesan website (www.santarosacatholic.org) for a location and day near you!

Marriage takes work, communication, sacrifice, and the determination to get your spouse to heaven. It also takes effort to achieve the goals you set for yourself. We know that all engaged couples desire to have a long and happy marriage, to be able to look their spouse in the eye 40 years down the road and declare “I love you more today than I did on our wedding day.” It is the hope of the Diocese of Santa Rosa that this updated Marriage Preparation Policy will grow the fruit of happy, healthy marriages and families, strong in their Catholic faith, setting an example for the greater community. We wish blessings on all engaged couples as they prepare to enter into the beauty and joy of a loving and faithful marriage in the Catholic Church.

And now for Ask FLO:

Dear FLO,

I love zucchini but my husband not so much. We have some growing in our garden and the harvest has been bountiful, but I think my husband has now seen one too many zucchinis on our dinner table. This is causing tension in our marriage. What can I do with all the zucchinis? Oh, and my husband too.

Signed: Not So Happy Gardener

Dear Not So Happy;

Have we got the perfect solution for you, Zucchini Enchiladas! Everyone loves Mexican food and your husband will hardly know that these enchiladas are stuffed with zucchini. (It works on picky-eating kids, too!)

Zucchini Enchiladas

3 cups grated zucchini (about 1 ¼ lbs.)
4 cups grated Mexican cheese blend
12 corn tortillas
1 cup sliced black olives
1 jar of your favorite enchilada sauce
1 cup sour cream (optional)

Warm the enchilada sauce in a small frying pan. Dip a tortilla in the sauce about 1 minute to soften. Lay flat and put on some grated zucchini, cheese, and a few slices of olive. Roll up and place seam side down in baking pan. Continue with the rest of the tortillas. Pour the extra sauce over the enchiladas. Sprinkle with more cheese and some olives. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Pass around the sour cream to spoon over individual servings. These are delicious! (Even Deacon Dave likes them.)

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

(Maria Esperanza, cont. from page 8)

She went sightseeing with family and friends. At one lookout point, she saw a young couple sitting in the back of a pick-up truck. The man looked like a rough character, covered in tattoos.

Maria Esperanza’s group took a group photo at the site. She told her son-in-law to invite the couple to join them for the photo. They agreed. Maria Esperanza said to the young man, “Those tattoos must have transformed. You weren’t likely to see the stigmata, for example, except on Good Friday. Bilocation is also something hard to see; she might be in both Venezuela and Italy at a given time, but people wouldn’t realize it until sometime later.

The gifts people could grasp were things like reading hearts, making prophecies, the scent of roses in her presence, a gold light shimmering around her that was unexplainable or rose petals beginning to fall. People at a prayer meeting might see her receive Communion mystically; a Host would appear suddenly on her tongue. I’ve reviewed many such written and spoken testimonies. It is unusual for a wife and mother to have extraordinary mystical experiences on a regular basis, but not unprecedented in Church history. Note the lives (see Maria Esperanza, page 10)
of Blessed Anna Maria Taigi (1769-1837) and St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510). God dispenses His graces according to His will, not our expectations.

**CWR:** There have also been Eucharistic miracles at Betania.

**Fr. Byerley:** Yes. In 1991, the chaplain of Betania was celebrating Mass for a big crowd. The Host began to bleed. It is being preserved in a monstrance in a convent of sisters in Venezuela. I’ve seen it myself. It has been analyzed by medical experts; it is human blood.

**CWR:** She predicted George W. Bush would win the presidency in 2000.

**Fr. Byerley:** Yes. A few weeks before the election, she was in a hotel suite with about a dozen people. A friend of mine was there. Someone asked her, “Who is going to win?” They showed her a newspaper with photographs of both candidates. She said, “The short one is going to win, but it will take a long time.”

My friend was thinking that there was no way she got it right. Unlike the elections in Latin America with which she was familiar, in American elections you know the next day. Well, it turned out she was right. The vote count was disputed in Florida, and it wasn’t until December 12th that the U.S. Supreme Court stepped in and stopped the counting, making George W. Bush the president. But, no one saw it coming.

**CWR:** What was Maria Esperanza’s message for the world?

**Fr. Byerley:** Her message was that the fundamental problem in society is the terrible division between people. We need reconciliation and the healing of wounded relationships, which can be racial, national, international, economic, class or religious-related. At the heart of it all is broken families. As goes the family, so goes society. Our Lady came to Betania not only to call us to family healing, but to help.

**CWR:** Why was Maria Esperanza in New Jersey at the time of her death?

**Fr. Byerley:** About 1995, Pope St. John Paul II began to manifest the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease. Maria Esperanza was distressed; she thought, “He’s the moral pillar holding the world together.” So, she did something radical: she offered herself on behalf of Pope John Paul II. Shortly after, she began to manifest symptoms of Parkinson’s. She had trouble walking and had to use a wheelchair. Eventually, her organs started breaking down.

In 2003, she forced herself to come to the U.S. for a mission. She spent Christmas 2003 in Connecticut, and then came to New Jersey. She was too sick to return home. She stayed at a house on Long Beach Island, New Jersey, where she died surrounded by family and friends.

**CWR:** Are her children carrying on her work?

**Fr. Byerley:** Yes. Her seven children are leaders of the Betania Foundation, which carries on her mission. There are 20 Betania communities around the world, including ones in the United States, South America and Rome. People in prayer groups live her spirituality.

**CWR:** The people in Venezuela have suffered from poverty, starvation and political repression in recent years. What do you think Maria Esperanza would say about this?

**Fr. Byerley:** She predicted that it would come to pass. She also predicted that the country would recover, and become a model for other nations on how to overcome civil strife.

**CWR:** What did she have to say about the Church?

**Fr. Byerley:** She loved the Church, and gave her life for Her. She was concerned about unity in the Church, and authenticity and faithfulness in doctrine. She had reverence for priests and religious.

**CWR:** What is the status of her cause for canonization?

**Fr. Byerley:** We’ve made progress. The theological commission has concluded its work, declaring that there are no errors in her teaching. The historical facts of her life have been confirmed. Right now, what we’re hoping for is greater enthusiasm from the Venezuelan bishops.

**CWR:** Do you have any final thoughts?

**Fr. Byerley:** Maria Esperanza is an ideal model of family life for our contemporary world. She was exquisitely balanced and joyful, yet fully committed to her Catholic Faith. To read her story is to believe that living a full and happy life is not in contradiction to Christian virtue, but in fact, unattainable without it.

Maria Esperanza exemplified the beatitudes, and therefore was continually reconciling people with God and with one another. The mission of her life was to proclaim and spread Our Lady’s message of reconciliation and to establish it in society by witnessing to authentic Christian family life. As St. John Paul II always reminded us, “Society passes by way of the family.” When the family is fractured, society is fractured. When the family is healthy, society is healthy.

The promotion of Maria Esperanza’s beatification is one of the greatest things the Church can do today to heal the family and thus reconstruct society.


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**Support Your North Coast Catholic**

With grateful hearts we extend a hearty “thank you” to all who made our annual BBQ such a delightful day for God’s glory. May God, who is never outdone in generosity, bless each of you abundantly—our generous hosts, dedicated Committee members and volunteers, families, and all who supported us by prayers and presence. For eight summers we have been blessed to gather together with friends new and old at the beautiful Smith Ranch. Each year we marvel at the wonderful friends God has given us. Thank you for making it possible, by your prayers and generous financial support, for us to live our lives of consecration in the service of God and of this Diocese. Each of you are remembered in our daily prayers—please continue to pray for us!
Discerning in, And Discerning Out: What Happens When Seminarians Leave?

By Michelle McDaniel

Denver, Colo., July 23 (CNA) - Catholic journalists know that discernment stories are popular because they give readers hope. And they often follow a pattern: They usually include a “God moment” in which the subject, through a dramatic circumstance, hears the word of God and finds with sparkling clarity, the call to become a cleric or religious. They end with ordination or follow final vows.

Jacob Hubbard’s discernment story isn’t like that.

Hubbard had multiple “God moments,” and he entered seminary because of them. But in seminary Hubbard realized that ordination wasn’t his calling. In November 2018, he discerned out of seminary.

“By our baptism, we’re all called to be priests, prophets, and kings,” Hubbard told CNA. “So although I won’t be an ordained priest, I’ll be living out my calling by being the priest of my family: the bridge between them and God, offering them Christ as much as I possibly can and relying on His Strength to do so.”

It could be easy to see Hubbard’s discernment out of seminary as a failure. In fact, many seminarians who discern out of seminary face a kind of stigma from their friends and family, and even from themselves. But that stigma is based on a misunderstanding of seminary’s purpose, Hubbard told CNA.

As Hubbard said, “The stigma today is that when people see seminarians, they don’t see them as discerning individuals, they see them as mini-priests.”

Seminary is a “house of discernment,” he said, “not a house of mini-priests,” adding that if a man leaves seminary, it’s often a positive sign of his ongoing vocational discernment.

Fr. Phillip Brown, President-Rector of St. Mary’s Seminary and University in Baltimore, agreed.

“As a seminary faculty as and as a rector, when a seminarian discerns out, and we’re satisfied that it was an authentic, good, discernment, we don’t consider that a failure. We consider that a success,” Brown explained.

“What I say to the seminarians is that in the end, the objective here is not to become a priest, but to be what God has made you to be,” Fr. Brown said.

Discerning with openness to God’s call

According to Fr. James Wehner, rector of Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, only about 30% of men who originally enter seminary are ordained.

“It’s not a failure,” Fr. Wehner said. “We think it’s a very healthy process of discernment where he and the Church recognize that he’s not called to priesthood.”

“But we want to give the guys an opportunity to discern and to form, and if they’re not called, they will leave here stronger, healthier, Christian men because they were totally open to the formation experience, so it’s a win-win situation.”

Even if a man leaves before ordination, Hubbard told CNA, “you can walk out a better man if you do seminary right. You could really figure out the areas you have believed lies your entire life. And then you can accept God’s love there instead.”

The difficulties and the fruits of seminary life

There are many gifts that come with entering seminary, but they come alongside trials, Hubbard said.

When he entered Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas, Hubbard found himself face-to-face with a slew of challenges.

A strict schedule and constant obligations kept him busy, even without the additional work a full-time student must face at the school next door, the University of Dallas.

“You need structure to build your life on, and that structure needs to include self-love, so doing things that you personally love, and then of course prayer where you receive love from God,” he said regarding structure.

The routine of seminary taught Hubbard that “it’s impossible to earn God’s love by your own measures. But the routine can open you up to being able to receive it more.”

Discerning into seminary

Hubbard said he had long considered the priesthood, with encouragement from his family, and reflected on it while journaling about his prayer life while in high school, and through retreats and mission trips.

After several invitations to visitation weekends at HTS, he attended one, and after a “God moment,” he chose to apply to the seminary, entering as a sophomore in college.

Discerning out of seminary

During Hubbard’s time in seminary, he worked hard to be engaged in the community and to take the opportunities presented to him.

The summer before his senior year, his pastoral assignment was as a counselor at The Pines Catholic Camp, a summer camp in East Texas. There, Hubbard worked closely with other counselors to teach and take care of children at the camp.

Hubbard told CNA that he was struck by some of the beautiful and inspiring marriages he saw the camp directors have, and the happiness he saw that came from their relationships with their wives and children.

That summer he also participated in Trinity Cor, “a two-week backpacking journey to discover your heart,” Hubbard explained. “To really find your manly heart and discover your masculinity, and it was awesome.”

“Coming back from that, I was really feeling like I had more grasp at my heart, and really had the question of discernment lodged in me from The Pines because I saw beautiful relationships there. That experience of The Pines mixed with deepening the discovery of my heart through Trinity-Core began the questioning of my discernment,” Hubbard said.

He sought out counsel about his questions, and trusting his spiritual director to keep his best interests in mind, opened up to him about everything.
Professing our Faith ~ Walking in Hope Building God’s Kingdom

Five years of Fidelity Bear Fruit for our Diocese

Parishes that reached eighty percent of their campaign target in pledges have been receiving 25% of all the funds generated by that parish. 25% of this became immediately available to the parish to use as needed, while 10% was invested in the parish’s savings fund in the Catholic Community Foundation of the Diocese of Santa Rosa. Next month’s North Coast Catholic will report in more detail how the parish share of the campaign was utilized.

On the Diocesan level, the campaign increased the endowments for the support of priests, deacons, and seminarians; Catholic education; new Diocesan ministries; and the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa; as well as funding for Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa. The Diocese also carried the expenses of both the Diocesan and parish shares allowing parishes which met their goal a larger share of ready cash.

The allocation of funds for the Diocesan share is represented by the pie chart.

Endowments to support our priests, deacons and seminarians received 26% of the Diocesan share (after expenses). This support was allocated to four areas, each receiving a quarter of the allocated funds (plus any funds restricted to that particular area):

- Priests
- Priest Retirement
- Seminarians
- Deacon Education

One of the most joyous fruits of the funds generated is to be seen in the recent ordination of our two transitional deacons, Deacons John Plass and Thomas Stuart. Both deacons, as well as all of our seminarians, have been supported and educated in part through the income from the seminarian endowment increased by this capital campaign.

Catholic education also received a boost, benefitting from 26% of the Diocesan share. Catholic schools participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church, integrating religious education throughout the curriculum. By providing academic excellence and moral formation, students receive a strong foundation for purpose-filled lives. Our goal is to ensure that every family who desires a Catholic education for their child has the opportunity to fulfill that dream. This requires the involvement and investment of our entire community, and this campaign provided an opportunity for increased involvement. The funds raised by the campaign were added to the Aquinas Scholarship endowment for subsidizing Catholic grade school tuition assistance, enabling the Department of Catholic Schools to extend financial assistance to a greater number of students.

Another area of positive growth is that of New Ministries. 23% of the Diocesan share was allocated to support growth in five ministries areas: Marriage and Family Life, Pro-Life Awareness, Hispanic Ministry, Stewardship, and Evangelization, each area receiving 20% of the funds allocated to ministry support.

A direct fruit of this campaign is the new Office of Marriage and Family Life. Ably run by Deacon Dave and Carlin Gould, the Family Life Office oversees the marriage preparation process for the Diocese, provides resources for families, and facilitates instruction in Natural Family Planning. The Office also provides support for Pro-Life Awareness in our Diocese. Hispanic Ministry was furthered through the development by the Department of Religious Education of Spanish-language training for catechists throughout the Diocese. A Diocesan position was created to increase parish stewardship awareness, emphasizing education in investing in accord with Catholic Social Teaching and awareness of planned giving opportunities. Evangelization efforts included support for the Office of Spirituality and increased support to the Sonoma State Newman Center.

Our local Catholic Charities is dedicated to serving the most vulnerable people in our community. They strive to have an open door for everyone in need. 22% of the funds generated by the campaign were allocated to continuing support of Catholic Charities. 50% of allocated funds went to the Family Support Center and 50% to general operational support. The Family Support Center provides housing, food, medical screenings, employment and housing counseling, and child care to needy families with children.

Founded for the service of the Diocese of Santa Rosa by magnifying Jesus Christ in union with our Lady, the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa have more than doubled in size during the course of the campaign and have purchased a new convent to accommodate the expanded Community. The Sisters serve at Cardinal Newman High School, St. Eugene Cathedral Office and School, in addition to teaching catechism, sacramental preparation, retreats and talks within and without the Diocese, and provide services in support of the sacred liturgy. The Sisters also serve in three Chancery offices: the Department of Catholic Schools, the Tribunal, and Development. The Sisters received 3% of the Diocesan share.

The capital campaign officially ends on December 31, 2019. No pledge reminders will be issued after that date.

Parishes, Deacons, Seminarians

Priests - 25%
$217,000
$47,000
$214,000
Priest Retirement - 25%
227,000
26,000
213,000
Seminarians - 25%
327,000
56,000
275,000
Deacon Education - 25%
227,000
2,000
225,000

Total distribution to Priests, Deacons, Seminarians
1,003,000
1,003,000

Catholic Education 26%
515,000
87,000
449,000

New Diocesan Ministries 28%

Marriage & Family Life 20%
163,000
1,000
163,000
Pro-Life Programs & Awareness - 20%
163,000
23,000
163,000
Pursh Stewardship & Development - 20%
163,000
1,000
163,000
Hispanic Ministry - 20%
163,000
173,000
163,000
Evangelization - 25%
163,000
1,000
164,000

Total distribution to New Diocesan Ministries
216,000
1,000
215,000

Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa

3%
100,000
9,000
110,000

Total Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities - Family Support Center
11%
409,000
46,000
403,000
Catholic Charities - Operational Reserve
11%
409,000
46,000
403,000

Total Catholic Charities
$5,955,000
$518,000
$5,437,000
Denver, Colo., July 25 (CNA) - NFP, or Natural Family Planning, is an oft misunderstood thing.

So much so that, to kick off NFP Awareness Week, one user joked in the "Catholic NFP TTA" Facebook group on Tuesday that she was celebrating the week with a drinking game.

"Take a shot every time a commenter opines about grave reasons. Another shot for when someone jokes that they're bad at NFP. What would you take a shot for?" she asked. The joke struck a chord, and other group members chimed in with more than 100 additional comments.

"How far is too far when you're abstaining?" EVERYONE DRINKS" one commenter proposed.
"Take a shot whenever someone claims Marquette is the perfect method for postpartum/everyone. Take another when someone argues with that person," suggested another.

This post, and its comments, illustrate not that NFP users are proponents of binge drinking, but rather that they are accustomed to being misunderstood—even, sometimes, by their fellow users of NFP—and that they've developed a sense of humor about it.

NFP is the umbrella term for a host of natural methods used to plan and space children that rely on charting a woman's menstrual cycle and related symptoms, including basal (resting) temperature, cervical mucus and hormone levels, among other things. The methods can be used to either achieve or avoid pregnancy, and are considered the only moral method of family planning by the Catholic Church; thus, many NFP users are Catholic.

So when The Outline, a secular, online publication, published last week an NFP article entitled "The Facebook groups where Catholic women shame each other about sex," women who use NFP were disappointed, but not surprised, they told CNA.

"Women join these groups to find support as they navigate the complicated and sometimes conflicting rules around family planning as Catholics, only to be met with judgment or contempt when they admit they may be struggling," wrote Mary Meisenzahl, the author of The Outline piece.

"NFP groups, as you might imagine, are also where women go to police each other's bodies and sexual lives."

The article included no interviews with NFP users, instructors or Facebook group administrators, and offered a handful of posts from only one NFP Facebook group—a secret, private group entitled "NFP: Catholic Style"—as proof that the culture of Catholic NFP is one of shame and judgment.

It concludes with a recommendation that the Catholic Church change its teaching on sexuality and contraception, "as many members of these groups are getting their feelings of shame directly from the church."

CNA spoke with multiple Catholic women and users of NFP who felt differently.

The study found that the efficacy of the Marquette Method of NFP for avoiding pregnancy was 99.4% effective with "correct use", and that it was 89.4% effective with "typical use" per 100 users. To compare, birth control pills are about 93% effective with typical use, while condoms are about 87% effective with typical use, according to the CDC.

A grain of salt and a sense of community
Laura Golden is a registered nurse and mother who lives in northern Minnesota. Golden has practiced the Creightone model of NFP for several years, and is training to become a Creighton NFP instructor.
She told CNA that she credits the method for helping her achieve two pregnancies after experiencing difficulties.

While Golden is not an administrator of any NFP Facebook group, she said she is a member of two—one that is Creighton-specific, and the larger, more general Catholic NFP group referenced in Meisenzahl's article. Golden currently instructs 13 couples in their use of the Creighton model - some Catholic, some not.

Golden said that she relies more on the Creighton-specific Facebook group; each NFP method comes with its own "jargon", she said, and it can be easy to confuse the different terminology.

She also cautions those who instructs to take what is said in the Facebook groups with a grain of salt.
"I tell them, if this is causing you anxiety, then delete it. If you need to turn off the notifications because it's just too much in your face, do that," Golden told CNA.
She said that for couples trying to achieve pregnancy, these groups can be overwhelming, since waiting each month to find out whether a pregnancy has been achieved can already lead to stress.

However, she added, these groups can also offer

(see Shaming Article, page 14)
Child & Youth Protection

If you or someone you know has been harmed by sexual misconduct by clergy, a Church employee, or volunteer, please contact:

Julie Sparacio, Director
Child and Youth Protection
(707) 566-3308
jsparacio@srdiocese.org

Save the Date
Guarde este fecha

Santa Rosa Religious Education Congress
Congreso de Educación Religiosa de Santa Rosa

Saturday, September 28, 2019
Sábado, 28 de septiembre de 2019
Cardinal Newman High School
Santa Rosa

• Registrations begins August 2019.
• Mailings go out in August.
• If you wish to receive the brochure, please send us your name, email & mailing address.
• El registro comienza agosto de 2019.
• Folletos salen en agosto.
• Si desea recibir el folleto, por favor envíenos su nombre, dirección de correo electrónico y dirección postal.

Contact: Carmen Perez Aanenson
Diocese of Santa Rosa
Department of Religious Education
(707) 566-3366   Fax (707)791-7495
dre@srdiocese.org

Shaming Article, cont. from page 13)

an important sense of community to NFP users who live in remote areas, or who do not personally know other NFP users.

“[I] live in a really small town and there’s probably three couples in our parish that are of childbearing years and are using a fertility method that I’m aware of at least,” Golden said. “So if you’re having an issue, you do feel really isolated because maybe you don’t know anyone else that has that issue or is even using a method that’s remotely familiar to you. And so when you are a part of this group, it does give you a lot of community.”

The article also missed the mark when describing the accuracy of NFP methods. Golden said. It cited a statistic from the Department of Health and Human Services, which states that NFP carries with it about a 25 percent chance of getting pregnant. However, it does not state the efficacy rates of each method of NFP, and it does not list the sympto-hormonal method of NFP (used in the Marquette Method, for example), on its list of method types.

In a study published by the National Institutes of Health, researchers tracked 204 women of childbearing years using the Marquette method of NFP over the course of a year. There were 12 pregnancies total in that year. The study found that the efficacy of the Marquette Method of NFP for avoiding pregnancy was 99.4% effective with “correct use”, and that it was 89.4% effective with “typical use” per 100 users.

To compare, birth control pills are about 93% effective with typical use, while condoms are about 87% effective with typical use, according to the CDC.

The “contraceptive mentality” and “just reasons” to avoid pregnancy

Mikayla Dalton is a Boston Cross Check method instructor and an admin for the Clearblue Monitor Methods (MM) NFP group on Facebook. She told CNA that her group has commenting guidelines that caution users against certain kinds of comments - those disparaging of others, those that attempt to start theological debates, those that are off topic, or those that encourage other users to go against the prescribed protocols of the Marquette Method, among other things.

The group tells members that any comments that go against the guidelines may be deleted, and that users may be muted or blocked if they are found to be hostile to the group. Dalton added that they also include a warning, telling women that while the group is closed, members are only lightly vetted, and that they should proceed with caution sharing personal sexual or intimate information in such a context.

“This warning strikes me as poignant now, after a person joined a group with the intent of surveilling its membership, to report on “the other,” having concealed - or not been upfront about - their identity and purpose in gathering information,” Dalton told CNA.

“Having a woman break the trust people had put in each other in the group, to get some kind of journalistic ‘scoop’ is disheartening. Accusing women of shaming other women... while shaming swathes of women... is ironic,” she added.

One kind of “shaming” comment in NFP groups that Meisenzah mentioned in her article are those that accuse NFP users of using the methods with a “contraceptive mentality” - in other words, that they are using NFP to avoid having children for selfish or unseemly reasons.

The term is incorrectly applied against users of NFP, Dalton said, and when she sees such comments in her group, she and many other members are quick to offer corrections.

“This particular phrase was used by Pope John Paul II in Evangelium vitae to refer specifically to a mental-ity arising from the use of contraception,” Dalton said, and he uses it in contrast to those who are following God’s plan for marriage and sexuality, under which the use of NFP falls.

Meisenzah added in her article that: “Humanae vitae refers to ‘serious reasons’ and ‘just causes,’ for avoiding pregnancy, but the preferred translation among the more extreme members of the Facebook group is ‘grave reason.’”

“The Church doesn’t give a list of specific circumstances that are valid for avoiding pregnancy. For some Catholics, this means, as one user put it, ‘God understands your reasons. It’s up to Him to judge. What is in your heart?,’ so each couple can make the choice that they feel is right for their specific situation. For others, though, a lack of concrete reasons means an opportunity to policse and shame women who are actively trying to avoid children.”

Humanae vitae is an encyclical written by Pope Paul VI and published in 1968. The document was written to explain Church teaching regarding sexual-ity, contraception and marriage, and upheld NFP at a time when many within the Church were calling for the Church to change its teaching and accept contraception.

Dr. Janet Smith is a Catholic professor who holds the Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Ethics at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and has written and spoken extensively on Humanae vitae. She has written about many different aspects about NFP including the “contraceptive mentality” and the reasons Catholic couples may legitimately use NFP to avoid pregnancy.

“The best description for the kind of reasons needed is ‘just reasons’ and the best understanding is that the couple needs to take into account their current and foreseeable duties and obligations. Succinctly stated, the reasons must not be selfish,” Smith told CNA.

“Having another child is such a great good on so many levels, to seek to avoid pregnancy cannot be made for trivial reasons and should be made only after careful, prayerful discernment. The Church does identify categories of reasons - the couple should take into account the economic, physical, psychological and social conditions in which they live,” she added.

Those reasons could include, for example, “experi-encing fatigue and anxiety that predictably impedes one’s ability to function at a reasonable level,” Smith noted.

“Decisions made on such a basis should be revisited regularly. People should be very hesitant to criticize the decisions couples make about their family size; the factors that need to be taken into account are not always accessible to outsiders,” she said.

The beauty of NFP

“You Me and NFP: Joy-filled living” is a website founded and run by four Catholic mothers, one of whom is a Marquette Method instructor. The intent for their website, and their social media groups, was to bring a more modern look and approach to the practice of NFP, some of the founders told CNA.

“We were researching NFP resources and they kind of have like a 1980s, 1990s kind of look to it,” Valerie Kelly, one of the founders, told CNA. “And we wanted to really brand it in a modern way while staying with (see Shaming Article, page 18)
Our Lady of Guadalupe Explores New Ways to Serve Those in Need

At Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Windsor, as a community of God’s children, we are committed to responding to Christ’s directive to love one another and care for those in need. We support a wide range of conventional outreach programs such as “Feed the hungry”, etc., but we continue to explore additional, non-conventional opportunities to serve our community. We have found just such an opportunity in the VITA tax preparation program.

There are many low-income individuals living and working in our community that pay taxes who are eligible for a tax refund that could significantly improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their entire family. However, for many of these individuals, filing an income tax return is a daunting challenge. For them, the forms and procedures are simply too complicated and the cost of professional help is too expensive.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sponsored program that was established more than 40 years ago by the federal government. The program is staffed by local volunteers who provide free preparation and electronic filing of tax returns for people with incomes of $68,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited-English-speaking persons who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns.

Every area throughout the United States has a designated nonprofit organization that contracts with the government to run the local VITA program. For the area that includes the Santa Rosa Diocese, it is United Way. The contractor then subcontracts with partners throughout their area. There are over 2 dozen partners in the Santa Rosa area. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Catholic Charities are each a subcontracting partner with United Way. At the present time, there are no other Catholic churches in the Diocese of Santa Rosa that are partners.

Our Lady of Guadalupe has provided VITA tax preparation service to clients in need for the last 5 years. Our contribution is provided by our volunteers. It costs us nothing. The federal government contracts with the regional nonprofit (United Way) to provide free training for the partner’s volunteers, and we are reimbursed for all expenses—rent, supplies, etc. as part of our contract with United Way.

This year, from the middle of February until the April deadline, 14 OLG volunteers were available every Saturday morning and every other Monday evening at our church to assist clients with their returns. We submitted 269 returns resulting in total refunds of more than $438,000 for our clients!

Latinos in our community are sometimes hesitant to take advantage of opportunities such as those afforded by the VITA program. Being able to provide this service at a Catholic church, where they feel more comfortable, can overcome this reluctance. We would definitely encourage other Catholic churches to explore this opportunity to serve.

National

Foster Moms Ask Supreme Court to Hear Philadelphia Case

Philadelphia, Pa., July 23 (CNA) - Two foster moms are asking the U.S. Supreme Court to protect the right of a Catholic foster agency in Philadelphia to contract with the city without being required to place children with same-sex couples.

“As the City of Philadelphia attempts to shamelessly score political points, dozens of beds remain empty and children are suffering the consequences,” said Lori Windham, senior counsel at Becket, which is representing the moms and the Catholic foster agency.

“It’s time for the Supreme Court to weigh in and allow faith-based agencies to continue doing what they do best: giving vulnerable children loving homes,” Sharonell Fulton, one of the plaintiffs in the case, has fostered more than 40 children through Catholic Social Services.

“As a single mom and woman of color, I’ve known a thing or two about discrimination over the years. But I have never known vindictive religious discrimination like this, and I feel the fresh sting of bias watching my faith publicly derided by Philadelphia’s politicians,” she wrote in an op-ed for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Tony Simms-Busch, the other foster mother in the case, said in a statement that she valued the freedom of choosing the foster agency that she felt best suited her needs.

“As a social worker I evaluated the quality of care provided by all of the foster agencies in Philadelphia. When I decided to become a foster parent myself, I chose to go through the agency that I trusted the most,” she said.

“The consistency, integrity, and compassion of Catholic Social Services has made all the difference in my journey through the foster care process.”

Last March, the City of Philadelphia announced that it was experiencing a shortage of foster families, in part due to the opioid crisis, and put out a call for 300 new families to help accept children.

A few days later, the city announced that it would no longer refer foster children to agencies that would not place them with same-sex couples.

One of those agencies was Catholic Social Services (CSS). Our Lady of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia that has been working with foster children since its founding in 1917. CSS serves about 120 foster children in about 100 homes at any one time.

City officials cited the group’s unwillingness to place foster children with same-sex couples due to its religious beliefs on traditional marriage, even though lawyers for Catholic Social Services argued that no same-sex couple had ever approached the agency asking for certification to accept foster children.

Catholic Social Services filed a lawsuit seeking a renewal of its contract, arguing that the city’s decision violated their religious freedom under the constitution.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ruled against CSS on April 22.

Christian Baker Asks for Dismissal of Lawsuit Over Cake Signifying Gender Transition

Denver, Colo., July 23 (CNA) - Attorneys for Denver-area cake artist Jack Phillips filed a motion Monday to dismiss a third lawsuit seeking to force him to create a cake that expresses a message contrary to his religious beliefs.

Colorado lawyer Autumn Scardina, who filed an unsuccessful complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission in 2017, is seeking $100,000 in monetary damages plus legal fees in the third lawsuit Phillips has faced in seven years.

Phillips, a Christian, is the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, a Denver suburb. He has operated his shop since 1993 and has focused his talents on artistic, custom cakes.

“Phillips wants to peacefully live out his faith as a cake artist by serving all people while declining to express messages that violate his beliefs,” the July 22 motion to dismiss, filed by attorneys with the Alliance Defending Freedom, reads.

“After losing in court, the state [of Colorado] was content to leave Phillips alone to do just that. But Scardina won’t allow it.”

“Phillips requests that the court dismiss the complaint so that he can return to the life he had before the state and Scardina targeted him for his faith,” the motion concludes.

Phillips has said in the past that he not only has declined same-sex union cakes, but he also declines (see News Briefs, page 16)
other types of cakes that go against his beliefs, including cakes for Halloween, bachelor parties, divorce, cakes with alcohol in the ingredients, and cakes with atheist messages.

Phillips in 2018 won a six year legal battle that led all the way up to the Supreme Court, whose ruling upheld Phillips’ religious freedom and freedom of expression in his declining to make a cake in 2012 that would have celebrated a same-sex union. Phillips said that particular kind of cake would violate his religious beliefs, but that he would create other kinds of cakes for the couple. Colorado law did not recognize same-sex unions as marriages at the time.

In the Supreme Court case, Scardina, who identifies as a transgender woman, sued Phillips for his refusal to make Scardina a gender transition cake—pink on the inside and blue on the outside.

Phillips then countersued the state of Colorado, claiming that he was being persecuted for his religious beliefs. The case was dropped in March 2019 “after the discovery phase demonstrated that the state was displaying ‘anti-religious hostility’ by continuing to pursue Phillips,” the National Review reported.

Sacred on June 5 of this year sued Phillips for a second time, claiming that he refused to make Scardina a birthday cake.

According to the complaint, filed with the District Court for the city and county of Denver, Scardina called Masterpiece Cakeshop to order “a birthday cake – one in a simple design that Defendants admit they would make for any other customer.”

The complaint noted that Phillips has said previously that he would be happy to make other kinds of cakes for LGTB individuals, as long as they expressed messages that did not violate his religious beliefs.

In the call, Scardina requested from Masterpiece Cakeshop a birthday cake for 6-8 people, with pink cake and blue frosting. A Masterpiece Cakeshop employee confirmed to Scardina that they could make such a cake.

“Ms. Scardina then informed Masterpiece Cake-shop that the requested design had personal signifi-
cance for her because it reflects her status as a trans-gender female,” the complaint states. It was at this point that Masterpiece Cakeshop told Scardina that they “did not make cakes for ‘sex changes.’” Scardina reconfirmed that it was a birthday cake, but Masterpiece Cakeshop declined to take the order and ended the call, according to the complaint.

Scardina called Masterpiece Cakeshop again, in case the previous call had been unintentionally dis-connected, the complaint states. Scardina spoke to a different Masterpiece Cakeshop employee about the same order, and that employee also declined the order, saying that making such a cake would violate their religious beliefs.

“Masterpiece Cakeshop, at the direction of Phil-
lips, refused to sell a birthday cake to Ms. Scardina because of her status as a transgender woman,” the complaint states.

The cake Scardina mentions in the new complaint is notably similar to the gender transition cake Scar-dina requested from Masterpiece Cakeshop in 2017, which was also requested to be made with pink cake and blue frosting.

ADF reported that Scardina had also asked Phillips to create a custom cake depicting satanic themes and images.

Catholic Groups Installing 5,000 Solar Panels in DC

By Christine Rousselle

Washington D.C., July 23 (CNA) Catholic organiza-tions are installing 5,000 solar panels in a five-acre space in Washington, D.C., in what will become the largest ground array of solar panels in the city.

The project is being led by Catholic Energies, which is a nonprofit organization that is part of the Catholic Climate Covenant. Catholic Energies is working with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington to design and create the solar panel field. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Wash-

ington owns the field, which is next to a retirement home and convent.

“Catholic Energies was born as a way of providing the time, the expertise, and probably more impor-
tantly, the resources,” for creating renewable energy projects in Catholic-owned-and-operated buildings, Page Gravely, the executive vice president for client services at Catholic Energies, told CNA.

These resources are primarily financial, as energy efficiency projects are typically expensive. Catholic Energies will team up with renewable energy compa-

is, who act as investors and work with contractors to make the projects come to life. In return, the invest-

tors receive a federal tax credit, and other financial incentives. In this project, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington will not pay anything for the solar panels.

In this project, IGS Solar is the investing company. Washington, D.C., has the highest solar tax credit in the country.

Gravely explained that Catholic Energies’ COO Dan Last kept being asked, “How do we actually put into action...Laudato Si? What can we do here at a parish or at a church?”

Initially, the group worked with LED retrofitting. LED lights are more energy-efficient than traditional incandescent light bulbs. The company shifted focus to solar after receiving numerous inquiries from potential clients about solar panels.

“I think really from the standpoint that there was familiarity with it,” said Gravely. “Folks that both could use it at home, or they just knew about solar and you know the growth in the solar market has been well-publicized, but also it was a larger impact,” he said.

Compared to an LED retrofit, solar panels are also far more visible and tangible.

“So we pivoted,” he said. The field in D.C. is Catho-

lic Energies’ second project in the area. In June, they coordinated the installation of 440 solar panels at Immaculate Conception Church in Hampton, VA. The panels will account for the entirety of the parish’s energy usage.

The project in Washington received some concerns and pushback from those who live near the site, who were concerned about the environmental impact of the panel installation.

Gravely told CNA that these concerns were con-
sidered, and there will be 100 trees planted in the field to create a screening effect for the panels, as well as to help beautify the area. Additionally, there will be flowers planted to help rebuild the bee, bird, and butterfly populations. Catholic Energies worked with the city to ensure that stormwater runoff would not be impacted.

“There’s still gonna always be a handful of the neighbors not happy with it, but we can only do so much. And we’ve done a lot,” said Gravely.

The panels are scheduled to be operating by March of 2020. The energy produced by the solar panels will be returned to the D.C. power grid, and the energy credits will be enough to cover the energy cost of 12 buildings owned by Catholic Charities of the Arch-

diocese of Washington.

US Bishops Decry Policy of Expedited Removal of Undocumented Migrants

Washington D.C., July 25 (CNA) - The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops spoke out Thursday against new Department of Homeland Security poli-cies that includes the expedited removal of undocu-

mented migrants who cannot prove to an immigra-
tion officer they have lived in the United States for two continuous years.

“This action is yet another escalation of this Admin-

istration’s enforcement-only immigration approach, and it will have terrible human consequences,” Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin, Texas, Chair of the of the US bishops’ migration committee, said in a July 25 state-

ment.

The DHS said in a July 19 notice that the new policy is meant to harmonize existing policies that treated migrants arriving by land and by sea differently. Expe-
dited removal has existed in US immigration law since 1996. Previously, the DHS could designate illegal aliens for expedited removal “within 100 air miles of the border and within 14 days of their date of entry regardless of the alien’s method of arrival.” The new policy allows DHS to expedite the removal of any undocumented immigrant anywhere in the United States, provided they are unable to prove they have been in the country less than two years.

The bishops called the new policy “unjust” and said it will stoke “fear in our communities.”

“The new policy will allow for the deportation of many more individuals without providing them an opportunity to seek legal counsel and have a hearing before an immigration judge,” he argued.

The DHS notice stated that undocumented immi-
gritants can apply for asylum when they are apprehend-
ed, potentially delaying an immediate deportation until a credible-fear hearing and a determination is made, NPR reports.

“Even those migrants who have long-standing ties to the U.S. and have been in the country for more than the requisite two years required under the new policy may now be subjected to expedited removal if they are unable to prove such to the satisfaction of an individual immigration officer,” the bishop said.

The DHS is seeking public comment on the new policy.

International

Six Months After Terror Attack, Philippines Catho-

lic Packed at Rededication

Jolo, Philippines, July 23 (CNA) - Despite the fresh memory of a deadly terrorist attack in January, the rededication Mass of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, an island in the Philippines, was packed with Catholics, an aid worker said.

“Security was really tight - police and soldiers locked down an entire block of the city...Yet the cath-

dral was packed. The dedication was attended by hundreds. It was inspiring to see the families of the victims and the survivors of the blasts there,” Jonathan Luciano, national director of the Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) in the Philippines, said in a report from the group.

The cathedral rededication was celebrated by Arch-

(see News Briefs, page 17)
Along party lines, with Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) Buescher, with nine senators not voting. The vote fell stated on the Senate Floor on Wednesday before Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kent.) the contrary, what the Constitution does forbid is faith that is disqualifying for public service. To Capitol, but there is nothing about living out one's Buescher will now become a U.S. District Judge in Washington D.C., July 24 (CNA) - The Senate on By Matt Hardo bership Confirmed as Federal Judge about what happened in Jolo. He “spoke of the partnership between Christians and Muslims” at the rededication ceremony. Luciano said he “spoke of the partnership between Christians and Muslims. With this rebuilding and this re-consecration, dialogue can restart.” Luciano said he hopes that ACN’s mission partners and benefactors will be interested in helping persecuted Christians in the Philippines after hearing about what happened in Jolo. “We have to reinforce the relationship between Christians and Muslims,” he said. “We can live harmoniously together.” Nominee Grilled Over Knights of Columbus Membership Confirmed as Federal Judge By Matt Hardo Washington D.C., July 24 (CNA) - The Senate on Wednesday voted to confirm Brian Buescher, a judicial nominee grilled by two senators last year over his membership in the Knights of Columbus. Buescher will now become a U.S. District Judge in Nebraska. “I can’t believe I need to repeat it here in the U.S. Capitol, but there is nothing about living out one’s faith that is disqualifying for public service. To the contrary, what the Constitution does forbid is imposing any kind of religious test for public office,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kent.) stated on the Senate floor on Wednesday before the vote. The Senate on Wednesday voted 51-40 to confirm Buescher, with nine senators not voting. The vote fell along party lines, with Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) voting No. Several presidential candidates, Sens. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) did not vote. During his confirmation hearings, Buescher faced pointed questions over his membership in the Knights of Columbus, and over the organization’s “extreme” opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, by U.S. Senators Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) and Kamala Harris. A series of written questions sent by Sen. Hirono to Buescher in December stated that the Knights taken “extreme” positions including supporting Californiā’s Proposition 8 in 2008, a successful ballot initiative to overturn same-sex marriage. Sen. Harris asked Buescher if he would end his membership in the Knights “to avoid any appearance of bias,” and if he would “recuse” himself “from all cases in which the Knights of Columbus has taken a position”. Sen. Harris said the Knights opposed a woman’s “right to choose” and asked Buescher if he knew about that stance when he joined, calling the Knights “an all-male society comprised primarily of Catholic men.” She also asked the nominee if he agreed with Supreme Knight Carl Anderson’s previous statements that abortion is “the killing of the innocent on a massive scale” which has “resulted in more than 40 million deaths”. A spokesperson for the Knights said the hostile questions hearkened back to a “sad history of anti-Catholic bigotry” in the U.S. Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia also rebuked the questioning in his weekly column on Jan. 9, writing that that “[t]his sheer ignorance, not to mention injustice, in the senators’ describing the Knights as “extreme” would be baffling—if it weren’t part of pattern of bigoted thinking already sanctified by other senators like Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) in her vulgar 2017 grilling of now-Judge Amy Coney Barrett (“The dogma lives loudly within you, and that’s a concern”).” Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) also defended Buescher in a July 18 statement, saying that “[t]his has been a long process and we’ve had to fight everything from political smears to outright anti-Catholic bigotry.” On Wednesday, he called the opposition to Buescher’s confirmation along with the questioning of the religious beliefs of other nominees, a “weird rebirth of McCarthyism,” according to Jason Calvi of EWTN News Nightly. In the Senate on Wednesday, Sen. McConnell noted, tongue-in-cheek, that the “negative bombshell” on the nominee was that he “is a practicing Catholic.” “My goodness. Imagine that, in the United States of America: a person of faith, serving in government,” McConnell said. “The Knights of Columbus are “known among other things for their love of their Catholic faith, their unparalleled commitment to charitable work, and for hosting barbecues and pancake breakfasts,” he said, in response to claims of the Knights’ “extreme” views. SRI LANKAN CHURCH RE-CONSECRATED, CARDINAL CHALLENGES GOVERNMENT Colombo, Sri Lanka, July 23 (CNA) - One of the churches in Sri Lanka damaged in attacks on Easter was re-consecrated Sunday. During the ceremony, the Archbishop of Colombo criticized the government’s investigation of the attacks. St. Sebastian’s parish in Negombo, nearly 25 miles north of Colombo, was re-consecrated July 21 by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith. The church was one of several targeted in bombings across Sri Lanka April 21. The attacks killed more than 250, and wounded another 500. During his homily, the cardinal encouraged Catholics and Muslims to work together to stem the spread of terrorism. He also challenged Sri Lankan officials to reconsider their political agenda, charging that there has been a failure in the investigation of the attacks. “The executive and the legislature were locked in a power struggle. They did not care about the international constituency against the country,” Ranjith stated. He said that “the selfish power hungry leaders did not worry about ordinary people... The leaders did not heed intelligence warnings... the security council did not meet since October because of the power struggle.” Ranjith said that “the current leaders have failed. They have no backbone. They must leave the government and go home.” “I have no faith in any of these committees and commissions of inquiry. These are election gimmicks. The leadership must allow someone else to run the country.” He expressed fear the investigation “will be brushed under the carpet,” and complained that the government “had been informed about the attacks more than three times” by Indian officials. At the re-consecration a monument inscribed with the names of 114 victims killed in the attack was unveiled. The Sri Lankan navy helped to rebuild St. Sebastians. The government has blamed the attacks on the jihadist group National Thowheeth Jama’ath, whom the police say was responsible for the attacks. The Islamic State has also claimed responsibility, saying the local jihadists had pledged loyalty to the group. ❖
Una Esperanza para el Futuro

Durante los últimos cinco años la Diócesis de Santa Rosa continuamente ha enviado estados de cuentas y recordatorios a los mil de generosos miembros de la Diócesis que hicieron promesas y compromisos en la campaña Capital Diocesana 2014. En esta edición el Católico de la Costa Norte damos un informe sobre los progresos de la campaña al prepararnos para su conclusión.

En primer lugar es importante reconocer con gran gratitud la generosidad de quienes hicieron promesas y fielmente han contribuido a lo largo de estos cinco años para cumplir esas promesas. Esto es de igual manera edificante y ejemplar. Gracias. Mientras que este aviso público es importante, espero que las notas enviadas desde esta oficina, algunos de los cuales han sido firmados personalmente por mí, sean una señal de que sus contribuciones no se dan por sentado. Les aseguro que sus donaciones no se dan por hecho.

El informe señala que los fondos recibidos han sido cuidadosamente contables así como han sido dirigidos para los fines indicados en el material original de la campaña. Los informes señalan que aproximadamente el 35% de todos los fondos recaudados se dedicaron a las parroquias del cual vinieron. La cuota de ‘Diócesis’, aproximadamente el 65%, se ha distribuido a las distintas categorías como esta señalado en los documentos de la Campaña. Mientras que las cantidades son importantes y ayudan a fortalecer la estabilidad financiera de la Diócesis no proporcionan los fondos creados para todas las necesidades de los distintos ministerios de la Diócesis. La Campaña Anual del Ministerio sigue siendo la ‘sangre de vida’ de la Diócesis. Los fondos de la Campaña Capital seguirán proporcionando un suplemento a los ingresos de la Campaña Anual del Ministerio para los Departamentos y Oﬁcinas Diocesanas.

El fruto de la Campaña Capital ya es visible en lo que hace posible la Diócesis a considerar el establecimiento de una Oficina de Vida Familiar. Esta oficina, ya en sus comienzos, es muy necesaria como vehículo para el fomento y fortalecimiento de la vida conyugal en nuestra Diócesis. El trabajo inicial de la oficina se ha centrado en la revisión y renovación de la Póliza de Preparación Matrimonial. Esa Póliza ha de tomar efecto en Enero 2020. Esto es en respuesta a la Exhortación Apostólica de San Juan Pablo sobre la familia que fue reiterada por la Exhortación del Papa Francisco, Amoris Laetitia. Ambos de estos documentos insisten en la necesidad de una preparación sólida y sistemática para el matrimonio. Esta preparación no es simplemente una preparación para la ‘boda’ sino una preparación para las realidades de la vida familiar abnegada. Si los jóvenes los reconocen o no, se están preparando para el matrimonio por una cultura y una sociedad que ha perdido su sentido de abnegación, compromiso, constancia y reconocimiento del valor y la dignidad de la persona humana, especialmente la persona recién concebida en el vientre de su madre. Por lo tanto, preparación para el matrimonio católico debe incluir, como insisten los documentos papales, preparación para el. Se considera la preparación para el matrimonio que comienza años antes de cualquier intención real de matrimonio. Los jóvenes están siendo preparados o formados para el matrimonio por la cultura en que viven, y a pesar de esa formación no es coherente con la comprensión católica del matrimonio. Esta es la importancia de la Oficina de Vida Familiar.

La cantidad del bien ya avanzado, así como el mayor potencial para bien a través de la Diócesis hecha posible por la generosidad a la Campaña Capital es más importante. Sólo Dios sabe que largo y ancho este beneficio se propagará pero todos sabemos que el crédito para lo que bien se logra va a aquellos que han contribuido y siguen contribuyendo a este esfuerzo.

El plan es concluir el envío de recordatorios de compromiso en Diciembre para que se pueda proporcionar una contabilidad final en Enero del 2020. Aunque es atendido por mí parte mencionar, anuncio a quienes han hecho promesas a perseverar hasta Diciembre del 2019 y, si es posible, hacer un esfuerzo generoso para completar su compromiso en su totalidad.

Las necesidades de la Diócesis y la fragilidad financiera que forma parte de nuestra historia continuarán, pero este esfuerzo de Campaña Capital ha hecho mucho para fortalecernos y proporciona una esperanza más segura para el futuro. Una vez más, gracias a todos los que han contribuido tan generosamente y desinteresadamente a esta Campaña y que Dios que ve todo, ¡le recompense abundantemente!

Shaming Article, cont. from page 14)

traditional Church teaching. But we are really sharing it and evangelizing with it. We meet people where they are and are taking them where the Lord wants them to be.”

Their website is clean and pretty, with plenty of millennial pink, sprinkled with gold accents. It includes videos and video testimonials from women who share why they use NFP, a “FAQ” segment on NFP, and instruction in the Marquette Method through Sarah Tramonte, one of the co-founders.

The group has a Facebook page, but comments are closed. The four women, who are also mothers, said they worried about having enough time to regulate comments in the way they would like, so they decided not to allow them.

Their Instagram page does have comments though, and while they get the occasional naysayer or negative comment, it is by and large positive comments from women seeking advice or understanding, they told CNA.

However, they added, sometimes sharing the truth about the Church’s teaching may make people uncomfortable, even when it is done in a loving way.

“It’s never right to speak uncharitably, but it’s always right to charitably speak the truth,” Annell Schraufnagel, one of the cofounders of You Me and NFP (YMNFP), told CNA.

“So a lot of these conversations that women are having, I think (they) are trying to, as sisters, come to the truth of their Catholic faith because the truth of their Catholic faith ultimately will bring them joy.”

That is something that can be easy to miss for an NFP outsider looking in - that practicing NFP, as a part of the Catholic faith, is something that brings many women and families peace and joy - even if they complain about some nitty gritty details along the way.

“Sometimes the Catholic Church’s teachings are hard, but sometimes hard things bring us happiness,” Schraufnagel said. “And...the ‘why’ behind the Catholic teaching, we need to talk about them.”

Besides some of the physical benefits of NFP, which include avoiding putting additional hormones or medical devices in one’s body, the “Why NFP” section of the YMNFP website includes women talking about the “joy” that NFP brings because of the sacrifices it requires, such as periodic abstinence. They also mention feeling at peace because they are able to plan their families according to what they believe is God’s plan for sexuality and marriage.

“I don’t want to sugarcoat NFP and say that it is all sunshine and daisies because it requires sacrifice and sacrifice is never easy! But the joy that grows out of selfless love, expressed through NFP, is one of the greatest blessings you can give to yourself and to your spouse,” reads one post from Ellen on YMNFP.

“I adore my husband, and by eliminating the pill I’m now so much more able to show him that. We are living, and loving each other, authentically,” reads another quote from Jen, an NFP user.

Couples who practice NFP also experience lower divorce rates, YMNFP notes. According to a study published by the National Institutes of Health, “among the women who ever used NFP only 9.6 percent were currently divorced compared with the 14.4 percent who were currently divorced among the women who never used NFP!” The study noted that the religiosity of the couples who practice NFP may be a contributing factor to the lower divorce rates.

Schraufnagel said the numerous benefits of NFP that she and her cofounders have experienced are the main reasons they started YMNFP.

That’s a huge aspect of our team at You Me and NFP, we are really passionate because we see how beautiful the Catholic Church’s teachings are and how much joy is brought into our lives because of it, including, our family lives as well. And part of that is our sexuality,” she added.

“So I think it needs to be brought up and talked about in the culture that these truths are beautiful."
Noticias

Obispos de Puerto Rico se pronuncian tras renuncia del gobernador Rosselló

REDACCIÓN CENTRAL (ACI Prensa) - Los obispos de Puerto Rico emitieron una declaración titulada “Encomienda tus caminos al Señor y confía en Él”, luego que el gobernador Ricardo “Ricky” Rosselló anunció que su renuncia, que se hará efectiva el próximo 2 de agosto.

Rosselló renunció luego de más de 10 días de protestas ciudadanas tras la difusión de 889 páginas de un chat del gobernador con sus colaboradores en la aplicación Telegram, donde él y otros profesan insul- tos contra los homosexuales, las mujeres, entre otros.

En un video de Facebook publicado el miércoles 24 de julio, el gobernador anunció su renuncia y dijo que lo reemplazará la actual secretaria de Justicia, Wanda Vázquez.

“Luego de escuchar el reclamo, hablar con mi familia, pensar en mis hijos y en oración, hoy les anuncio que está renunciando al puesto del gober- nador efectivo el 2 de agosto”, dijo Rosselló, y espera que su decisión “sea un llamado de reconciliación ciudadana”.

En el comunicado publicado este 25 de julio, los obispos invitaron “a todos los hermanos puertorriqueños a mantener la serenidad y el equilibrio democrático que amerita este periodo de transición gubernamental”.

“Es hora de seguir adelante en este momento crucial de la historia que nos llama a una profunda reflexión como sociedad puertorriqueña. Hagamos de este momento una gran oportunidad para unirnos como pueblo y trabajar juntos, fuera de banderas y partis- dones, en la búsqueda del bien común para superar la crisis fiscal, la corrupción, la violencia y otros males”, precisaron.

“¡Qué nadie se quede de brazos cruzados, porque, unidos es posible un mejor Puerto Rico! Que aquellos y aquellas que continúen en la dirección de nuestra democracia respeten los espacios sagrados de gobernanza que les corresponde asumir”, exhortaron.

La crisis en Puerto Rico

El 18 de julio los obispos puertorriqueños señalaron en un comunicado Rosselló ya no podía seguir ejer- ciendo el cargo de gobernador.

“Señor Gobernador, usted ha abusado al cor- romper y atacar a personas y grupos de nuestro vivir democrático desde su aspecto sagrado de ejecución en el poder de la Rama Ejecutiva que ya no puede seguir ejerciendo”, dijeron los prelados.

Los obispos se pronunciaron ante la ola de protes- tas que pedía la renuncia de Rosselló, luego que el Centro de Periodismo Investigativo (CPI) de Puerto Rico publicó 889 páginas del chat privado del gober- nador con sus colaboradores cercanos del gobierno.

Según diversos medios, el chat de la aplicación Telegram tiene mensajes contra los homosexuales, las mujeres y los adversarios políticos, entre otros.

Ante el escándalo, el gobernador pidió disculpas públicamente y dijo que el contenido del chat era inapropiado, pero no un delito. Dos altos funcionarios que también participaban en las comunicaciones, comprendidas entre noviembre de 2018 y enero de 2019, renunciaron.

Carla Minet, directora ejecutiva del CPI, dijo a BBC Mundo que “el chat revela una dimensión hasta ahora desconocida sobre la forma como se maneja- ban los asuntos públicos y las decisiones de política pública a través de los teléfonos celulares”.

“Esas conversaciones tenían lugar entre el gober- nador y sus secretarios de gabinete; y en ellas par- ticipaban también personas allegadas a Rosselló que no tienen ningún puesto público, empresarios que tienen intereses económicos y que buscaban contratos con el gobierno”, agregó.

¿Sabías que la Madre Ángelica era una gran devota del Divino Niño?

Redacción Central (ACI Prensa) - Un hecho muy poco conocido de la vida de la Madre Ángelica, fundadora de EWTN, la cadena de televisión católica más grande del mundo, fue su gran devoción por el Divino Niño Jesús.

La Madre Ángelica conocía la iglesia del Divino Niño Jesús, en el barrio 20 de Julio de Bogotá, durante un viaje realizado a América del Sur en junio de 1996. En ese mismo viaje visitó también Perú, Ecuador y Bolivia.

La devoción del Divino Niño comenzó durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, promovida por el sacer- dote salesiano italiano Juan del Rizzo, a cargo de la evangelización del humilde barrio 20 de Julio de la capital colombiana.

El caritato por el Divino Niño ha rebasado las fron- teras colombianas y ha llegado a diversos países del mundo.

El periodista Raymond Arroyo, en su biografía de la Madre Ángelica - “Mother Angelica: The Remark- able Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles”- señala que en su viaje de 1996, la fundadora de EWTN fue llevada por su anfitrión en Colombia, el P. Juan Pablo Rodríguez, a la iglesia del Divino Niño Jesús.

Mientras rezaba a la imagen de la Virgen de la Madre de los Ángeles, en Hanceville, estado de Alabama, Estados Unidos, no surgió directamente por broma o piropo a la Madre Ángelica, pues las excavaciones en el terreno de lo que luego sería el Monasterio de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, en Hanceville, estado de Ala- bama, Estados Unidos, no surgió directamente por el Divino Niño, pues las excavaciones en el terreno habían comenzado alrededor de seis meses antes de la visita de la Madre Ángelica a Colombia.

“Lo que el encuentro con el niño Jesús hizo fue cristalizar la visión de la Madre para el monasterio de Hanceville, alterando radicalmente los planes origina- les. Antes lo que ella consideró un mandamiento divino, la ‘sencilla capilla de granja’ no sería tal;”, asegura Arroyo.

Gobernador de Texas firma ley para proteger a bebés sobrevivientes del aborto

REDACCIÓN CENTRAL (ACI Prensa) - El 18 de julio el gobernador de Texas (Estados Unidos), Greg Abbott, firmó la ley que protege a los bebés sobre- vivientes del aborto.

“En algunos estados los líderes apoyan el aborto hasta el último momento del embarazo, incluso después de que el niño ha nacido. No en Texas. Firmo formalmente la Ley de Nacidos Vivos que declara ilegal matar a un niño que sobreviva a un aborto. También aseguro que el bebé reciba atención médica”, escribió Abbott en su cuenta de Twitter.

La ley, patrocinada por representante estatal Jeff Leach, exige a quienes hacen abortos que propor- cionen la atención médica esencial a los bebés que sobreviven a esta práctica. De no hacerlo pueden afrontar algunas penas y una multa de hasta 100 mil dólares.

“Estamos trazando una línea. Estamos procla- mando alto y claro que un bebé que sobrevive a un aborto merece la total protección de la ley y el más alto estándar de atención de salud”, dijo el gobernador según informa el Texas Tribune.

La norma, que fue aprobada en mayo en el Senado y en abril en la Cámara de Representantes, tam- bién tiene algunos críticos como la representante demócrata Donna Howard, quien señaló que el objetivo de la ley “es claro: estigmatizar el aborto, desinformar al público, intimidar a los médicos y interferir con la capacidad de una mujer de buscar atención médica”.

Dyana Limon-Mercado, representante de Planned Parenthood Texas Votes, dijo a su turno que la ley “es falsa y peligrosa. Ha sido alentada por organizaciones contrarias a la elección para estigmatizar el aborto, intimidar a los médicos y una vez más, interferir con los derechos de las mujeres”.

Diversos reportes de los Centros para el Control de Enfermedades (CDC, por sus siglas en inglés) señalan que entre los años 2003 y 2014 hubo alrededor de 588 muertes de infantes luego de “la terminación de un embarazo” o aborto.

De estos, 143 “definitivamente” nacieron vivos luego de un aborto y vivieron algunos minutos, e incluso días. Los reportes admiten además que la cifra puede estar por debajo del número real de sobrevivientes.

Varios sobrevivientes del aborto como Melissa Ohden, Joseph Presley; Gianna Jessen y Claire Culwell han dado su testimonio ante distintos foros públicos en todo el país este año, incluyendo el estado de Texas. Según informa LifeNews, el Instituto de Infor-

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Panadero que rechazó hacer pastel de cambio de sexo busca desestimar demanda

Denver (ACI Prensa) - El último lunes, los abogados de Jack Phillips, el panadero cristiano que se negó a elaborar pasteles que expresen mensajes contrarios a su fe, como el cambio de sexo, presentaron una moción para desestimar una tercera demanda en su contra.

Phillips quiere vivir su fe pacíficamente como artista de pasteles sirviendo a todas las personas y negándose a expresar mensajes que violen sus creencias, dice la moción de desestimación del 22 de julio, presentada por abogados de Alliance Defending Freedom.

Phillips, es el propietario de Masterpiece Cakeshop, una pastelería ubicada en Lakewood, un suburbio de Denver. Esta tienda ha centrado su talento en pasteles artísticos y opera desde 1993.

Asimismo, la moción también afirma que "después de perder en la corte, el estado (de Colorado) estuvo satisfecho con dejar a Phillips para continuar con su trabajo. Sin embargo, Scardina no lo permitirá".

Por ello, los abogados solicitan que "el tribunal desestime la queja para que pueda volver a la vida que tenía antes de que el Estado y Scardina lo ataquen por su fe".

Anteriormente, Jack Phillips ha manifestado que no solo ha rechazado elaborar pasteles sobre "la unión del mismo sexo", sino que también pasteles de Halloween, despedidas de solteros, divorcios, pasteles con alcohol en los ingredientes o con mensajes ateo, los cuales van en contra de sus creencias.

En 2018, Phillips ganó una batalla legal que duró seis años en el tribunal hasta la Corte Suprema, y cuya decisión reafirmó la libertad religiosa y la libertad de expresión de Phillips: el panadero se negó a hacer un pastel que celebre una unión entre personas del mismo sexo en 2012.

En aquella ocasión, Phillips propuso crear otro tipo de pastel para la pareja, puesto que la idea inicial era contraria a sus creencias religiosas. Asimismo, la legislación de Colorado no reconocía las uniones del mismo sexo como matrimonios.

Luego de que la Corte Suprema, Scardina, quien se identificaba como una mujer "transgénero", demandó a Phillips por negarse a hacer un pastel que celebraba la transición de género del abogado: rosa por dentro y azul por fuera.

Así es que el panadero contradió la demanda del estado de Colorado, alegando que estaba siendo perseguido por sus creencias religiosas. Asimismo, el caso fue abandonado en marzo de este año, debido a que se descubrió que "el estado estaba mostrando "hostilidad antirreligiosa" al continuar persiguiendo a Phillips", expresó el National Review.

El 5 de junio de este año, Scardina demandó a Phillips por segunda vez, alegando que se negó a prepararle un pastel de cumpleaños. "Masterpiece Cakeshop, bajo la dirección de Phillips, se negó a venderle un pastel de cumpleaños a la Sra. Scardina debido a su condición de mujer transgénero", afirma la queja.


La Dignidad De Los Migrantes Ha Sido Cambiada Por "Un Plato De Lentejas" En México

(ACI Prensa) - La Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano reafirmó su preocupación por la falta de acogida humanitaria hacia los migrantes, cuya dignidad ha sido vulnerada y cambiada por "un plato de lentejas".

Mediante un comunicado del 23 de julio, la institución rechazó la falta de políticas migratorias en México y que, como consecuencia, se haya sometido a las políticas e imposiciones de Estados Unidos, "aceptando la incoherencia de unir negocios con el derecho y la necesidad de migrar, buscando la oportunidad de una vida mejor".

"Tristemente constatamos que esta dignidad como personas e hijos de Dios está siendo vulnerada, pues ha sido "cambiada por un plato de lentejas" lamentó.

En ese sentido, la CEM y su Dimensión de Movilidad Humana manifestaron su preocupación por "la falta de acogida verdaderamente humanitaria a nuestros hermanos migrantes, que refleje nuestras convicciones en materia de reconocimiento y protección de los derechos de todos los seres humanos por igual".

Asimismo, representantes de la Iglesia en México recordaron las palabras del Papa Francisco cuando mencionó que "no se trata solo de migrantes: se trata de nuestra humanidad". "Desea concientizar al mundo entero que la persona migrante no debe verse como objeto del cual puedo servirme y mucho menos al cual tengo oportunidad y derecho de rebajar o ignorar su dignidad", expresaron.

Bajo esta línea, indicaron que el Santo Padre anima a "tener actitudes concretas para con los migrantes: acoger, proteger, promover e integrar", a dejar de lado los miedos de encontrarse con el otro, y de esa manera levantar los "muros" que impidan una verdadera integración.

"Un muro no solo protege, sino aísla del encuentro con el otro; levantarlo nos dejamos llevar por el temor y la incertidumbre. Los muros no solo se construyen con piedras y ladrillos sino también con actitudes negativas como lo despliega de miles de efectivos de la Guardia Nacional en nuestras fronteras como una solución fallida para frenar la migración; un muro no atiende a la raíz y a las verdaderas causas del fenómeno migratorio”, recalcaron.

Por ello, aseguraron que el combate contra la pobreza y la desigualdad en el país y en Centroamérica pareciera “quedado sustituido por el temor ante el otro, que es nuestro hermano”. Del mismo modo, destacaron la Iglesia y la sociedad civil siempre ha velado por la “no criminalización de las personas migrantes y de los defensores de derechos humanos, que luchan a favor de la dignidad, a contrario corriente y con riesgos importantes para su propia seguridad e incluso su vida”. Además, que la dignidad y los derechos humanos de los migrantes están “muy por encima de cualquier negociación”.

"La Iglesia está convencida de que es necesaria y urgente una justa política migratoria que, por un lado, garantice un ordenado, responsable y regulado libre tránsito de personas, y que vele por los intereses legítimos de nuestra nación", expresaron. También explicaron que “el hambre, la pobreza, la violencia, y la falta de oportunidades” son las causas de la migración interna y externa, la cual exige la “creación de fuentes de empleo y reconstrucción del tejido social”.

De acuerdo con el CEM, miles de migrantes están a la espera de cruzar la frontera con el solo objetivo de huir de la violencia y la miseria. Otros tantos son detenidos y son deportados a México, ahora m ã ñ os bajo el programa unilateral americano “Quedate en México”, bajo el cual miles de centroamericanos, esperan una resolución de su situación migratoria, colocándolos un brazalete electrónico y restringiéndoles su movimiento a un lugar específico", afirmaron.

Asimismo, recordaron que no se puede ser indiferente ante el dolor que padecen los migrantes ante la falta de ayuda humanitaria, y quienes "exponen a graves riesgos en las ciudades fronterizas impidiendo su pleno y libre acceso a la asistencia legal".

En su comunicado, la iglesia mexicana muestra preocupación por estos cinco puntos principales: 1. La defensa de la dignidad y de los derechos humanos de todos los migrantes 2. Las redadas en Estados Unidos con masivas detenciones de migrantes, su trato inhumano, con el grave peligro de la separación de las familias. 3. La amenaza de las deportaciones masivas a México desde diversas ciudades de los Estados Unidos y la política de terror psicológico en la que viven migrantes en ese país. 4. El cambio en la política migratoria del gobierno de México, pasando de una actitud de bienvenida, a otra de contención y deportación. 5. La insistencia que se ha recibido de parte de diferentes dependencias como PFP, SER, INM, SEGob solicitando información que los alberguen manejen de manera interna, para salvar y proteger la vida de las personas en tránsito.

"La Iglesia, como madre y protectora, se preocupa y se ocupa de los pobres y necesitados, y los migrantes son en este momento, los pobres entre los pobres, la colaboración de los obispos mexicanos y norteamericanos en la caridad para este sector de la sociedad, manifiestan su deseo de seguir colaborando con todas las iniciativas que permitan encontrar un camino de mayor seguridad y protección de los derechos humanos de quienes emigran para salvar la vida de las personas en tránsito."

Obispos De Estados Unidos: Cierre Del Programa De Refugiados Es “Preocupante”

Washington D.C. (ACI Prensa) - El presidente del (vea Noticias en Español, página 21)
Comité de Migración de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB), Mons. Joe S. Vásquez, calificó de “preocupante” si son ciertos los recientes informes sobre grandes recortes a los programas de reubicación y asilo de refugiados en el país.

El medio Político.com informó que el Gobierno de turno estaba considerando recortar el límite anual de refugiados para el 2020 a “cero” o a números muy reducidos, es decir, entre 10 mil y 3 mil personas. Esto representa el número total de refugiados que podrían ingresar a los Estados Unidos en el próximo año fiscal. “Este informe reciente, si es cierto, es preocupante y está en contra de los principios que tenemos como nación y como pueblo, y tiene el potencial de terminar por completo el programa de reubicación de refugiados”, dijo el 19 de julio Mons. Vásquez.

Los informes fueron filtrados a Político.com por tres individuos cercanos a las recientes reuniones de los funcionarios de seguridad.

Estas cifras representarían una disminución dramática con respecto al límite del 2019: de 30 mil refugiados. En 2018, el límite fue de 45 mil y en 2017 fue de 50 mil. De acuerdo con los datos del Instituto de Política de Migración, reportados por el Washington Post, antes de la presidencia de Donald Trump, el límite de inmigración generalmente se estableció, desde la década de 1990, entre 70, mil y 80 mil. Mons. Vásquez dijo que estaba preocupado por los informes de recortes cuando “el mundo está en medio de la mayor crisis de desplazamiento humanitario en casi un siglo”.

“Me opongo firmemente a cualquier otra reducción del programa de reubicación de refugiados. Ofrecer refugio a aquellos que huyen de la persecución religiosa y de otro tipo ha sido la piedra angular de lo que hizo a este país un lugar fantástico y de bienvenida. La eliminación del programa de reubicación de refugiados los deja en peligro y mantiene a sus familias separadas en los continentes”, sostuvo el Prelado.

El también Arzobispo de Austin señaló que los refugiados ya se someten a un intenso proceso de investigación que a menudo dura entre un año y medio a dos años, e incluye entrevistas extensas y verificación de antecedentes. Los refugiados tienen vínculos familiares aquí y rápidamente comienzan a trabajar para reconstruir sus vidas y enriquecer sus comunidades”.

Así, Mons. Vásquez pidió que se suspendiera cualquier reducción del programa de refugio, y que se aumentara el límite anual de reubicación, si el Gobierno desea hacerlo.

El tope final para el número refugiados del año fiscal 2020 se anunciaría en septiembre.
(Seminarians, cont. from page 11)

One of the biggest moments for Hubbard was when his spiritual director asked Hubbard to consider marriage.

His spiritual director asked Hubbard to imagine himself, in prayer, as a priest coming home from a good day of Confessions and Mass, and then to imagine, in prayer, being married and coming home to a wife and children.

“I felt so much more deeply my heart belonged with a family,” Hubbard explained. “There’s no way to really articulate it, except that I just felt myself more present, more human there. Even just painting the picture almost brought me to tears.”

Hubbard left seminary in November of his senior year.

“And I have not regretted it since,” he said. “It’s been a beautiful journey. Seminary was a necessary step, and so I know that God has just continued to lead me along a path which I hope one day, He will use to help heal those hurting around me. I want to still give of myself to those around me.”

Does “discerning out” mean failure?

Although seminary was helpful for Hubbard in his discernment both for the priesthood and for the married life, he found that a lot of people misunderstood the reasons he had left, and some saw it as a failure on his part.

“I think that a lot of people have the misconception that when you step out of seminary it’s a failure of sorts. Their reactions are, ‘Oh, I’m sorry,’ or things like that. The negative stigma of discerning out needs to be eradicated so that seminarians who are torn don’t have that fear that when they leave, their friends, their families, their priests back home will be disappointed.”

“The stigma holds seminarians back from being able to healthily discern. I think that’s something pretty unaddressed in today’s world: the very healthy and good option of discerning out. People see it as something entirely negative, and they shouldn’t,” Hubbard continued.

After explaining his decision to his friends they understood and supported him, he told CNA, but the initial uncomfortable or negative feelings still felt like a stigma, or at least a misunderstanding, about what he considered to be a healthy discernment.

“And I experienced that a bit with some of my friends and family, but I also had overwhelming support, especially from my father, and so it was okay,” he said. “I definitely felt supported in my decision.”

Discerning into seminary at 18, his father told Hubbard that he “was proud of Hubbard no matter what.”

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At the time, Hubbard wondered why his dad didn’t seem more enthused about his entrance to seminary.

“But that consistency was something that was actually beautiful in the long run, and that’s what I think parents should strive for when their kids enter seminary,” he told CNA.

“That’s the exact same thing he said to me when I discerned out of seminary, and I knew that he supported me on either side and trusted my judgment, so it was incredible. It really was,” Hubbard said.

Hubbard’s father, Brad, told CNA that his first and foremost step is to pray for his children, and says that he wanted to make sure his son was happy with the formation he was receiving while in seminary.

“For me, it’s just the importance of leaving the discernment to God. As a parent, I’m there to support and especially pray, and then God’s will be done in regards to that.”

Hubbard’s Future

Last May, Hubbard graduated from the University of Dallas with a degree in philosophy, and he now plans to attend the Augustine Institute for a graduate degree in theology.

He believes he has had many blessings throughout his time in seminary and now working, and wants to have the opportunity to impact people through an occupation in ministry after he graduates.

Hubbard finds that despite the magnitude of the decision, he does not question his choice. He told CNA that his relationship with God has grown since his departure from seminary.

And in the pursuit of marriage, Hubbard has felt more confirmed in his choice.

“If everything else were to fall apart in my life, if I questioned every other piece of discernment, that is what I could hold onto and know for a fact that I made the right decision because I have so deeply encountered God’s love incarnationally in a way that I could not have in seminary,” he said.
Federal Judge Temporarily Blocks Trump Admin’s New Asylum Rules

Washington D.C., July 25 (CNA) - A federal judge in California has issued a temporary injunction against the Trump administration’s new rule limiting asylum eligibility on the southern U.S. border.

The injunction will halt the rule from being enforced while legal challenges against it are heard in the courts. The American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Constitutional Rights and other groups are arguing against the law.

U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar said the policy is “inconsistent with existing asylum laws.”

“You have the right to determine whether a particular group of applicants is categorically barred from eligibility for asylum is conferred on Congress,” he said.

“While the public has a weighty interest in the efficient administration of the immigration laws at the border, it also has a substantial interest in ensuring that the statutes enacted by its representatives are not imperiled by executive fiat.”

Tigar’s nationwide injunction overrules a previous decision by a federal judge in Washington, D.C., to allow the rule to move forward while it faced court challenges.

The Trump administration has said that its policy, which had gone into effect July 16, aims to crack down on false asylum claims, as the number of people seeking asylum in the U.S. has risen drastically in the last decade.

The new policy establishes that claimants are ineligible to apply for asylum in the United States if they failed to first apply for asylum in any third country they passed through after departing their country of origin.

For many asylum seekers traveling from Central or South America, this means first applying for asylum in Mexico before being eligible to claim asylum in the U.S.

The rule contains a number of exceptions. Those who arrive at an American port of entry having passed through a country that has not signed up to certain refugee agreements are exempt, as are survivors of human trafficking. Those who apply for asylum in a pass-through country and are denied there may still claim asylum in the United States.

A similar policy is in place along the northern border of the U.S. A 2014 agreement between the U.S. and Canada requires a person to claim asylum in either the U.S. or Canada, depending on which country they arrived in first. However, critics of the Trump administration’s new policy argue that Mexico does not have the same capacity as Canada and the U.S. to ensure the safety of those seeking asylum.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. bishops’ conference, condemned the asylum rule shortly after it was announced, saying that it “adds further barriers to asylum-seekers’ ability to access life-saving protection, shirks our moral duty, and will prevent the United States from taking its usual leading role in the international community as a provider of asylum protection.”

The number of asylum claims has dramatically increased over the last decade, with very few asylees being allowed to stay. In 2009, there were 35,811 people who applied for asylum in the United States, and 8,384 were granted. In 2018, that number had more than quadrupled to 162,060 claims, with 13,168 actually granted.