Benedict XVI: The Church’s Unity is Stronger Than Internal Conflicts

By Courtney Grogan

Vatican City, Jun 28 (CNA) - Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said in an interview published Friday that the unity of the Church has always prevailed over internal struggles and affirmed that there is currently only one pope.

"The Pope is one, it is Francis," Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said in an interview with an Italian magazine published by Corriere Della Sera June 28.

"The unity of the Church has always been in danger, for centuries," Benedict said. "It has been for all its history, Wars, internal conflicts, centrifugal forces, threats of schisms."

"In the end the awareness that the Church is and (see Church Unity, page 8)

What’s going to bring the ‘nones’ back to the Church?

By Matt Hadro

Baltimore, Md., June 14 (CNA). As the U.S. bishops gathered in Baltimore this week, primarily to vote on proposals to respond to the clergy abuse crisis, another crisis loomed large with no easy solutions—how to evangelize the “nones,” or people with no religious affiliation.

Bishop Robert Barron, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles and chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, delivered a presentation on Tuesday morning at the annual spring meeting of the U.S. bishops on “this massive attrition of our own people, particularly the young” from the Church. He exhorted fellow bishops “to look at this (see Back to Church, page 4)

A Community’s Soul-Thirst Fulfilled —Building Church and Holy Family Catholic Parish

By Arlene Q.M. Collins, Parishioner

“Keep asking God for the grace to help us keep going”, Fr. Fred Kutubebi, the current pastor of Holy Family Parish, exhorts his parishioners at every single Eucharistic celebration.

Several years later, the grace prayed for is fulfilled. The Holy Family Catholic Parish (HFCP), indeed, “keeps going” for good. It continues to be known far and wide as the “Friendliest Little Parish in Napa Valley”. It continues to draw more people to Christ while it serves its community. It has received its canonical designation as a “parish” The Holy Family Catholic Parish. Further, the community’s soul-thirst journey of 25 years is now quenched.
Where is Your ‘Island of Spiritual Concentration’?

In 1986 Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, recommended the establishment of ‘islands of spiritual concentration’. In recent years, with the seemingly relentless increase of secularity, there is an ever increasing need to these islands of spiritual concentration.

In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles we find the description of the coming of the Holy Spirit. There we are told that the apostles and disciples gathered in one place. They gathered to await the promised Holy Spirit. They gathered in prayer and anticipation of the great things that God would do in their midst. They gathered in a kind of ‘island of spiritual concentration’ to await the coming of the Spirit and when the Spirit came, He came in wind and fire. They then took the Gospel message to the streets. That part of the narrative is well known. However, even after their initial Spirit filled foray into the world the Apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break the bread, and to pray” (Acts 2:42).

This was their island of spiritual concentration, their faith community. Here was a place and a community to which they went to remember who their Lord is, who their brothers and sisters were and who they were. They went there, not because they were afraid but because they were prudent. They understood that the world was hostile to the Spirit especially the spirit of truth and so they gathered aware of their own weakness and the Spirit’s strength. They gathered for the breaking of the bread, the Eucharist, for in that action they remembered what the Lord had done in their midst and they remembered that He had conquered sin and death. They gathered to hear the truth proclaimed by the Apostles recognizing that they could not long be exposed to the errors of the world without being infected and contaminated, at least to some degree, by that exposure. They came frequently to their ‘island of spiritual concentration’ to discuss their experiences and interpret them in the light of the Spirit and Scripture and faith. And they came together to pray, not only occasionally but constantly.

It is essential that each of us finds our own island of spiritual concentration where we not only hear and practice the gifts and virtues needed in our chaotically relativistic world but where we also come to understand and appreciate the need to meet “constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break the bread, and to pray”.

For many, the parish community is just such an ‘island of spiritual concentration’. I pray that this is the case for you. This island is not intended as isolation from the world but a prudent protection from an excessive worldliness. The communal aspect of our parishes is often quite strong. At the same time it is necessary for each of us to strive to foster within ourselves a deeply rooted conviction of our ongoing need to be a part of or even to establish other ‘islands of spiritual concentration’ where, like the disciples of Jesus, we can meet constantly “to hear the apostles teach, to share the common life, to break the bread of Eucharist, and to pray”.

Such islands begin with the domestic Church, the family home. In fact, each Catholic family is to be the first island of spiritual refuge. Summer is a great time to spend more time with family and it also affords an opportunity to recommit to those things which help assure that the family maintains its own tranquility. Old radio programs, sponsored by Christian groups, would often repeat the phrase, which was very common, that “the family that prays together stays together”. The value of family prayer, led by the father, needs to be recognized again. Establishing a pattern of family prayer is not necessarily easy but in our present circumstances it is no longer optional. Imitate the Apostles who “met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break the bread, and to pray” (Acts 2:42).
California Bishops Call Catholics to ‘Ecological Spirituality’

Sacramento, Calif., June 19 (CNA) - On the fourth anniversary of *Laudato Si’*, the bishops of California challenged the community to grow in an “ecological conversion” that respects God, man, and creation.

The California Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a June 18 pastoral statement reflecting on Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical, “*Laudato Si’: On care for our common home.*”

The bishops reflected on the call to stewardship of the environment and how concrete actions are necessary to exercise this stewardship in preserving the natural beauty of California.

“The astonishing diversity of landscapes across California - formed by the dynamic interplay of diverse natural forces - moves us to recognize God’s artistry in creation,” the bishops said.

“We propose a practical application of the *Laudato Si’* message of ecological spirituality—that the ecological well-being of California is meant to be deeply embedded in a spirituality that unites all creatures and all creation in praising God.”

In recent years, California has faced significant drought, as well as the largest fire in state history, which took place last year, when more than 400,000 acres were burned in and around Mendocino County. The state’s four hottest years on record occurred from 2014-2018.

Man is responsible for caring for creation, the bishops said in their message. They encouraged people to find ways to prevent waste and ensure sustainability. They suggested Catholics invest in energy efficient appliances, residences, and vehicles. In two examples, the bishops said families may consider adding solar panels to their homes, and businesses may reflect on the environmental impact of the products they produce.

In addition, the bishops highlighted the importance of dialogue about environmental issues and the development of educational materials to further awareness on the topic. They called for works of art that reflect the beauty of creation in order to “inspire a culture of ecological and human care in the light of the moral applications of the Pope’s encyclical.”

The California bishops said climate change harms both the environment and people, especially the most vulnerable. They noted that Pope Francis has included the issue in his admonitions of a “throwaway culture,” which also includes consumeristic excess, abortion, and euthanasia.

“The disruption of the earth’s climate is one of the principal challenges facing humanity today, with grave implications for the poor, many of whom live in areas particularly affected by environmental degradation and who also subsist largely on access to natural resources for housing, food, and income,” they said.

It is the responsibility of the local community to work together to overcome climate change, the bishops stated, calling particularly on young people, businesses, and public officials to be involved.

“Subsidiarity presents an opportunity for all of us to act locally, but with an eye to broader social transformation to advance sustainability and climate protection,” they said.

In recent years, California has faced significant drought, as well as the largest fire in state history, which took place last year, when more than 400,000 acres were burned in and around Mendocino County. The state’s four hottest years on record occurred from 2014-2018.

To respond to these climate crises, the bishops said, it is important to ensure that people have access to clean, affordable water and to provide proper fire education and prevention measures.

They also called for efforts to strengthen aqueducts and water ways to withstand drought, as well as greater investment in attempts to better understand the effects of climate change on water systems.

“The *Laudato Si’* call to live integral ecology means listening to creation and observing what is happening in it,” the bishops said. “To live out a spirituality of the common good, we must recommit ourselves to fostering greater harmony in our relationship with the earth.”

The state bishops promised to work with pastoral leaders to spread the message of *Laudato Si’*. They challenged parishioners and communities to undergo a spiritual conversion and grow in virtues which will positively affect the environment.

“At the heart of all spirituality is conversion. We all need to change for the better. Conversion is not just turning back to God, but always embraces new thinking and new decisions—a new way of life as we move into the future,” they said.

“Ecological conversion challenges us to advance in culture, to grow spiritually, and to be better educated about the world entrusted by God to our care. The heavens and the earth belong to God, but we have been called to be good stewards.”

PRIESTLY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY

Rev. James McSweeney, July 6, 1974
Rev. Valentine Ibeh, July 13, 1991
Rev. Lawrence Mutiso, July 18, 1992
Rev. Oscar Díaz, July 14, 1994
Rev. Christopher La Rocca OCD, July 12, 1997
Rev. Ismael Mora, July 6, 2002
Rev. Raul Lemus, July 6, 2002
Rev. Abel Mena, July 6, 2002

Prayer for Priests

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.
issue of who are the unaffiliated, why are they leaving, and how do we get them back.”

He presented some sobering statistics: for every one person joining the Church today, 6.45 are leaving. Almost eight in ten leave by the age of 23, and the median age for leaving the Church is just 13 years old.

Where are they going? While roughly one quarter are becoming Evangelical, and another 25 percent are joining another religion or denomination of Christianity, half are simply atheist, agnostic, or without any religious affiliation, Barron said.

“Most are ambivalent about religion rather than hostile to it,” he noted.

They are leaving Catholicism primarily because “they don’t believe it,” he told CNA in an interview on Thursday. Regarding “the questions about God and about Jesus and about eternal life and about the soul,” he said, “they don’t believe it. They think religion’s at odds with science. That comes through all the time.”

Bishop Christopher Coyne of Burlington, Vt., agreed with the assessment that a primary reason for young people leaving the Church is a lack of belief. However, he challenged the assumption that there are clear-cut intellectual reasons why teenagers as young as 13 are leaving the Church. “The question that popped into my head was were they really believing (in the first place)?” he said of the statistic.

According to Barron, some of the other common reasons given for lack of religious affiliation are a perceived intolerance of revealed religion, opposition to being told what to do, a belief in a personal relationship with God outside of revealed religion, and a perception that religion is anti-science or anti-rational.

Some of the reasons Barron gave for the migration of young people away from the Church are secularism, and with it, a culture of relativism “which gives rise to the self-invention culture of...I decide who I am. I decide what I believe.”

Thus, when the Church makes objective claims and preaches dogmas and doctrines, “that meets with a lot of resistance,” particularly teachings on sexuality and morality which are a “stumbling block for a lot of people,” Barron added.

However, despite recent revelations of clerical sex abuse and misconduct and cover-up by bishops and prelates, the abuse crisis has not played a primary role in young people departing the Church, both bishops said.

“It’s not been certainly one of the top reasons. It’s there, but certainly not a top reason,” Barron said.

“All of the surveys that I’ve seen around people who have turned 18 since 2000,” Coyne said, “the abuse crisis is way, way down on the list of why they left the Church, and why they’re not affiliated with the Church.”

According to a survey of the religiously unaffiliated by the Pew Research Center conducted in December of 2017, 25 percent of respondents said that “I question a lot of religious teachings” is the most important reason they do not identify with a religion, the leading reason among the “Nones” for their lack of affiliation.

“I think we’ve underplayed the intellectual side. We’ve undervalued what kids are capable of, intellectually,” Barron said, noting that young people are leaving the Church “more and more consciously. They’re making a conscious decision—not just drifting away, but they are deciding to go. And that’s often on intellectual grounds.”

During his presentation to the bishops, Barron brought up University of Toronto psychology professor Jordan Peterson and his popular online discus-

Regarding “the questions about God and about Jesus and about eternal life and about the soul,” he said, “they don’t believe it. They think religion’s at odds with science.

“I would say if we’re going to try and help people raise children in the faith so as to make a good choice to stay in the faith, then they have to be disciples,” Coyne said. “I’m seeing that in a lot of our families that stay in the Church, the parents are disciples because they choose to stay in the Catholic Church.”

“It’s not a matter of cultural Catholicism, it’s Catholicism by choice,” he added.

For adults who are religiously unaffiliated and living apart from their families, there’s also networking, he said. Lay Catholics in Burlington have begun to form Catholic business associations and medical associations not unlike the guilds from centuries ago, and in the process have been able to form relationships and support each other in the faith.

“It’s the Holy Spirit, it’s incredible,” Coyne said. “The evangelization part is really being picked up by lay men and lay women, and they understand that evangelization is relational.”

“They come together, they pray, they support each other, and they also talk about the struggles of being a Catholic in the medical profession or being Catholic in the business community.”

For example, a local doctor started a Catholic medical association group and “they had their first meeting at my house, they had about 40 people come who are all in the medical profession, who are all Catholics who are looking to network,” Coyne said.

Meanwhile, regarding evangelization on the intellectual level, Barron pointed to the Catholics who are prolific in their evangelization through social media and in person such as his Word on Fire Ministries, FOCUS, St. Paul Street Evangelization, and figures such as Scott Hahn and Peter Kreeft.

He also admitted to other paths to the faith than through purely intellectual arguments, such as the “way of beauty” and the “way of justice.”

“Young people respond very much to the call to social justice,” he said. “There’s a huge part of our tradition around that, from John Chrysostom to Dorothy Day and Pope Francis. That’s a wonderful tradition.”

If there was one thing he could tell a lay Catholic at a parish about evangelization to others, Barron said, “don’t be afraid to tell them about your relationship with the Lord.”

“Don’t be afraid to share your faith, and talk about your faith and what it means to you. And people will respond to that, even if they don’t seem to at first.”

(Back to Church, from page 1)
In Responding to Gender Theory, ‘Forming The Formators’ Is Key, Educators Say

By Jonah McKeown

Washington D.C., June 24 (CNA) - Amid a flurry of headlines denouncing the Vatican for releasing a document condemning “gender theory,” theology professors and Catholic educators told CNA that the document will be helpful in setting priorities for Catholic educators going forward, as Catholic schools respond to questions about LGBT issues.

“I love the emphasis on ‘forming the formators’...It’s important for teachers to realize that they’ve got to be able to answer their students’ questions, whether in religious education or teaching in a Catholic school,” Dr. Theresa Selner-Wright, a professor of philosophy at St. Paul Seminary, the minor seminary of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, told CNA.

“You’ve got to be able to answer your students’ questions. Because you might get one shot to answer that question, and that may be it.”

Published at the beginning of “Pride Month,” during which many cities and corporations mark the campaign of LGBT advocacy, the document says that the Church teaches an essential difference between men and woman, ordered in the natural law and essential to the family and human flourishing.

“There is a need to reaffirm the metaphysical roots of sexual difference, as an anthropological refutation of attempts to negate the male-female duality of human nature, from which the family is generated,” the Congregation for Catholic Education wrote June 10, in a document entitled “Male and Female He Created Them.”

“The denial of this duality not only erases the vision of human beings as the fruit of an act of creation but creates the idea of the human person as a sort of abstraction who ‘chooses for himself what his nature is to be,” the document states.

For Christians working in schools, both religious and secular, the radical individualism of gender theory should be avoided in favor of teaching children “to overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith, their specific vocation to live responsibly in a community.”

Dr. Susan Selner-Wright, who holds the Archbishop Chaput Chair in Philosophy at St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver, told CNA that “dialogue” does not, as some may believe, mean the same thing as “compromise” when it comes to talking about these kinds of issues.

“Dialogue’ right now, in the culture, basically means everybody’s got a right to their opinion, all opinions are equal, and ‘dialogue’ is just basically cover for never having to disagree with each other. And I think the congregation was just brilliant in explaining what dialogue really is,” Selner-Wright said.

The document also states that many efforts to implement “gender theory” into society shut down any possibility of dialogue from the Christian perspective.

[“Pope] Francis says that the ideologues just want to ‘assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised,’ and then that cuts off dialogue...That’s not real dialogue. That’s just people shouting at each other. It’s not a way to go forward and to help people to live well.”

True dialogue, she said, is not just “dropping knowledge” on people, but rather inviting them into a conversation in order to be able to propose reasons to support your point of view.

“I would caution people not to dismiss dialogue as something that always leads to compromise. It shouldn’t. It should lead us to journey together towards the one who is Truth,” she said.

Much of the document is a reiteration of existing Church teaching on gender, but Selner said she appreciated the document’s points of emphasis on formation of teachers.

“I will say the gamechanger...is the absolute insistence that they have to form all of their teachers, so that every teacher who is in a classroom with a kid can articulate the Church’s teaching on gender,” Farnan said.

The document says that “school managers, teaching staff and personnel all share the responsibility of both guaranteeing delivery of a high-quality service coherent with the Christian principles.”

“The other brilliant thing about the document, I think, is that it shows the utter continuity from John Paul II through Benedict XVI to Francis on this specific issue,” Selner-Wright said.

“People want to say ‘Oh Francis is my guy,’ well, he’s really not if what you’re talking about is transgenderism. He’s been completely clear that [transgender ideology] is bankrupt,” she said.

“I really liked the model that [the document] used: listen, reason, and propose,” Farnan said.

Farnan said she just finished a three-day workshop with members of the “iGen” generation, who have never known a time before the internet. She said the way to connect with members of the iGen is to be able to back claims up with science and to “be able to carefully distinguish between ideology and genuine scientific contribution.”

“The final part of it, which I think is the most important, is to propose Christian anthropology as a way of life,” Farnan explained.

“And honestly, if there’s anything that over the last four decades, five decades, we’ve been failing at as a Church is that we’re not going out and presenting a confidant vision of how Christianity differs from culture. And this is an opportunity to present a pretty stark difference. I think it’s really important.”

“What this document reminds us is that, as educators, we have to make sure that they’re getting a complete understanding of what Christianity has to offer in a very positive way...the authentic way to live a life of fulfillment of the human being.”

Farnan said she will watch with interest as individual dioceses work to implement the contents of the document. She highlighted Fort Wayne-South Bend as an example of a diocese that has been proactive in holding workshops for their teachers, educators, and priests to form them in Christian anthropology so they can answer their students’ questions about (see Gender Theory, page 6)
Through the Fire of Purification

By Chris Lyford

The purification of the Church that is represented by the 6.8 Million dollar settlement against Hanna Boys Center, as well as by the mass exodus of young people and newly married from the church, the pervasive negative public perception of priests, bishops, and catholic church workers, is a purification that is not going to be halted by creating a new model for communication in the workplace, or implementing methods for discerning and clarifying organizational identity, mission, vision, focus and planning that will maximize and sustain our efforts. Nor will this purification be completed by creating a new program of evangelization at the parish and diocesan level that is coordinated with each other ministry, and enforcing a zero tolerance policy for those who do not comply with the safe environment protocols.

This is the Catholic Church, it's 1986 years old. It started with Pentecost in the year 33, and continued next as a community that “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers…All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need” (Acts 2: 42, 45).

That is from our original handbook; our manual; our mission statement; our strategic plan.

The purification will be complete when we return to our roots and live out what our handbook says. When you hear about another multi-million-dollar settlement payout amount that has been reached in a lawsuit against a ‘catholic’ institution in our Diocese, do you consider that as a payment that will come from ‘your’ community, because you ‘hold all things in common?’ Or do you start to reconsider your regular donations to the Church as a way of punishing the leadership?

One email came in regarding the recent news about Hanna this past week that asked: “What incentive is there to continue to put money in the collection envelopes?” I immediately thought, well maybe the answer is in the question here; if no money is put in the collection envelopes, then we may have to go all the way back to the way the Gospel came to California in the first place; just a bell to ring, and an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as an icon of the Gospel message, both hung over a tree branch. Ring the bell to invite the locals, and hang the image over the branch and you are all set to preach. Or, maybe the incentive would be to bring us all the way back to the beginning; all the believers “were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need.” How much money would your parish have if everyone sold all their assets and divided them among all your parishioners according to each one's need? By the way the bank balance is not the point. The point is, it takes everything to live the Gospel authentically and nothing less. If anything less than everything is given, isn't the Gospel.

Perhaps sometimes God takes everything, or at least a significant amount, to remind us of our stated priorities, in order to purify us; bring us back to the beginning. When and if He does, be thankful if it's spread out over time, rather than all at once. If, God forbid, it's all at once, the phrase “you don't know what you got till it's gone” comes to mind. Either way, there is pain in purification.

Think of Coffey Park, October 9th 2017. When it happens very fast it's called a 'wake-up call.' How about this wake-up call that happened to my good friend Sue; She woke up from a nap and the RV has crashed, a ball of fire is billowing toward her from the front of the cab, her back is broken, she kicks her way through a small hole in the wall only to find herself crawling across the dry grass trying to escape the flames.

In her own words: “I awakened from a sound sleep as I was thrown across our motor home. Dishes crashed all around me. In an instant, a wall of flames separated me from my husband Rusty, who was driving, and our twenty-seven-year-old daughter, Nikki, in the passenger seat…

Intense heat chased me away from them. I pleaded with God to save us all or none of us. As I spotted a gash in the side of the aluminum wall of the motor home I kicked my way through. Even though I wasn't on fire, I could see my skin melting. Blood ran down my forehead and into my eyes, blurring my vision as I tried to escape.

The grass in the guilty where I landed was on fire. As I crawled away from the motor home, flames pursued me. I crawled to a wire fence and tried to climb it, but fell back because my feet were burned and raw. As I was racing from the menacing flames I was screaming, “Save my family! Save my family!” Billowing black smoke blinded me as our motor home incinerated.

After months in the hospital and the incredible pain from their burns, Sue, Rusty, and Nikki made it home. Their life has never been the same, as Sue said: “I clung onto my faith like never before”.

When we pray with all our hearts minds and souls praying like, “save my family!” God answers. We can all pray this without having to go through any fire except the fire of love that will grow in our hearts meant to be shared with the people in our lives in order to create the world anew one heart at a time.

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

(Gender Theory, from page 5)

gender theory.

Mary Pat Donoghue, executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told CNA in an interview that she also thinks the document will be useful for ongoing formation of Catholic educators.

“It’s a call for all of us to enter more deeply into an understanding of Church teaching. I think that the document serves that purpose very, very beautifully,” Donoghue said.

“It also, though, has an element encouraging compassionate pastoral response, and I think that is important as well. So on a local level, diocesan level, finding ways to respond and to help schools to respond should these types of situations arise.”

Donoghue echoed Farnan’s point about the importance of “forming the formators.” Individual situations will always vary, she said, but schools faced with challenging situations related to gender theory should always be able to look to the diocesan level for guidance.

“It’s important for our schools to have clear and consistent teaching, certainly around something that’s this important,” she explained.

“It’s also important for our teachers to understand that the Church’s teaching contains the fullness of truth, therefore it’s always going to be the most charitable and the most loving answer. Pairing that with a compassionate person-to-person response I think is the best way forward.”

Bishop Michael Barber of Oakland is the chairman of the ‘Cone’s Committee’ on Catholic Education for the U.S. bishops’ conference, and Donoghue said she believes Barber would describe the document as a means to better understand Church teaching about the nature of the human person.

“All human people struggle and bear crosses in many, many different forms, and a person suffering from gender dysphoria bears a very painful cross, and so we certainly don’t stand to condemn or to judge, but to offer care and to bring about the fullness of the teaching to help to liberate that person,” Donoghue said.

Boa Cuasay and Michelle McDaniel contributed to this report.

Letters Policy

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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.srдиocese.org
In their June meeting, the US Bishops covered several issues, but the one that was of particular interest to me was the conversation about what to do when a bishop is accused of sexual misconduct. Since all bishops are priests first, it always seemed obvious to me that the rules of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People would apply to them. I've discovered that wasn't actually the case!

In May Pope Francis issued an edict, a Moto Proprio and this is what Cardinal DiNardo, the President of the USCCB (United States Catholic Conference of Bishops) had to say about it:

"Today, Pope Francis ordered a worldwide response to the evil of sexual abuse. It calls for the establishment of easily accessible reporting systems, clear standards for the pastoral support of victims and their families, timeliness and thoroughness of investigations, whistleblower protection for those making allegations, and active involvement of the laity. It also leaves latitude for national bishops' conferences, such as the USCCB, to specify still more to account for their local circumstances. We receive the Moto Proprio Voc estis lux mundi ("You are the light of the world") as a blessing that will empower the Church everywhere to bring predators to justice, no matter what rank they hold in the Church. It also permits the Church the time and opportunity to bring spiritual healing."

The third - Directives for the Implementation of the Provisions of Voc estis lux mundi Concerning Bishops and their Equivalents, presents a plan for optimal implementation of Pope Francis’s recent Moto proprio in the United States, including an outline for lay involvement.

In addition, the body of bishops passed another bishop accountability reform, voting for the establishment of a Third-Party Reporting System for receiving confidentially, by phone and online, reports of possible violations by bishops of Voc estis lux mundi. The action item commits to activating the system no later than May 31, 2020.

There was a lot of conversation about the involvement of laity. If you read the articles, the victim advocates do not think there is enough lay involvement, others think there is enough. Even the various bishops disagreed on how much involvement the laity should have. There will definitely be involvement by the laity, but it remains to be seen what that will actually look like.

When I first started, many people told me that things move very slowly in the Church. Bishop Walsh told me the work I was doing was changing a culture. I can't tell you how often I think of those days and laugh at how naive I was! The Church does move slowly, and it does take time to change a culture. We have made great strides, seriously! This is another example, while it feels slow, a long time coming, it is actually a huge step forward. I feel very encouraged at how many of the bishops really; truly do understand the seriousness and the absolute need for change. Some of you are no doubt thinking—finally! What took them so long? I get it. I say, instead, let's focus on the fact that they are here, today. I am thankful. I think this is a good start. It will be reviewed in three years, and modified. Having worked with the document—the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People for 16 years, I can say that I have learned this is how it works—you put something out there, work with it, and continue to improve it. This is a good thing, a very good thing. Is it perfect? No. Is it enough? No. But the people of the Church—we need to feel encouraged by this. It is action!
day celebration of Eucharist, on Sundays and holidays of obligation.

Through a new leadership and the generous sharing of Time, Talent and Treasure by parishioners, donors, sponsors and even guests, there emerges the visible beginnings of the first phase of its planned design: the construction of a permanent church center.

The church community of American Canyon, the citizens of the City of Napa and neighboring cities have a significant reason to celebrate. In full regalia, a colorfully diverse community and parishioners participated in the recent celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Holy Family Catholic Parish. Fran Fanelli, one of the church pianists, composed a special anniversary song. children wrote articles on what the church mean to them, and certificates of appreciation were given to early parishioners. Music, singing and dancing filled the air. And celebrated they did!

HFCP - Its Beginnings, A Story to Tell
The Holy Family Catholic Parish is located in American Canyon located between the cities of Napa and Vallejo. It is a city “Where your Napa Valley Experience Begins”. Its parishioners have had their share of challenges and opportunities of grace from where it started. Deacon Michael Simons and some dedicated volunteers sought the need to celebrate church services in their own area. The first mass was celebrated on January 9, 1994 with about 85 attendees. Parishioners welcomed all people no matter what their color, age, education or ethnic background. Their culture of friendliness and hospitality, earned them the name “The Friendliest Little Parish in the Napa Valley”. As people heard about the local gathering, attendance at mass swelled tremendously. Fr Patrick Stephen son became the first pastor in March 1994. In the course of months and years that followed, believe it or not, the Holy Family Catholic Church has held mass at thirteen locations. School cafeterias, multipurpose rooms, community Center, gymnasiums, hotel rooms, rectory, McIntyre Ranch and former Napa tourist information Center were some of the places of worship. The present construction site at Antonina Way will be the permanent church location. The challenges of the church survival came. The number of parishioners dwindled to a precious few because of the feeling that the “place of worship did not look like a typical church”—no stained glass windows, no pews, no statues, no permanent altar and tabernacle. Funds were low due to the purchase of the five-acre piece of land (the site of the present church construction) and the pasted suspension of the project. But the place of worship was a signpost that parishioners are ready to make their gathering not only as an obligation, as it is an experience of God’s Real Presence in community. Experience or encounter of the sacred is permeating and permanent. The parish church, after all, offers a place of silence, solitude—Presence in the midst of all the chaos of life and daily living.

This is the true essence behind all these church building activities. It entails commitment. It is also what “homesickness” one writer wrote about laying down roots that “we cannot shake off”, a homesickness to draw closer to God. At the Eucharistic prayer we thank God for making us worthy to be in His presence. He gifts us with His Beloved Son, Jesus. We gift God by returning our very selves, who we are, essentially, to Him. We gift God by returning our very selves, who we are, essentially, to Him. We gift God by returning our very selves, who we are, essentially, to Him.

What is the church building saying about us?
The plan and design of the church building includes a parish center which values connections with people in ministry, families, young people, the elderly and visitors. There will be a business center as a resource for both parish and community and will help offset the construction loan. The low income senior housing which will be built in the periphery of the church, is a critical timely response to Christ’s pastoral care of the elderly and a city’s most welcome answer to its urgent moral need.

HFCP Looks to the Future
In Hope, the parishioners, parish leaders, deacons and the Pastor, Fr. Fred forge ahead on this quest: a sacred pilgrimage to be Church. What has been there all these 25 years behind the arduous struggles is the grace of God and His generosity—plus the burning desire to love and serve Him.

It only makes sense to support the Holy Family Parish in their need and the need of the people of God in the building of a permanent church. And so we pray. Amen.

New Leadership, New Gifts
God answered the prayers for help. In 2010, Fr. Fred Kutubebi, from Ghana, became the Parochial Administrator of Holy Family Catholic Church. He eventually became the pastor in 2017 after going through the process of being incardinated into the Diocese of Santa Rosa.

With the help of Deacons Mike Simmons and Victor Leach, and other parish leaders, Fr. Fred created emergent changes to the old and no longer relevant administrative practices for the survival of the church. The place of worship was moved from the American Canyon Community Center to its present location at 101 Antonina Way. The new location fit more to a typical church. A permanent place of worship with permanent altar and a tabernacle. Best of all, mass services included Saturday vigil mass, two on Sundays, Spanish mass on First Saturdays of the month and daily weekday mass. Aforementioned saw the rise in the number of enrollees to the catechetical program, reception of the sacraments of confirmation, reconciliation and Eucharist. A new leadership team was created in Pastoral Council and in various ministries. The number of parishioners increased from 300 to 900 and the number kept growing. As the community grew, so were the donations. Dedicated volunteers started aggressive fund raising programs for much needed church construction money. Fr. Fred’s mandate to keep asking God to “help us keep going” didn’t exempt him. He and other parishioners collected recyclable cans, bottles, plastic or glass and turned them in for cash towards church building fund. When he filled his van with bags full of recyclable, he can be mistaken for a homeless man. From the pastor to the youngest CCD students, everyone’s effort was outstanding. With the groundbreaking and start of the construction of the Church, the parishioners saw a bright future!

Outreached Hands
HFCP’s Outreach Program included Cardinal Maurice Otunga Empowerment Center for Girls in Nairobi Kenya, community blood drives, Mexico Youth Mission, Mother Teresa Sunday (support Christian Help Center), Prison ministries, Get on the Bus, Support American Canyon Food Bank, Support Global Holiday Faire, Birth Right, visit the sick and homebound. In additional HFC served as emergency volunteer coordinator center, the Napa County Food Distribution center every first Friday of the month. The church also started and is responsible for the Relay for Life in American Canyon.

Reflections
The gifts of this current lived reality inspire leaders and parishioners to hold on to a deeper truth. Everyone is “church”, that is each one has a share in responsibility as regards Time, Talent and Treasure. The desire or thirst to seek a lasting place of worship is a signpost that parishioners are ready to make their gathering not only as an obligation, as it is an experience of God’s Real Presence in community. Experience or encounter of the sacred is permeating and permanent. The parish church, after all, offers a place of silence, solitude—Presence in the midst of all the chaos of life and daily living.

This is the true essence behind all these church building activities. It entails commitment. It is also what “homesickness” one writer wrote about laying down roots that “we cannot shake off”, a homesickness to draw closer to God. At the Eucharistic prayer we thank God for making us worthy to be in His presence. He gifts us with His Beloved Son, Jesus. We gift God by returning our very selves, who we are, essentially, to Him.
Summer greetings! What a wonderful blessing that we live in such a beautiful and unique place—the north coast of California. A scenic coastline to experience, ancient redwood forests to explore, lakes and rivers to enjoy, plenty of hiking opportunities, and a fascinating bit of California history to discover, all within the bounds of the Diocese of Santa Rosa! Hope you have a chance to enjoy a summer experience in the grandeur of God’s creation.

We have taken the opportunity in our past couple of articles to briefly discuss with you the newly updated Marriage Preparation Policy recently approved by Bishop Vasa. It is important to get the message out to all of the members of the Diocese of Santa Rosa that there are some exciting changes as to how marriage preparation is now to be conducted within the diocese.

The main goal of course is to help guide and form engaged couples so that they have a sound understanding of marriage as a Sacrament in the Catholic Church. Marriage in our culture has undergone many transformations in the recent past and society has certainly taken an altered view of what marriage signifies. So this updated Marriage Preparation Policy endeavors to educate engaged couples (and others as well) as to the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Last month we shared with you the initial components of the marriage preparation process, specifically meeting with your pastor, then completing the FOCCUS prenuptial inventory. We also told you about an exciting new element in the process, Witness to Love, the marriage mentorship program. Now we'd like to share a couple more of the components of this updated preparation process.

Most marriage preparation programs involve marriage “formation.” That is, classes or some sort of education in what the vocation of marriage is in the Catholic Church and how to live a faithful, life-time commitment in your marriage. Sessions like God’s plan for marriage and Jesus’ teachings on marriage, how to effectively communicate as a couple, handling finances, intimacy in marriage, raising children in the faith, and many more practical aspects of living as a married couple are covered in these formation programs. Most couples married in the Church may recall this aspect of their marriage preparation process. Marriage formation programs are a very important part of the whole preparation process and the updated policy gives pastors a variety of options for their engaged couples.

Many pastors have expressed an on-line formation option for a variety of reasons. The one selected for the Diocese of Santa Rosa is MarriagePrep.com, a program managed by Agape Catholic Ministries. It is quite thorough and gives the engaged couple the opportunity to complete the program at their own pace. And, if the engaged couple live far apart from each other, they can still successfully complete the formation program. It has been very beneficial where one or both of the engaged persons is serving in the military. For specific info go to: www.catholicmarriageprep.com

Another formation option is Catholic Engaged Encounter. This is a weekend program (Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) held at a retreat center or hotel/conference site. The closest Engaged Encounter locations for us in the Diocese of Santa Rosa are in Sacramento or San Francisco in English or San Jose in Spanish. We are very familiar with Engaged Encounter as we were a presenting couple for many years with this formation program. For more info go to: www.engagedencounter.org

And one more option for the formation component is an opportunity if a pastor wants to hold classes in his own parish. There have been a couple of parishes that do hold their own formation programs. The new program that is to be used is God’s Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage. It is published by Ascension Press and also is a thorough marriage preparation program. Using this program would give a parish the great opportunity to develop their own marriage preparation team. Go to: www.ascensionpress.com then to Sacramental Preparation Study Programs.

In our next month’s article we will wrap up the final discussion on the newly updated Marriage Preparation Policy.

And now for Ask FLO:

Dear FLO: My parents are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary and I would like to get them a Papal Blessing in celebration of such a wonderful achievement. How do I do that?


Dear Grateful: That is a great question and what a wonderful gift this will be!

The Holy Father offers blessings for Catholics for special occasions such as Baptisms, Confirmations, marriages, birthdays, and anniversaries. A general blessing from the Pope for no specific occasion may also be requested. Papal blessings come in the form of printed certificates or parchments with the name(s) of the recipient(s) and the occasion inscribed on them. Many people treasure these certificates as important symbols of sacraments and other special occasions.

In this day and age of the internet, it’s actually pretty easy to apply for a Papal Blessing. Simply go to: https://www.vaticannews.va/papal-blessing-parchments/ and follow the directions.

They will walk you through the process. It generally takes about 20 days to receive the official document. The cost is about $20 plus the shipping by DHL. All the proceeds go to the pope’s charitable causes in Rome. Enjoy your summer! ✨

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

(Hope in Modern Society, cont. from page 7)

(out daily in newspapers and magazines, in books, in the media, in classrooms,” Gomez said, and it is the mission of the Church, expressed through the witness of the Christian family, to respond.

“The question for us is: how are we going to live as Christians in this culture, and how are we going to raise our children and evangelize this culture? In these times, what case can we make for marriage, for the family, for children?”

In the Los Angeles archdiocese, he said, a community of more than five million Catholics was baptizing 50,000 infants every year. “These are not just numbers,” Gomez said, “these are souls, entrusted by God to our care. As a pastor, I do not want a single one to be lost.”

It is vital, he said, to discover and promoted the “Domestic Church” of the family, rooted in a parish able to sustain and support them.

“In my opinion, forming small faith communities is crucial,” Gomez said, while insisting that continuous sacramental and faith formation was essential to the life and mission of the Church.

“When we marry a couple or baptize a child—we need to see that as the beginning of a relationship. We need to find ways to nurture that relationship, to support that child and that couple, to help them grow in their love of Jesus and their commitment to living the Gospel in their families.”

Formation of families in the faith is, Gomez said, central to the Church’s mission at a time when the Gospel message is once more seen as antithetical to the culture.

“We need to rediscover the radical ‘newness’ of the Christian message about the family,” he said.

“Before Christianity, no one had ever spoken about marriage in terms of a love that lasts a lifetime, or as a calling from God, or as a path that can lead to holiness and salvation. It was a new and thrilling idea to speak of man and woman becoming ‘one flesh’ and participating in God’s own act of creating new life.”

The simplicity of the family, mirroring the hidden life of Christ in the Holy Family of Nazareth, offers the man and woman becoming ‘one flesh’ and participating in God’s plan for marriage and Jesus’ teachings on marriage, how to effectively communicate as a couple, handling finances, intimacy in marriage, raising children in the faith, and many more practical aspects of living as a married couple are covered in these formation programs. Most couples married in the Church may recall this aspect of their marriage preparation process. Marriage formation programs are a very important part of the whole preparation process and the updated policy gives pastors a variety of options for their engaged couples.

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

(Hope in Modern Society, cont. from page 7)
‘Sister Strike’ Nominated for Best Viral Sports Moment

By Mary Farrow

Chicago, Ill., Jun 26 (CNA) - Maybe it’s the signature bump of the baseball off her bicep before pitching the perfect curve ball. Maybe it’s that she does it all in a full black and white habit with a beaming smile on her face.

Whatever it is, the pitch of baseball whiz Sister Mary Jo Sobieck, OP, that captured the hearts of many over the past year inspired a baseball card, a bobblehead, and now a nomination for a national sports award.

“Sister Strike,” as the Dominican sister has been called, has been nominated for an ESPY award in the category “Best Viral Sports Moment.” The ESPYs (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly) are an annual sports awards ceremony honoring memorable people and moments in sports. This year’s ceremony will be hosted by Tracy Morgan in Los Angeles July 10.

The moment for which Sister is nominated? It’s called “Don’t Sleep on Sister Mary Jo’s curveball” and it’s the moment when she threw a curveball strike to Lucas Giolito at the ceremonial opening of a Chicago White Sox game in August 2018.

The fans went wild and the moment went viral, catching the attention of baseball fans and casual observers on social media and national media. Her strike also aired on ESPN’s Sportscenter highlight reel.

The National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum now sells a Sister Mary Jo bobblehead for $25. She stands in a pitching stance, wearing a baseball jersey pulled over her habit, and a baseball mitt. Her right hand is cocked back with a baseball, ready to strike.

In April, Topps announced that they would be premiering a Sister Mary Jo baseball card this summer. Patrick O’Sullivan, Topps Associate Brand Manager, told CNA in April that Sister is a good reminder that: “Baseball is for everyone from every walk of life. That’s what makes it so special and fun to be a fan.”

There’s a reason Sr. Mary Jo, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Springfield and a teacher at Marian Catholic High School, seems so comfortable on the pitching mound. She played softball starting in elementary school and through college and has coached high school sports.

She told the Chicago Catholic in December that she wasn’t about to “get ripped” by past coaches and teammates for a lousy pitch, so she gave the White Sox throw her all. But then again, that’s how she lives her whole life.

“Before (the pitch), she was just kind of like that loud nun,” Jen Paszyk, a fellow Marian Catholic teacher, told the Chicago Catholic. “She’s kind of gregarious and outgoing. There’s this image that sisters are kind of quiet and reserved, and that was never her. She is very popular, because she makes it a point to meet the students wherever they are. She really goes out for those shy kids who just want to blend into the bricks. She will learn something about them, so someone knows something about them.”

Since the viral moment, Sr. Mary Jo has been invited to various sporting events and speaking engagements. She wants to use the attention to lead others to God, she told the Chicago Catholic.

“The best gift I can give now is to give a good example of what it means to be virtuous,” Sister Mary Jo said. “It’s transitioned to what happens on the field of life. I try my best and sometimes I fail miserably and I get back up and try again. You get up the next day and try again.”

Sister Mary Jo said “It’s transitioned to what happens on the field of life. I try my best and sometimes I fail miserably and I get back up and try again. You get up the next day and try again.”

(Hope in Modern Society, cont. from page 9)
Washington D.C., June 25 (CNA) - With the latest U.S. report on global persecution of individuals and groups based on their religious beliefs, the Trump administration promised action to counter the human rights violations of the countries and groups listed in the U.S. State Department’s 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom.

“As in previous years, our report exposes a chilling array of abuses committed by oppressive regimes, violent extremist groups, and individual citizens. For all those that run roughshod over religious freedom, I’ll say this: The United States is watching and you will be held to account,” said U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Pompeo released the report at a June 21 briefing with U.S. Ambassador-at-large for Religious Freedom Samuel Brownback.

The Secretary of State summarized the situation in the worst countries: “People are persecuted – handcuffed, thrown in jail, even killed – for their decision to believe, or not to believe. For worshiping according to their conscience. For teaching their children about their faith. For speaking about their beliefs in public. For gathering in private, as so many of us have done, to study the Bible, the Torah, or the Qur’an,” he said.

“Go into any mosque, any church, any temple in America, and you’ll hear the same thing: Americans believe that kind of intolerance is deeply wrong,” said Pompeo, who said it is “a distinctly American responsibility to stand up for faith in every nation’s public square.”

The State Department has 90 days to designate “countries of particular concern” and to choose which countries to put on a special watch list. It can also designate non-state actors as “entities of particular concern.” Those designations can have significant legal consequences.

Pompeo cited the “good news” that Uzbekistan is no longer listed as a country of particular concern, for the first time in 13 years. Though the secretary said “much work remains,” the country has created a “religious freedom roadmap.” It has released about 1,500 religious prisoners and ended a blacklist that no longer listed as a country of particular concern, “The party demands that it alone be called God,” he said.

Pompeo said the State Department looks forward to legal reforms on registration requirements so that more religious groups may worship freely and so that children may pray at mosques with their parents.

He credited President Donald Trump for leading a government-wide effort to secure the release of U.S. Pastor Andrew Brunson from Turkey, saying he had been wrongly imprisoned for his faith.

The briefing also turned critical.

While Pakistan’s Supreme Court acquitted the Catholic woman Asia Bibi of blasphemy and spared her from execution after almost a decade in prison, over 40 people are serving a life sentence or face execution for the same charge. Pompeo called for these captives’ release and for the government to appoint an envoy to address various religious freedom concerns.

Pompeo opposed what he said was Iran’s “crackdown” on Baha’is, Christians and others.

Brownback expanded on this, saying Iranian religious minorities, including Baha’is, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Sunni and Sufi Muslims, “face discrimination, harassment, and unjust imprisonment because of their beliefs.”

“Their religious books are banned. They are denied access to education. Their cemeteries are desecrated. Blasphemy and proselytization of Muslims is punishable by death,” he said.

Pompeo criticized Russia’s categorization of Jehovah’s Witnesses as “terrorists,” the confiscation of their property, and the threats to their families. He spoke against the Burmese military’s violence against Rohingya Muslims, saying hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee or to live in overcrowded refugee camps.

China also drew criticism from Pompeo, who said, “The Chinese Communist Party has exhibited extreme hostility to all religious faiths since its founding. The party demands that it alone be called God.”

Brownback added: “China has declared war on faith. We’ve seen increasing Chinese Government abuse of believers of nearly all faiths and from all parts of the mainland.”

“They’ve increased their repression of Christians, shutting down churches and arresting adherents for their peaceful religious practices,” said Brownback, predicting this will affect China’s standing domestically and around the world.

China’s government has made “intense persecution” normal for many religious believers, including Falun Gong practitioners, Christians, and Tibetan Buddhists, Pompeo said.

The State Department added a special section to its report on China to discuss the country’s treatment of its Uighur Muslim population in Xinjiang autonomous region.

Brownback went into more detail on problems in other countries. He objected to Eritrean authorities’ continued house arrest of Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch Antonios, detained since 2006, and the detention of hundreds of other “prisoners of conscience.” The Turkish government continues to keep closed the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople’s Theological School of Halki, he said.

According to Brownback, religious leaders in Nicaragua report “constant surveillance, intimidation and threats.”

“The national police assault priests in full daylight, revealing the government’s contempt for any religious leaders they view as a threat to their authority,” he said.

In Brownback’s view, the Trump administration has made religious freedom a top priority and fought “for people of all faiths.”

“We will not stop until we see the iron curtain of religious persecution come down; until governments no longer detain and torture people for simply being of a particular faith or associated with it; until people are no longer charged and prosecuted on specious charges of blasphemy; until the world no longer believes it can get away with persecuting anyone of any faith without consequences,” he said. “We will not stop.”

Pompeo noted the upcoming second annual Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, to be held in mid-July, expected to draw up to 1,000 people.

He said the first ministerial was “truly a stunning show of unity—people of all faiths standing up for the most basic of all human rights.” It inspired follow-up conferences in the United Arab Emirates and Taiwan.

The State Department’s International Religious Freedom Fund, launched to support victims of persecution and to “give groups the tools to respond,” has received millions of dollars, he reported.

(see Global Religious Liberty, page 22)
People Not Politics: Pro-Life Groups Unite to Send Aid to the Border

Brownsville, TX June 28 (CNA) Reports of children with matted hair, inadequate sleep and no access to showers or clean clothes. A published photo of a father and his toddler daughter who drowned trying to reach the United States. Media reports in the last week painted a bleak picture of the unsafe and unsanitary conditions at the U.S.-Mexico border, worsened by overcrowding and underfunding. 

The crisis spurred New Wave Feminists, a secular pro-life group, to take action in collaboration with And Then There Were None (ATTWN), a support group for former abortion clinic workers. In just three days, New Wave Feminists has collected more than $16,900 in monetary donations, while ATTWN has collected more than $12,800 worth of donated goods through a wish list registry on Amazon—so many toiletries, diapers, and other basic items that the group is renting a U-Haul truck to deliver their donations. 

“The thing we keep hearing is, ‘Oh, pro-lifers don’t care about life outside the womb. Where are they at the border?’” Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa, founder of New Wave Feminists, told CNA. 

The sentiment is inaccurate, she said, citing a border donation drive by New Wave Feminists last year, to which pro-life people from various groups throughout

“It’s not a political issue; it’s a people issue. And so if we care about the human dignity of the child in the womb, then we also care about the human dignity of the migrant. We care about the human dignity of all people, and that’s because we subscribe to the consistent life ethic.”

(see Hope in People Not Politics, page 13)
Democratic Candidates Tout Abortion Credentials in First Debate

Washington D.C., Jun 27 (CNA) - Taxpayer funding for abortions is a matter of “justice” for men and women, Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro said during the first Democratic primary debate Wednesday.

Castro’s comments were echoed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), who said that she does not support any restrictions on abortion, and wants to see the Roe v. Wade decision codified into federal law.

After acknowledging that every Democratic candidate on the debate stage June 26 was in favor of abortion rights, debate moderator Lester Holt asked Castro if, as he is elected, abortion would be covered under a government-funded healthcare plan.

“Yes, it would,” said the former Department of Housing and Urban Development secretary.

Ashley McGuire, a senior fellow for The Catholic Association, an organization that promotes religious liberty, life, and the Church in the public square, was critical of Castro’s enthusiasm for taxpayer-funded abortion, and said it was a sign the party has been overrun by “abortion extremism.”

“By equating reproductive justice” with taxpayer funding of abortion, he reveals the party’s fundamentally schismatic with Americans write large on the issue,” said McGuire.

“Americans overwhelmingly oppose the use of tax dollars to pay for abortions, and yet Democrats are actively and aggressively working to undo legal barriers like the Hyde Amendment.”

McGuire believes that this election will result in “a competition between the candidates as to who can be most extreme on abortion” and that “Castro was just the first one out of the gate.”

Castro has made his Catholic identity a hallmark of his campaign, initially announcing his presidential ambitions in front of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12, her feast day.

“I don’t believe only in reproductive freedom, I believe in reproductive justice,” Castro said Wednesday night. He further elaborated that “just because a woman—or let’s also not forget someone in the trans community, a trans female, is poor, doesn’t mean they shouldn’t have the right to exercise their right to choose. And so I absolutely would cover the right to have an abortion.”

The comment caused some confusion among LGBT activists. A “trans female” is a man who identifies and presents himself as a woman, but cannot get pregnant as they do not possess a uterus. Castro later clarified on Twitter that he intended to refer to “trans males,” or women who identify and present themselves as men, who can and do bear children.

“Last night I mispoke—it’s trans men, trans masculine, non-binary folks who need full access to abortion and repro healthcare,” he said.

Castro, who pointed out the Catholic church where he was baptized during the announcement of his presidential campaign, pledged that if he were elected, he would appoint federal judges who will “understand the precedent of Roe v. Wade and will respect it.”

After this question, Holt then asked Warren if she would put any limits on abortion. Warren said she would not.

“I would make certain that every woman has access to the full range of reproductive health care services, and that includes birth control, it includes abortion, it includes everything for a woman,” she said.

Warren accused states of working to “undermine Roe” by passing restrictions on abortion, and that “it’s not enough to expect the courts to protect us.”

“We now have an America where most people support Roe v. Wade,” said Warren. “We need to make that a federal law.”

Massachusetts, which Warren represents in the Senate, passed the “Negating Archival Statutes Targeting Young Women Act” or “NASTY Women” Act in 2018. The NASTY Women Act codified Roe v. Wade into law and overturned a dormant Massachusetts law that criminalized abortion.

Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life of America, said after the debate that “the abortion lobby has too much power within the Democratic Party and is successfully alienating Democratic voters with the pressure for all candidates to take an abortion extremism approach.”

Day told CNA that she hopes the issue of pro-life support is raised on Thursday, the second night of Democratic primary debates. That debate will feature Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), who has said that she does not believe there is a place for pro-life Democrats in the party.

“Tonight, we would like to see one of the moderates ask, by show of hands, if anyone wants pro-life Democrats to vote for them,” said Day.

Day believes that the focus on abortion will end up harming the Democratic Party in their effort to win the presidency in 2020.

“The first one out of the gate is that an abortion extremist cannot defeat President Trump, because the independents and Democrats who oppose abortion will simply stay home or vote third party,” she said.
Historic Mission Bell Removed from California College

Santa Cruz, California, Jun 25 (CNA) - A university in California removed a bell last week after a Native American group claimed the historic piece was disrespectful to their heritage.

The El Camino Real Bell, named for the California route connecting the 21 Franciscan missions, was removed by the University of California, Santa Cruz on Friday. The bell has been on UCSC’s campus since the 1990s. It is one of a series of bells placed along the route.

The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band issued an objection to the bell during the last school year. The group said the bell symbolized the enslavement and humiliation of their ancestors.

“It is shameful that these places where our ancestors were enslaved, whipped, raped, tortured and exposed to fatal diseases have been whitewashed and converted into tourist attractions,” said Valentine Lopez, chair of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, according to Fox News.

Sarah Latham, the university’s vice chancellor of administrative services, said the move was “in support of efforts to be more inclusive,” the Associated Press reported.

A decision regarding the bell’s transfer or destruction has not been announced yet. Amah Mutsun suggested it should either be placed in a museum or melted down.

The bell is one of the hundreds of others placed around California in 1906. According to the Fox News, a press release from UCSC claimed that these bells has been meant to honor California’s “Hispanic past” and “expand tourism.”

“The bell marker, which memorializes the California Missions and an imagined route of travel that once connected them, is viewed by the Amah Mutsun and many other California indigenous people as a racist symbol that glorifies the domination and dehumanization of their ancestors,” the release continued.

The removal of the bell follows other outcries against historical monuments in recent years. California legislators attempted in 2015 to replace a statue of St. Junipero Serra with Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, at the National Statuary Hall in Washington D.C.

Last year, a bronze statue titled “Early Days” was removed from San Francisco City Hall. It involved three figures - a Native American, the seafarer Francis Drake, and St. Junipero Serra.

Critics argued that the statue was degrading to Native Americans and used visual stereotypes that were racist.

Serra played a key role in the evangelization of 18th-century California. The missions he founded took in thousands of Native American converts to Christianity and taught them technological development skills.

Serra and other missionaries have drawn criticism from those who see them as a symbol of European colonialism and characterize the missions as engaged in the forced labor of Native Americans.

However, their defenders vigorously dispute these claims, noting that participation in mission life, while strict, was voluntary, as well as the efforts by the missionaries to feed, clothe, and house those who came to them.

Pope Francis canonized Serra in 2015. He praised the saint for seeking “to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it.”

The pope, the said, “was excited about blazing trails, going forth to meet many people, learning and valuing their particular customs and ways of life. He learned how to bring to birth and nurture God’s life in the faces of everyone he met; he made them his brothers and sisters.” ☼
In his life, and continued to be a leading figure in U.S. Society for the Propagation of the Faith at one point shows, Archbishop Sheen authored many books, with York in 1951, and he remained there until his appointment-age of 24. He was appointed auxiliary bishop of New was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria at the archbishop’s disinterment took place.

Venerable Sheen was born in 1895 in Illinois and was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, along with funeral home and cemetery personnel, gathered early in the morning June 27 at St. Patrick Cathedral in New York, where Sheen’s remains were taken out of the cathedral to LaGuardia airport and flown to Chicago O’Hare.

The dioce also announced that Sheen’s Cause for Beatification, the next step on the road to sainthood, had resumed. “Bishop Jenky has notified the Vatican indicating that civil litigation has ended and that Sheen’s remains have been transferred. The Vatican has confirmed that the Cause for Beatification has now resumed,” the release continues.

The next step will be for the Congregation of the Causes of Saints in Rome to present the alleged miracle attributed to Sheen’s intercession—the miraculous healing of an infant declared to be stillborn—to Pope Francis for his decree authenticating it.

Sheen’s remains will be encased into a marble monument inside the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, located at the side altar dedicated to the Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help—on whose feast day, June 27, the archbishop’s disinterment took place.

Venerable Sheen was born in 1895 in Illinois and was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria at the age of 24. He was appointed auxiliary bishop of New York in 1951, and he remained there until his appointment as Bishop of Rochester in 1966.

Sheen served as host of the “Catholic Hour” radio show and the television show “Life is Worth Living.”

In addition to his pioneering radio and television shows, Archbishop Sheen authored many books, with proceeds supporting foreign missions. He headed the Society for the Propagation of the Faith at one point in his life, and continued to be a leading figure in U.S.

Catholicism until his death in 1979. The Peoria diocese opened the cause for Sheen’s canonization in 2002, after the Archdiocese of New York said it would not explore the case. Jenky had suspended the beatification cause in September 2014 on the grounds that the Holy See expected Sheen’s remains to be in the Peoria diocese. A lengthy legal battle followed.

Sheen’s will had declared his wish to be buried in the Archdiocese of New York’s Calvary Cemetery. Soon after Sheen died, Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York asked Joan Sheen Cunningham if his remains could be placed in the crypt of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City, and she consented. However, Cunningham has since said that Sheen would have wanted to have been interred in Peoria if he knew that he would be considered for sainthood. In 2016, she filed a legal complaint seeking to have her uncle’s remains moved to the Cathedral of St. Mary in Peoria.

An initial court ruling had sided with Cunningham, but a state appeals court overturned that ruling, saying it had failed to give sufficient attention to a sworn statement from a colleague of Archbishop Sheen, Monsignor Hilary C. Franco, a witness for the New York archdiocese.

Msgr. Franco had said that Sheen told him he wanted to be buried in New York and that Cardinal Cooke had offered him a space in the crypt of St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The appeals court ordered “a full exploration” of the archbishop’s desires.

The Superior Court of New York ruled in June 2018 that Sheen’s remains be transferred to Peoria. The New York Court of Appeals unanimously agreed during March 2019. The appeals court dismissed New York’s appeal of the decision in May 2019, and again earlier this month. The New York Archdiocese ultimately agreed to cooperate with the transfer after all its civil law options were exhausted.

Although the date of Beatification is not known at this time, Bishop Jenky hopes and prays that these decrees from Rome will be issued in the coming weeks,” the release continued.

“Bishop Jenky continues to be hopeful that Vener- able Archbishop Fulton Sheen will be Beatified during this 100th anniversary year of his ordination to the priesthood in Peoria.”

“Everyone is encouraged to continue offering prayers for the Beatification of Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen. Bishop Jenky invites everyone to visit the new tomb [in Peoria],” the release concluded.

Suicide Rate in Prisons Raises Alarm, Calls for Change

Washington D.C., Jun 27 (CNA) - With suicide rates remaining high in the United States’ prison system, civil advocates are raising concerns regarding the treatment of inmates.

Suicide is the leading cause of death in prison. According to recent data from the U.S. Department of Justice, 372 suicides occurred in 3,000 federal prisons in 2014. This number is 2.5 times higher than suicide rates in state prisons and 3.5 times higher than in general society.

The Associated Press conducted a recent investiga- tion into suicide rates in prisons, finding that more than 300 suicides occurred in local prisons through- out nine states from 2015 to 2017.

Many lawsuits regarding prison mistreatment have to do with self-immolation and attempted suicide, according to the AP. Out of 400 lawsuits in the last five years, 40% involved an attempt of suicide.

As jails seek to curb prison drug abuse, inmates often lack access to medication for their pre-existing mental health conditions, the AP reported. About one-third of prison suicides occur after the prisoner requested prescription medication and was denied, it found.

According to the AP, prison experts believe these deaths are largely avoidable by either providing inmates with better suicide prevention or ensuring offenders are placed in psychiatric hospitals rather than prisons.

“The vast majority are foreseeable and preventable,” said Lori Rifkin, a prisoners’ rights attorney in Cali- fornia. “But they continue to happen because, overall, I think there is a cultural dismissiveness toward both the signs that help us predict suicide—and toward the steps necessary to prevent them.”

“We have decided that as a society let’s just ware- house the mentally ill in a jail ... which is neither equipped for, trained to handle or able to be most efficient and effective at solving the problem,” said Jonathan Thompson, head of the National Sheriffs’ Association.

“The failure here isn’t just what a deputy or an offi- cer in a jail does or doesn’t do. The failure is that these people are being put in a criminal environment for mental illness.”

Some states have initiated suicide prevention and mental health awareness programs, including the Sandra Bland Act passed in Texas in 2017. The law requires law enforcement to undergo mental health training.

Numerous county jails have also stepped up suicide prevention methods. In Lake Country, California, the jail installed a better surveillance system to monitor at-risk prisoners. It also added a registered nurse and four additional hours of suicide prevention training. In Harris County, Texas, a suicide hotline has been made available to the inmates.

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has expressed significant concern for the proper treat- ment of prisoners. On Holy Thursday this year, the Pope celebrated the Mass of the Lord’s Supper with the prisoners in Velletri, about 30 miles from Rome.

In February, he challenged prison personnel to pro- mote hope among inmates. He said prisons need to be humanized, preventing offenses against the human person, and inmates need to be treated with love.

“I have much closeness with prisoners and the people that work in prisons,” he said. “[I give] my affection and my prayer, so that you can contrib- ute with your work to making the prison, a place of pain and suffering, also a workshop of humanity and hope,” he said.

“Suicide is a suicide, which finds its root in the love of Christ, can foster in many prisoners the trust, the awareness, and the certainty of being loved.”

International

Pope Gives Chaplains of Sailors Same Faculties as Missionaries of Mercy

Vatican City, VA June 28 (CNA) In a meeting with the Apostleship of the Sea on Thursday, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of mercy, and said he was giving sea chaplains the same expansive faculties he had given to the Missionaries of Mercy.

“I would like to say a word about peace of heart. (see News Briefs, page 16)
Many sailors approach or come to see chaplains and priests with problems of conscience that make them suffer greatly, problems that they have never had a chance to bring up in those circumstances, so far from home, far from their native land,” the Pope said June 27 in the Vatican’s Clementine Hall to participants in a meeting for chaplains and volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea.

“Dialogue with a chaplain may well open up new horizons of hope. So I would say to you: be merciful, be merciful. And to favour that mercy, I grant to all chaplains and sailors and fishermen the same faculties I have gave to the Missionaries of Mercy. In this way, you will be able to bring peace to so many hearts.”

During the Jubilee of Mercy, the Missionaries of Mercy had no limits on where they could validly and licitly hear confessions, and they were able to absolve sins otherwise reserved to the Holy See: profaning the Eucharistic species by taking them away or keeping them for a sacrilegious purpose; the use of physical force against the Roman Pontiff; the abolition of an accomplice in a sin against the Sixth Commandment; and a direct violation against the sacramental seal by a confessor.

Pope Francis noted the importance of maritime industry, and thus the chaplains who minister to seamen.

“Without sailors, the global economy would come to a standstill; and without fishermen, many parts of the world would starve. I would ask you to convey my esteem and encouragement to the sailors and fishermen whom you meet, many of whom work for lengthy periods of time, thousands of miles away from their native land and their families,” he said.

“The pope noted that in addition to isolation and distance, sailors and fishermen can face injustice, trafficking, forced labor, and piracy.

“As chaplains and volunteers of Stella Maris, you have been entrusted with the mission of presence, bringing the Good News of the Lord Jesus to the complex and varied world of seafaring,” he told his audience.

“Your daily visits to the ships enable you to encounter people in concrete situations, at times serene, at other times anxious or even deeply troubled. With compassion and discretion, you give them a chance to pour out their hearts. This is the first and most precious service that you provide, above all to those who have few similar opportunities. Your ministry to sailors and fishermen is above all one of listening, to their needs and to their material and spiritual needs.”

This listening can lead to action, he advised, encouraging them to confront “human trafficking, forced labour and violations of the human and labour rights of so many men and women who live and work on the seas.”

“Through your service, you can help restore to these persons their sense of dignity,” he said.

The pope added that “thanks to you, those who are most vulnerable can find hope for a better future. Your efforts can help them not to give up in the face of a life that is precarious and at times marked by exploitation. Your presence in the ports, large and small, is already a sign of God’s fatherhood and the fact that, in his eyes, we are all children, brothers and sisters to one another.”

He said that “presence is also a sign of the primordial worth of the human person, prior to and above every other interest, and an incentive for everyone, starting with the poorest, to work for justice and respect for fundamental rights.”

Pope Could See Final Draft of New Curial Constitution by September

By Courtney Grogan

Vatican City, Jun 27 (CNA) - Pope Francis could receive a final draft of a new constitution for the Roman curia as soon as September, according to the secretary of the pope’s Council of Cardinal Advisors.

Bishop Marcello Semeraro said Thursday that the group was in the final stages of drafting the new constitution, titled Praedicate Evangelium, or “Proclaim the Gospel,” marking the near completion of a key reform project which began with the establishment of the Council of Cardinals in 2013, one month after Francis was elected. Since that time, the group has worked to advise the pope on Church governance and reform, with the drafting of a new constitution a key priority.

The draft text is expected to place renewed emphasis on evangelization as the structural priority of the Church’s mission, with some predicting the merger of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization into a single larger department.

“The text will lead the pope to recognize that we are no longer in a world that has a structure of Christianity in which it is enough to pay attention to doctrine. Particular attention must be paid to proclamation. An announcement that brings joy,” Council of Cardinals Secretary Bishop Marcello Semeraro said at a Vatican press conference June 27.

Semeraro said the text of the constitution must take into consideration “a changing world,” and that the reforming efforts drew inspiration from Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world.

Praedicate Evangelium will replace Pastor Bonus, the current apostolic constitution promulgated by Pope John Paul II on June 28, 1988, and subsequently modified by both popes Benedict and Francis.

Pope Francis and his Council of Cardinals met June 25-27 to discuss the comments and suggestions received on the draft text after it was sent to the presidents of national bishops’ conferences, dicasteries of the Roman Curia, Synods of the Eastern churches, conferences of major superiors, and a few pontifical universities.

Bishop Semeraro called it “an intense process of listening.”

The six members of the council, Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, Reinhard Marx, Sean Patrick O’Malley, Giuseppe Bertello, and Oswald Gracias, all participated in the meetings with Pope Francis.

The Council of Cardinals is often referred to informally as the “C9,” although there are now only six members. In December, three of the original members of the council, Cardinals George Pell, Francisco Javier Errazuriz, and Laurent Monsengwo were removed from the council, ostensibly for reasons of age.

The next meeting of the Council of Cardinals will take place September 17-19.

No Evidence That Notre-Dame Fire Was Intentional, Investigators Say

Paris, France, Jun 27 (CNA) - An initial investigation into the devastating fire that consumed much of Notre-Dame cathedral in April has found no signs of criminal action behind the blaze, French officials said Wednesday.

Chief Prosecutor of Paris Remy Heitz said in a statement that the investigations so far have not been able to pinpoint a cause of the fire but have found no evidence that it was deliberate, the BBC reported. “Deeper investigations” will be carried out, he said.

Officials conducted 100 witness hearings in the initial stage of their investigation, according to CNN. They will now consider the possibility of negligence - including electrical malfunction or a poorly extinguished cigarette - as a cause for the fire.

Shortly before 7 p.m. on April 15, a fire broke out in the iconic Gothic cathedral in Paris. The roof and the spire, which dated to the 19th century, were destroyed. Shortly after midnight April 16, firefighters announced that the cathedral’s main structure had been preserved from collapse.

Major religious and artistic treasures of the cathedral were removed as the fire began, including a relic of the crown of thorns.

Originally built between the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, the landmark cathedral in the French capital is one of the most recognizable churches in the world, receiving more than 12 million visitors each year.

The cathedral was undergoing some restorative work at the time the fire broke out. Officials had been in the process of a massive fundraising effort to renovate the cathedral against centuries of decay, pollution, and an inundation of visitors. French conservationists and the archdiocese announced in 2017 that the renovations needed for the building’s structural integrity could cost as much as $112 million to complete.

Last month the French Senate passed a bill mandating that Notre-Dame be rebuilt as it was before the fire. President Emmanuel Macron had previously called for “an inventive reconstruction” of the cathedral.

Since the adoption of the 1905 law on separation of church and state, which formalized laïcité (a strict form of public secularism), religious buildings in France have been considered property of the state.

More than one billion dollars has been raised for the restoration effort.

The first Mass since the fire was celebrated at the cathedral June 15. 

July 14: Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Francis Solano
Religious Freedom Laws ‘More Necessary Than Ever,’ Congress Hears

By Matt Hadro

Washington D.C., Jun 26 (CNA) - The House Committee on Education and Labor heard testimony June 25 on the Do No Harm Act, a proposed measure to limit the application of landmark religious freedom legislation.

The Do No Harm Act proposes to limit the application of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Critics of the measure warned Tuesday that tampering with the law could hurt religious minorities who need its protections the most.

Matt Sharp, senior counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom, said during his testimony that at a time when certain religious freedom protections are unpopular, “RFRA is more urgent and necessary to ensure that the political whims don’t dictate whether an individual or an organization’s faith is respected.”

Sharp said that the Do No Harm Act would withdraw the “opportunity for relief” available to religious groups, “shutting the doors of a courthouse to a lot of individuals and organizations if their claims fall out of favor.”

Tuesday’s hearing on Capitol Hill also heard testimony from several witnesses for and against Do No Harm, including Reps. Joe Kennedy (D-MA) and Mike Johnson (R-LA), and Rachel Laser, President and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act was passed by Congress and enacted into law in 1993, receiving unanimous bipartisan support in the House and passing the Senate by a vote of 97-3. President Bill Clinton signed the legislation.

RFRA was supported by leaders in both parties as a response to the 1990 Supreme Court decision Employment Division v. Smith, in which the Court upheld the government in a case involving two Native Americans fired after testing positive for the drug peyote, which they argued they had ingested as part of a religious ritual.

The law prevents the federal government from imposing a substantial burden on the sincerely-held religious beliefs of a person, unless it can establish a compelling government interest in passing the law and the legislation is the least-restrictive means of furthering that interest.

At the time of its passage, RFRA enjoyed broad support from both parties and from advocacy groups across the political spectrum.

“The reason all those diverse groups came together was because the Smith decision caused great alarm around the country,” stated Rep. Johnson in his member testimony at the hearing.

Prior to his time in Congress, Johnson served for nearly 20 years as a constitutional law attorney and a defense litigator in religious freedom cases.

The consensus behind RFRA’s passage was not, he said, a reflection of support for the men in the Smith case, but “the personal views of the lawmakers were not the point.”

“Everyone, both liberal and conservative, recognized that even the sincerely-held religious beliefs of small minority groups are important for us to protect,” Johnson said. “RFRA supporters understood that one day, it could be their own religious beliefs and practices that would be unpopular and face government scorn and restriction.”

“All RFRA provides is a fair hearing,” Rep. Johnson said. “[It] was created to provide a very reasonable balancing test” between sincerely-held religious beliefs and the government’s interest in federal law.

Supporters of the Do No Harm Act argued that, since its passage, application of RFRA has been broadened to allow religious groups to avoid complying with equality and employment laws.

In 2014, RFRA was at the center of the Supreme Court case Hobby Lobby v. Burwell, in the Christian owners of the closely-held for-profit company objected on religious grounds to the Obama administration’s mandate of provision of coverage for certain drugs that can cause abortions.

The Court ruled that Hobby Lobby was exempt from the mandate, which was not the least-restrictive means for furthering the government’s compelling interest of providing contraceptive coverage.

After that decision, critics claimed it violated women’s right to obtain healthcare coverage—including contraceptives, sterilizations, and abortifacient drugs. Legislation was introduced in Congress to limit the use of RFRA in religious freedom cases.

In 2019, Reps. Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Joe Kennedy (D-MA) reintroduced the “Do No Harm Act” to forbid the use of RFRA against “equal opportunity and protection against discriminatory laws, protections in the workplace and against child abuse, and health care access, coverage and services.”

“Over the years,” Rep. Kennedy explained in his testimony, “RFRA has morphed from a shield of protection to a sword of infringement.”

Religion has played a vital role in our nation’s history,” stated Rep. Scott in his opening remarks at Tuesday’s hearing, helping fuel social justice causes such as the civil rights movement and child labor movement. Yet, he said, it has been used as a “pawn” to justify segregation and discriminatory attacks.

New conscience protections, introduced by the Trump administration for health care workers opposed to procedures such as abortions, were cited as a discriminatory practice that was protected by RFRA but against the original spirit of the law.

Opposition to the contraceptive mandate, notably by groups like the Little Sisters of the Poor, was also argued by supporters of the Do No Harm Act to be an unreasonable religious exemption under RFRA, along with religious adoption agencies only placing children with opposite-sex couples—or even with couples from a certain church or Christian denomination.

The Do No Harm Act would “restore RFRA to its original purpose,” Kennedy said. “If civil liberties and legal rights exist only in absence of a neighbor’s legal objection” then they’re not rights, he said.

Rachel Laser, CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State said that the proposed legislation would prevent RFRA from being “misused for something that it wasn’t originally intended to do.”

Against these arguments, Sharp and Congressmen Johnson both testified that RFRA does not disproportionately benefit Christians at the expense of other groups.

In 25 years, Sharp argued in his written testimony, only 16.3% of appellate court religious freedom cases under RFRA were successful—in other words, the government almost always wins,” Johnson said.

“Critics of the Hobby Lobby decision insisted that the decision would ‘open the floodgates’ to all sorts of new claims under RFRA and to ‘impose Christian values in America and use religious freedom as a license to discriminate.’ That simply has not happened,” Johnson said, citing a Becket Fund study showing that Christians were actually under-represented among the religious groups making claims under RFRA.

The bill, if enacted, “would eviscerate one of the most important and widely-regarded laws that’s ever been passed by the Congress,” Rep. Johnson said.

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC) dismissed the argument that RFRA was being used to protect unfair discrimination in health care, “that is not what RFRA is about,” she said.

“RFRA is not about denying anything to anybody except the freedom of religion—the Do No Harm bill will deny that.”

July 29: St. Martha
En 1986 el Papa Emérito Benedicto XVI, entonces Cardenal Ratzinger, recomienda el establecimiento de ‘islas de concentración espiritual’. En los últimos años, con el incesante aumento de laicos, hay una necesidad cada vez mayor de estas islas de concentración espiritual.

En el libro de los Hechos de los Apóstoles encontramos la descripción de la venida del Espíritu Santo. Allí se nos dice que los apóstoles y discípulos se reunieron en un solo lugar. Se reunieron para esperar el prometido Espíritu Santo. Se reunieron en oración y anticipación de las grandes cosas que Dios haría en medio de ellos. Se reunieron en una especie de ‘isla de concentración espiritual’ para es-perar la venida del Espíritu y cuando el Espíritu llegó, El llegó en forma de viento y fuego. Luego llevaron el mensaje del Evangelio a las calles. Esta parte narrativa es muy conocida. Sin embargo, aun después de su inicial experiencia con el Espíritu que lleno de incursión en el mundo, los discípulos no abandonaron la seguridad de su comunidad, su isla de concentración espiritual. Como leemos en Hechos: “se reunían constantemente a escuchar a los apóstoles enseñar y compartir la vida en común, para la fracción del pan, la Eucaristía, porque también lleguemos a comprender y apreciar la necesidad de encontrarnos ‘constantemente para escuchar la enseñanza de los apóstoles y a compartir la vida en común, a la fracción del pan, y a orar”. Para muchos, la comunidad parroquial es justamente una ‘isla de concentración espiritual’. Ruego que este sea el caso para usted. Esta isla no está diseñada para proteger contra una excesiva mundanidad. El aspecto comunitario de nuestras parroquias es a menudo muy fuerte. Al mismo tiempo es posible, y probablemente necesario, mayores esfuerzos para acrecentar en nuestras parroquias espacios, que relativamente no sean perturbados por un mundo tan confuso, en donde el silencio en la Presencia del Dios vivo puede experimentarse mas profundamente y sea apreciado. Es necesario que nos esforcemos en fomentar en cada uno nosotros una convicción profundamente arraigada de nuestra constante necesidad de ser parte de o incluso establecer otras ‘islas de concentración espiritual’, y así como los discípulos de Jesús, podamos reunirnos constantemente “para escuchar la enseñanza de los apóstoles, compartir la vida en común, la fracción del pan en la Eucaristía y orar”. Tales islas comienzan con la Iglesia doméstica, el hogar. De hecho, cada familia Católica debe ser la primera isla de refugio espiritual. El verano es un buen momento para pasar más tiempo con la familia y también ofrece una oportunidad a nuestro compro-miso a aquellas cosas que ayudan a asegurar que la familia mantenga su propia tranquilidad. Viejos programas de radio, patrocinados por grupos cristianos, a menudo repetían la frase, que era muy común, que “la familia que reza unida permanece unida”. El valor de la oración familiar, dirigido por el padre, necesita ser reconocido otra vez. El establecimiento de un patrón de oración familiar no es necesariamente fácil, pero en nuestras circunstancias actuales ya no es opcional. Imitar a los apóstoles que: “se reunían constantemente a escuchar a los apóstoles enseñar y compartir la vida en común, para la fracción del pan y orar” (Hechos 2:42).

Declaración Pastoral de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de California

Resumen

California ha sido bendecida con una gran belleza. Dios se revela a través de toda la creación. La encíclica del Papa Francisco, Laudato Si’, nos llama a redescubrir con admiración y asombro la belleza de la creación. A su vez, debemos también responder al clamor de la tierra en su sufrimiento por nuestro maltrato del mundo natural.

En el cuarto aniversario de Laudato Si’, los Obispos de California, publicamos esta Declaración Pastoral con un enfoque doble: para animar y inspirar a aquellos que nos llaman a unirnos a la causa de la defensa de la Madre Tierra. Para muchos, la comunidad parroquial es justamente una ‘isla de concentración espiritual’. Ruego que este sea el caso para usted. Esta isla no está diseñada como aislamiento del mundo pero una prudente protección contra una excesiva mundanidad. El aspecto comunitario de nuestras parroquias es a menudo muy fuerte. Al mismo tiempo es posible, y probablemente necesario, mayores esfuerzos para acrecentar en nuestras parroquias espacios, que relativamente no sean perturbados por un mundo tan confuso, en donde el silencio en la Presencia del Dios vivo puede experimentarse mas profundamente y sea apreciado. Es necesario que nos esforcemos en fomentar en cada uno nosotros una convicción profundamente arraigada de nuestra constante necesidad de ser parte de o incluso establecer otras ‘islas de concentración espiritual’, y así como los discípulos de Jesús, podamos reunirnos constantemente “para escuchar la enseñanza de los apóstoles, compartir la vida en común, la fracción del pan en la Eucaristía y orar”. Tales islas comienzan con la Iglesia doméstica, el hogar. De hecho, cada familia Católica debe ser la primera isla de refugio espiritual. El verano es un buen momento para pasar más tiempo con la familia y también ofrece una oportunidad a nuestro compromiso a aquellas cosas que ayudan a asegurar que la familia mantenga su propia tranquilidad. Viejos programas de radio, patrocinados por grupos cristianos, a menudo repetían la frase, que era muy común, que “la familia que reza unida permanece unida”. El valor de la oración familiar, dirigido por el padre, necesita ser reconocido otra vez. El establecimiento de un patrón de oración familiar no es necesariamente fácil, pero en nuestras circunstancias actuales ya no es opcional. Imitar a los apóstoles que: “se reunían constantemente a escuchar a los apóstoles enseñar y compartir la vida en común, para la fracción del pan y orar” (Hechos 2:42).

La encíclica señala que nuestra fe nos permite ver la increíble belleza del universo como algo abierto a la trascendencia de Dios (LS 79). San Junípero Serra, entre los primeros en catalogar la hermosura silvestre de California, captó bien el sentir de nuestra Declaración Pastoral, página 20.

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¿Dónde está tu ‘Isla de Concentración Espiritual’?

Desde el Obispo

Mons. Robert F. Vasa es el sexto obispo de la Diócesis de Santa Rosa en California.
Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la más violentas del mundo en 2018, realizado por el violentos de México. En el listado de las 50 ciudades migrantes que buscan ingresar a Estados Unidos, es una de las zonas habituales de paso para los y le digo que para mí platicar con ella ha vivido, de muchísimo dolor. Pero cómo, de que esa fe le está permitiendo enfrentar las lágrimas, esa misma tarde. “Yo les invitaría a tener siempre esa mirada de fe, la esperanza que no defrauda, sobre todo la gran esperanza de la eternidad que nos aguarda”, dijo. “Necesitamos eso para que nadie se vea obligado a dejar su tierra por necesidades económicas o por la violencia o por daños ecológicos, y que pueda encontrar en su lugar lo necesario para desarrollarse. Y en el caso que tome la decisión de migrar, pueda hacerlo con todas las condiciones que su dignidad humana y sus derechos merecen”, indicó.

Esculturas de Virgen de Guadalupe y San Juan Diego van de México al Monte Tabor CIUDAD DE MÉXICO (ACI Prensa) - Esculturas de la Virgen de Guadalupe, San Juan Diego y de un franciscano bautizando fueron llevadas desde México para quedarse en el Monte Tabor, en Tierra Santa, donde Jesús se transfiguró para mostrar la esperanza que no defrauda, sobre todo la gran esperanza de la eternidad que nos aguarda. En el Monte Tabor se encuentra en la zona de Galilea y, en su cima, desde el siglo IV se erigió un monumento para recordar la transfiguración de Cristo. El peregrinaje constante de los fieles hizo que para el siglo ya se hubieran construido tres basílicas, en alusión a las tres tiendas de campaña que Abraham le propuso a Dios. Gracias a Dios ha disminuido la violencia, no tanto el cuarto lugar. Reynosa, uno de los municipios que forma parte de la Diócesis de Matamoros, se encuentra en el puesto 42. Mons. Lira destacó que, a pesar de la violencia, los fieles de la diócesis, laicos y sacerdotes, no han dejado de manifestar su solidaridad con los migrantes. El Prelado agradeció el “buen ejemplo y testimonio de gente buena, que incluso en los momentos más difíciles de violencia en esta zona arriesgó su vida, tendió la mano a los migrantes y lo sigue haciendo. Gracias a Dios ha disminuido la violencia, no tanto en Reynosa, pero sí en los otros ocho municipios que conforman la diócesis de Matamoros”. El Obispo de Matamoros dijo que la muerte de Oskar y su pequeña hija, así como de tantos otros migrantes fallecidos, “tiene que llevarnos a todos a reflexionar: estamos hablando de vidas humanas, de personas, no de números. De gente con su historia, con sus suenos, sus ilusiones”. “Esto nos muestra el rostro humano del migrante”, precisó. “Algo bien importante es descubrir en el fenómeno de la migración rostros y nombres, como nos ha invitado a hacer el Papa Francisco, porque si no, a veces podemos convertirnos en estadísticas, en números fríos. Y en realidad se trata de personas, cada una con su propia identidad, sus necesidades”, señaló. Los migrantes, explicó, son personas que tratan “de buscar algo mejor para sí mismas o para su familia. Y que son capaces de dejar su tierra, su casa, y lanzarse a una aventura bastante peligrosa”. Como un mensaje a los migrantes, Mons. Lira les invitó a descubrir “que en el trayecto que han seguido, al igual que el resto de su vida, Dios siempre ha caminado con ellos. El siempre camina con nosotros, no nos deja solos. Y en los momentos más difíciles nos tiende una mano, incluso a través de las personas que nos rodean”. “Lamentablemente, en el año 1212, el Sultán Malek al-Adel destruyó los santuarios y, aunque no hubieron restaurado en el siglo III, en 1263 el Sultán Bibars, volvió a destruir todos”. “Al resto de la sociedad, los invito a tomar conciencia de que en este mundo estamos construyendo, y a tratar de que caiga en quedar en nuestro granito de arena para edificar una cultura y una sociedad que sea capaz de reconocer, respetar, promover y defender la vida, la dignidad y los derechos y también los deberes de todas las personas, sin excluirlas”. “Pero cómo, gracias a Dios, ella ha buscado en la oración el consuelo, la esperanza que no defrauda, sobre todo la gran esperanza de la eternidad que nos aguarda”, dijo. Así lo indicó a ACI Prensa el Obispo de Matamoros (México), Mons. Eugenio Lira. Oskar y Valeria murieron este 23 de junio cuando intentaban cruzar el Río Bravo a la altura de las ciudades de Matamoros (México), y Brownsville (Estados Unidos). Sus cuerpos fueron encontrados a dos kilómetros de distancia y las imágenes de ambos, casi abrazados a orillas del Río Bravo, han conmovido a miles, entre ellos el Papa Francisco. Tania presentó todo y fue ella quien avisó por teléfono a la madre de Oskar de la tragedia, entre lágrimas, esa misma tarde. Actualmente, la mujer de 21 años se encuentra en una de las dos casas de migrantes que tiene la Diócesis de Matamoros. En diálogo con ACI Prensa, Mons. Eugenio Lira señaló que “he tenido la oportunidad de platicar personalmente con ella y puedo decir que he quedado edificado por su testimonio”.

“Es una mujer de fe y que precisamente da testimonio de que esa fe le está permitiendo enfrentar esto con esperanza cristiana”, dijo. “Ella me comenta los momentos difíciles que ha vivido, de muchísimo dolor. Pero cómo, gracias a Dios, ella ha buscado en la oración el consuelo, la luz, la fuerza” y le dijo que para mí platicar con ella ha sido un gran testimonio, un testimonio de fe”, añadió.

Matamoros, en el estado mexicano de Tamaulipas, es una de las zonas habituales de paso para los migrantes que buscan ingresar a Estados Unidos. Tamaulipas es también uno de los estados más violentos de México. En el listado de las 50 ciudades más violentas del mundo en 2018, realizado por el Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la Justicia Penal A.C., su capital, Ciudad Victoria, ocupó el cuarto lugar.

(con continuación... síntesis de la información)
En un artículo publicado en el Catholic Herald, Steve-

1. Estar sentado quiere decir “habitar”

2. Tener en cuenta que Dios Padre es “incorpóreo”

3. La expresión indica el poder y la autoridad de Dios

4. Tener en cuenta que Cristo es verdaderamente Dios, como lo es el Padre

5. Cristo hecho hombre muestra que viviremos en la bienaventuranza divina

¿Qué significa en el Credo que el Hijo está sentado a la derecha de Dios Padre?

Redacción Central (ACI Prensa) - Si alguna vez te has preguntado qué significa la frase del Credo “subió a los cielos y está sentado a la derecha de Dios, Padre Todopoderoso”, este artículo te ayudará a disipar la duda.

Ahí presentamos cinco puntos a tener en cuenta de los doctores de la Iglesia, San Agustín y Santo Tomás de Aquino; y de un especialista inglés en temas teológicos, cita a San Juan Damasceno, “no mencionar tanto en este mundo como en el futuro”.

En ese sentido, San Agustín afirma que en esa condición Jesús “es feliz y de esa felicidad, que se llama la derecha del Padre, viene el nombre mismo de felicidad, que es la derecha del Padre”.

“En efecto, si lo entendemos según la carne: que está sentado a la derecha del Padre, el Padre estará a su izquierda. ¿Acaso uno no se levanta, no pasea, no se acuesta? Y, sin embargo, se las llama residencias. Pues creed así: que Cristo habita a la derecha del Padre”.

En ese sentido, San Agustín explica que la expresión “estar sentado” significa “residir o habitar”. “Y donde se tienen las residencias, ¿se está siempre sentado? ¿Acaso uno no se levanta, no pasea, no se acuesta? Y, sin embargo, se las llama residencias. Pues se debe así: que Cristo habita a la derecha del Padre”.

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En tercer lugar, Bullivant indica que Cristo no se “sienta” a la derecha de Dios, Padre Todopoderoso; como lo haría un niño en salón de clase frente al profesor. Él se sienta como lo que es: un Juez y un Rey.

“Él está ‘sentado’ en el sentido de que está instalado en una posición de supremo honor y autoridad”.

Como señala Santo Tomás de Aquino en la Suma Teológica, citando a San Juan Damasceno, “no llamamos diestra del Padre a una realidad local. ¿Cómo conseguiría una derecha local que pueda mencionarse tanto en este mundo como en el futuro”.

Ef. 1, 19-21). Al respecto, Bullivant aclaró que San Pablo no considera a “la derecha” como una especie de lugar subordinado en el podio divino. “Más bien, afirma que Cristo comparte precisamente el mismo poder y autoridad que el Padre”.

Por ejemplo, en el Evangelio según San Mateo Jesús resucitado que el Salmo 110 indica: “Dijo el Señor a mi Señor: ‘Sientate a mi derecha, mientras yo pongo a tus enemigos como estrado de tus pies’” (Mt. 22,44).

Ese es el verdadero profeta, aquel que no busca endulzar el oído, sino que “anuncia la Buena Nueva de la Verdad”. Por lo tanto, “no tiene manos ni lados para que el Hijo se siente a su lado literalmente. Así que estamos hablando de algo simbólico”.

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En su Carta a los Efesios, San Pablo dice lo siguiente: “La extraordinaria grandezza del poder con que Él obra en nosotros, los creyentes, por la eficacia de su fuerza. Este es el mismo poder que Dios manifestó en Cristo, cuando lo resucitó de entre los muertos y lo hizo sentar a su derecha en el cielo, elevándolo por encima de todo Principado, Potestad, Poder y Dominación, y de cualquier otra dignidad que pueda mencionarse tanto en este mundo como en el futuro”.

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Bullivant destacó que Jesús está sentado a la derecha del Padre como Dios hecho hombre. Indicó que los Padres de la Iglesia como San Atanasio y San Gregorio Nacianceno repetían constantemente que “Dios se hizo hombre, para que el hombre se haga Dios”.

En ese sentido, recordó lo que dice San Pablo en su carta a los Romanos: “Si somos hijos, también somos herederos, herederos de Dios y herederos de Cristo, porque sufrimos con él para ser glorificados con él” (Rom.8,17).

“Como tal, entonces en nuestro legítimo hogar que es el cielo, viviremos en la bienaventuranza divina, es decir, a la derecha del Padre, junto con nuestro prójimo Jesucristo”, resaltó. (vea Declaración Pastoral, página 21)
Chinese Priests Do Not Need to Register with Government, Vatican Says

Vatican City, Jun 28 (CNA) - The Vatican issued new guidance for priests and bishops in mainland China on Friday, addressing government requirements that clergy register with the Communist government.

The document, issued by the Vatican June 28, provides "pastoral guidelines of the Holy See concerning the civil registration of clergy in China."

While recognizing the need to continue efforts to normalize relations between the Catholic community and government authorities, the document "respects the choice of priests who refuse to register."

"For some time, requests have been received by the Holy See from Bishops in mainland China for a concrete indication of the approach to be adopted in relation to the obligation of presenting an application for civil registration," the document begins.

Priests in China are required to register with the government in order to be able to minister openly. In the process of doing so, they are expected to acknowledge the government's policy of "sinicization."

"Many pastors remain deeply disturbed [at] the modality of such registration," the Vatican document states.

The Holy See also notes that the act of registration "requires, almost invariably, the signing of a document in which, notwithstanding the commitment assumed by the Chinese authorities to respect also Catholic doctrine, one must declare acceptance, among other things, of the principle of independence, autonomy and self-administration of the Church in China."

If, the document says, "the text of the declaration required for the registration does not appear respectful of the Catholic faith," priests should specify - in writing if possible, or else in front of witnesses - that the declaration is made only to the extent it is "faithful to the principles of Catholic doctrine."

"At the same time, the Holy See understands and respects the choice of those who, in conscience, decide that they are unable to register under the current conditions."

"The Holy See remains close to them and asks the Lord to help them to safeguard the communion with their brothers and sisters in the faith, even in the face of those trials that each one will have to face."

The Catholic Church in China has long been split between the underground Catholic Church, which is persecuted and whose episcopal appointments are typically unknown by Chinese authorities, and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, which is government-sanctioned.

In September 2018 the Holy See and Beijing reached an agreement meant to normalize the situation of China's Catholics and to unify the underground Church and the CPCA.

Despite Vatican support, that agreement has been roundly criticized by human rights groups and some Church leaders, including Cardinal Joseph Zen Zeeluk, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong.

The new guidelines acknowledge that the situation in China remains "complex," and that registration requirements are not necessarily enforced in the same way in all places throughout the mainland.

There is, the Vatican says, a need to balance the legitimate concerns of some clergy with the broader aim of regularizing the status of the underground Church.

"On the one hand, the Holy See does not intend to force anyone's conscience. On the other hand, it considers that the experience of clandestinity is not a normal feature of the Church's life and that history has shown that pastors and faithful have recourse to it only amid suffering, in the desire to maintain the integrity of their faith."

"Until such time as a modality for the civil registration of the clergy that is more respectful of Catholic doctrine, and thus of the consciences of those involved, is established," the Vatican document states, "no intimidatory pressures [may] be applied to the priests and bishops who are persecuted and whose episcopal appointments are non-official Catholic communities, as, unfortunately, has already happened."

In April of this year, government officials offered a bounty for information leading to the arrest of under-

(see Chinese Priests, page 22)
Pompeo said the State Department is elevating its Office of International Religious Freedom and its Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, effective immediately. These offices will now report directly to the undersecretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights.

Tony Perkins, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, welcomed the report. He said the State Department should not use pre-existing sanctions or indefinite waivers because “they provide little or no incentive for governments to walk more closely with Jesus Christ and other Christians. Those who want to know more about the Catholic Cursillo Movement and those who have already lived a Cursillo weekend are invited to attend. For further information call Molly Touchette at 707-292-8389 or Olga Dorado at 707-755-0022.

Youth and Young Adults
Stay current on Youth & Young Adult ministry events in the diocese: www.sryouth.org & www.catholicya.org. Humboldt State Newman Center events: Regina - rfonaughr1@hotmail.com http://www.hsnewmancenter.com

To have your calendar event listed please email us! Srdioce1@gmail.com

July 8th - 12th
Little Flower Diocese Youth Camp
Participants between 9-16 year old, parent permission slip needed. For more information e-mail: youth@srdioce1.org, phone: 707-566-3371

July 13th
Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa BBQ
Please join us for an afternoon of fun, family, and fellowship! This fun-filled day features: Barbecue Tri-Tip or Chicken Chili, Salads, and all the trimmings, Fine Napa Valley Wines, Great Desserts Sparkling conversation, Elegant surroundings, Games for the Children/petting zoo Raffle items from the Sisters Raffle (Courtesy of Ignatius Press) Instant Wine Cellar Raffle, 3 cases of the finest Napa Valley Wines.
Cost: In advance: $50/person and $90/family At the door is $60/person and $110/family Special Reserved Tables for $8: $500 Raffle Tickets: $25/ticket or 5 for $100. Please make plans to stop by the BBQ on July 13th, or offer an online donation! The favor of your reply is requested – R.S.V.P. to Carole Duncan at dincan@aol.com

July 20th
All invited to July Ultreya
The Catholic Cursillo Movement of the Diocese of Santa Rosa invites all Catholics to attend a Ultreya on Saturday, July 20, from 2 – 4 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Seton Church, 4595 Snyder Lane, Rohnert Park. Ultreya means “moving forward,” and Ultreya gatherings teach more about our faith and how to walk more closely with Jesus Christ and other Christians. Those who want to know more about the Catholic Cursillo Movement and those who have already lived a Cursillo weekend are invited to attend. For further information call Molly Touchette at 707-292-8389 or Olga Dorado at 707-755-0022.

July 24th
Renowned papal biographer and Catholic scholar George Weigel
Will speak on “My Unexpected Life with Pope St John Paul II,” Wednesday, July 24, 7 PM, at Kolbe Academy-Trinity Prep, 2055 Redwood Rd, Napa. For more information call 707-258-9030.

July 26th - 28th
Steubenville NorCal
Participants must have completed 8th grade. More information: https://lifeeteen.com/events/steubenville-norcal/

Ongoing in Santa Rosa
Catholic Charities’ Senior Transportation Program is a free service for seniors 60+ living in Santa Rosa. Our dedicated and trained volunteer drivers take seniors to medical appointments, grocery shopping and other similar errands. Medical appointments are given priority. Our program operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To schedule a ride, call 707-529-2063 and leave a message with your ride request the week before you need your scheduled ride.

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

Global Religious Liberty, cont. from page 11

The U.S. itself has been a focus of concerns for religious freedom. While freedom of religion is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions, anti-discrimination laws and policies have forced Catholic adoption agencies to close, while Christians in the wedding industry face pressure to serve same-sex wedding ceremonies or face lawsuits. The Little Sisters of the Poor continue a legal fight to secure their protections from mandatory health care coverage of drugs and procedures barred by Catholic ethics.

The Trump administration’s ban against travelers from several predominantly Muslim countries, characterized during his campaign as a “Muslim ban,” was among other actions that prompted strong concern. It was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision.

July 20: St. Apollinaris
How ‘Hosanna-Tabor’ Is Shaping Employment at Catholic Schools

Washington D.C. June 30th (CNA) In the wake of recent controversies over teacher hiring and firing at religious schools, CNA spoke with professor Rick Garnett from Notre Dame Law School to discuss the future of religious liberty. In 2012 the US Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the case Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC that the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment prevents the government from interfering with the employment of ministers. The government cannot be involved with the employment of ministers, which would be a violation of the First Amendment.

When a woman named Cheryl Perich was a religion teacher at Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran School for five years, before she went on disability in 2004. When she was cleared to work the following year, she was not offered her job back, and the school said they had hired someone else to teach religion. Perich then sued for unlawful dismissal, stating that her firing was a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The court said that her firing was in fact not unlawful, due to the religious component of her job, which the Supreme Court said likened her to a minister. The government cannot be involved with the employment of ministers, which would be a violation of the First Amendment.

The Establishment Clause would prevent “a situation like in England, where the queen picks the bishop,” explained Garnett. “The idea behind the ministerial exception is that our Constitution doesn’t permit stuff like that.”

A minister, said Garnett “is broader than just, you know, an ordained priest or pastor. It includes people who work for religious institutions, and who have a role in the religious mission of these institutions.”

First Amendment prevents the government from interfering with the hiring or firing of ministers. The case also determined what can be considered under the ministerial exception.

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The effects of Hosanna-Tabor may be seen in the coming years, as the exercise of religious liberty in schools becomes a bigger and bigger problem.

“One place where this is coming up is fair hiring and firing some controversy is when you have religious schools that are hiring teachers who enter into a civil marriage,” said Garnett.

“That’s happened in a number of Catholic schools around the country. And in a number of these cases have been lawsuits saying the firing was illegal, on the ground that it was discrimination.”

The schools, Garnett said, have responded to the claims of discrimination that these teachers are teaching at Catholic schools, and therefore are ministers.

“Far, there’s been some disagreement about how to handle these cases in the Supreme Court,” said Garnett.

Recently, two Jesuit high schools in Indianapolis were in the news. One defied orders from the archbishop to not renew the contract of a teacher who is in a civil same-sex marriage, opting to keep him on staff. The other high school decided not to renew the contract of one of their teachers who is in a same-sex marriage, who is, coincidentally, married to the other teacher.

Other religious liberty issues are beginning to arise over school vouchers. The Maryland Department of Education last year disqualified Bethel Christian Academy from participating in the state’s Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today voucher program, which benefits low-income students in the area.

The department had previously requested to see the student handbooks of schools in the program. Bethel’s handbook includes a statement of Christian beliefs about marriage and sexuality.

Garnett told CNA that does not think schools should be forced to give up the ministerial exemption to get vouchers, and that “every school [should] get some sort of public support.”

Walk in the Footsteps of Christ

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Fr. Thomas Diaz
April 14th to April 30th, 2020
$4,495 per person on dbl. occupancy
*$998 extra per single room
For more information contact: www.holylandtoursandtravel.com
Click onto Upcoming Tours and scroll down to the tour, or contact Fr. Tom at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Rohnert Park, CA (707) 585-3708 for more details.
How A Search for A Church, and for Truth, Led This Protestant Family to Catholicism

Atlanta, GA June 29th (CNA) Allison DeVine's conversion began in a preschool classroom.

There, she met another woman named Allison - a Catholic. The two women started talking because their daughters had become playmates. Both girls had strong personalities, and neither Allison believed the preschool friendship would stick.

But it did. The Allisons laughed about the improbable friendship of their strong-willed daughters.

"It was one of those moments we knew that we had to be friends. Our daughters intimidate everybody, but they got along fine. We were astonished that they didn't intimidate each other," DeVine told CNA.

As DeVine was教堂 shopping on New Year's day, she and her husband church shopping on New Year's day, they found themselves having more and more conversations that came back around to faith," DeVine said.

Soon the circle widened to include other women. Devine, a mother of three, describes the small group as "A Catholic, a Protestant, an agnostic, and a Mormon…it sounds like the set up to a good joke, but we had very in depth conversations about what we believed; we respected each other completely." As DeVine and her Catholic friend - the other Allison - grew closer, their conversations always seemed to come back around to spirituality and belief, and eventually focused on the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism.

"One Halloween, we were all out in a group, trick or treating. The kids were running around, going crazy, and in the middle of it all, my friend looks over at me and my husband and goes: 'Y'all will eventually become Catholic.'"

"My husband Jason and I were both like, 'whatever,'" DeVine recalled. "At the time, Protestantism was home for the DeVines. DeVine and her husband were small group leaders at their Protestant church, and DeVine had worked in Protestant churches for most of her career.

"But slowly, God began taking everything apart," DeVine said. Their small group fell apart. Things at their church "just weren't right.""We started looking for another church. And what we found during I guess what Protestants would call 'church shopping' was that nobody was grounded in truth. And that's where it all started for my husband," DeVine said.

DeVine acknowledged that while she and Jason Planning, and became pregnant during what seemed like an "impossible time," based on their charts. Even before their conversion, God was calling the couple to trust him more deeply through the unexpected pregnancy, DeVine noted.

As DeVine's husband continued his church search, "one night he woke me up in bed and said 'I have to talk to Allison,'" DeVine recalled. "I was like, 'Okay…you can have her number,'" DeVine told her husband, "and he was like, 'No, I think we're going to become Catholic.'"

Devine remembered rolling back over and telling him: 'I'm going back to bed.'

But for Jason DeVine, a fire was lit. He started reading everything he could get his hands on about Catholicism. It was during that same week that the family went to Catholic Mass on Sunday for the first time ever.

"We were totally lost, didn't know when to stand or sit," Allison DeVine said. "And at the end of the Mass, my husband looked over and was like, 'Yes, I think, this is it.'"

At that first Mass, the parish announcer that later that day, they would be beginning a series of talks on Catholicism. Allison's husband told her: "We're coming back tonight."

"I am so pregnant at this point, and I am exhausted, I was almost in tears at his suggestion, just because I was so tired," she recalled, "but I agreed to come back."

DeVine said the very first night of the parish mission answered "almost all of my questions" about Catholicism. Still, they decided to return for a second night.

During that second session, DeVine got up from the pew to stretch her legs and walk out some of her pregnancy discomfort."

(A) little old man in the back of the church stopped me to ask when I was due," she said. "I told him, 'Not for seven weeks,' and he said, 'Oh, no, that's not right, you're having that baby any day now.'"

DeVine returned to her pew and shared her prediction, laughing about it with her husband. She joked that "maybe we should take him at his word since we are in a Catholic church, and they do seem to know their pregnant women."

By the end of that second night, DeVine said, "All of my questions were answered. It was as if that little priest who came to preach was actually speaking directly to our family. Every single question. Everything we were wrestling with."

As it turned out, they wouldn't have been able to return for that third night anyway, because Allison went into labor that night and their tiny son was born the next morning—seven weeks early, but "perfectly healthy, defying every odd."

"We had a priest come and bless him that night, at the hospital, and we looked at each other and said, "Well, I guess we're in the Catholic Church now."

DeVine joked that "my husband read his way into the Church, but I birthed my way in."

The DeVines started regularly attending Mass once their son was discharged from the hospital. They enrolled in RCIA, and they formally entered the Catholic Church this past Easter, in April of 2019.

The switch to Catholicism had its rocky moments, including the loss of several of the family’s Protestant friends, who disagreed with some social teachings of the Catholic Church.

"God has really provided, though, because that core group of women, the four of us, we're still very close, and there is so much respect," DeVine said.

Becoming Catholic in 2019, however, is not a move for the faint of heart. Deixer acknowledged that while she and Jason were aware of the scandals in the Church surrounding the former cardinal Theodore McCarrick, and other serious abuse allegations against prelates at various levels in the hierarchy, they "weren't fazed by it."

"When you work in the church as I did, in various Christian denominations all my life, you already know about everything that goes on behind closed doors," she said. "Nothing shocked us. The difference is, though, these other churches aren't big enough, aren't institutionally organized in the same way. So some of them may break news for about five minutes, but nothing seems to capture the headlines the way Catholic scandals do," she added.

"It's actually amazing to me, because Jesus says 'you will be persecuted for my sake,' and we can see that in the way the Catholic Church is constantly in the news, constantly under media scrutiny. For us it was truly a mark that this was the true Church," DeVine said.

"Every one of us are sinners, we all have our issues," said DeVine. "He [Jesus] is the only one of us that's perfect."

The DeVine's chose Sts. Gianna and Simon the Zealot, respectively, as their confirmation saints. As a mother herself who experienced complications in her first pregnancy, DeVine feels very close to St. Gianna. Inspired by their pro-life convictions, the DeVines have also founded a nonprofit to benefit the unborn, called the The Bespoke Foundation.

“We're not good at going down and sitting in front of abortion clinics and talking to people, but we can sure raise money. So we started a foundation to benefit the crisis pregnancy clinics around the greater Atlanta area.”

DeVine cited the rosary, the Eucharist, and the reality of there being “church everywhere, always, anywhere we go in the world” as some of the biggest gifts of becoming Catholic.

And Allison's friend, the other Allison? She is now the godmother to one of the DeVine's children. "God had all the details worked out ahead of time. He really thought of everything, it really is amazing." Allison's husband, Jason, blogged about the family's journey into Catholicism at his blog, www.397totheLamb.com. ✿