Father Timothy Hayter poses with students of St. Ann Catholic School on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2020. The students participated in a drive-through Veterans Day parade, waving flags in appreciation of the veterans who drove past the school.
**From the Bishop’s Desk**

My battle with the coronavirus

The coronavirus had been spreading in our area for eight months. I was grateful to God for the gift of health, allowing me to continue serving our people in a time of serious pandemic and social turmoil. Here in San Angelo, we had long been planning a race relations forum, involving community leaders, government officials, university spokespersons, and pastors of various churches. I had great hopes for its potential in confronting racism. Nevertheless, as the number of cases spiked, I decided to postpone the event.

The morning after the event would have taken place, I began to feel feverish at my office. I locked up my laptop and proceeded directly to the drive-through rapid test facility. A few hours later, they contacted me with the good news of a negative result, saying I could now return to work. However, I did not trust the result, because there was still no explanation for my persistent fever. I kept a self-quarantine just to be on the safe side. I looked for a PCR test and managed to find one at a local pharmacy. Two days later, the pharmacy sent me the fateful email.

Before I opened it, I prayed, “Lord, may your holy will be done. Give me the grace to face whatever the result is.” The note from the pharmacy included the word written in red — positive.

My struggle against the coronavirus raged on for days. I don’t recall ever in my life having a fever that lasted so long. I had a strong desire to avoid hospitalization and treatment if at all possible, since hospital resources here in West Texas are stretched so thin. I took vitamins and medications like they were going out of style. I made several new fascinating discoveries — like the fact that the unflavored Pedialyte tastes a whole lot better than the flavored kind. I slept more than ever before, because the fever was just wearing my body out.

Going through day after day of illness put me in touch with the human vulnerability. It helped me to identify more closely with the vulnerability of others around the world, including those who are sick, elderly, homeless, in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, refugee camps, and in hospice care. In my illness I felt more deeply connected with the human family everywhere. I embraced a sense of solidarity with those who are in pain, those who care for the sick, those grieving loss, and those who feel fear and anxiety.

It is hard to be productive when you are in quarantine, especially if you are battling illness. There are several projects I was working on that have been delayed. This is frustrating, because I like to get things done. Nevertheless, it is a reminder that one always has the right to be heard. Those prayers have made a tremendous positive impact on my health.

In the depths of my illness, with coughing, fever, and a tightness in my chest, and worried about possible lung complications, I felt very close to Jesus. I recalled what I had read years ago in various scholarly studies that, as Jesus hung on the Cross, the many things that he suffered was difficulty in breathing and a lack of sufficient oxygen. Jesus felt the pain and struggle of not being able to get enough air. Therefore, our COVID-19 breathing difficulties can connect us to Jesus. So, in my prayer, I asked Jesus to join my illness to his experience on the Cross, so I could share in some small way in his redemptive suffering for the good of humanity.

In the midst of my coronavirus experience, on a day when I was not feeling well at all, I was on a teleconference with a few old friends. One of them made a statement that struck me as a profoundly Christian insight. She said, “Make sure to pray for us while you’re sick, because the prayers of those who are suffering are especially powerful.” She inspired me to offer extra prayers of intercession during my illness for the needs of people everywhere.

Another source of Christian wisdom that helped me with my own case of COVID-19 comes from the preaching of Pope Francis in his Extraordinary Moment of Prayer in an empty St. Peter’s Square on March 27, 2020. He said that, as the human race struggles with the coronavirus pandemic, we must remember the experience of his disciples when Jesus calmed the violent storm on the Sea of Galilee in Mark 4:35-41. The waves were breaking over the boat, and it was taking on water. Jesus was fast asleep in the stern, trusting in the Father. His disciples woke him in their fear and anxiety, crying out, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Jesus immediately calmed the storm and reminded them to have faith.

When Pope Francis reflected on this Gospel passage, he pointed out several things that help us in our struggle with the coronavirus: We are in the same boat together, and Jesus is right here in the boat with us. He does care about us. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Our only true consolations come from the promise of immortality. Our only true home is in heaven, and we will never be completely fulfilled until we get there, and see God face to face. In heaven, there will be no more tears, no more illness, no more pain, no more loneliness, no more pain of separation, and no more death.

Knowing that some of my co-workers in the diocesan offices also tested positive for COVID-19 around the same time that I did, I am sorry if I may have unknowingly spread the virus to them before I was symptomatic, and for any negative impact this has had on their families. I pray for healing of all those impacted by this pandemic.

As I look back, I am very relieved that we did not hold the race relations forum in San Angelo on that day when I unknowingly had the virus. Otherwise, it could have become a real super-spreader event.

I am deeply grateful to those who have helped me in my battle with the coronavirus. These include the ones who reached out, those who dropped things off on my front porch, those priests who covered the Masses I had scheduled to celebrate, those people who called and emailed, and the many who offered prayers to God on my behalf. These prayers have made a tremendous positive difference. I am also thankful for all those who work in medical facilities and pharmacies. They face the danger of infection every day, yet they courageously fight on, helping others to heal. I am forever grateful to you all.

We are in this boat together. We must row together and place our trust in God.

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**Christmas Prayer**

From the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who accepted for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!

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**Reporting Sexual Abuse**

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for our children and vulnerable adults. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you feel a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church, we are here to help you. To report incidents, call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609 (cell), or write Diocese of San Angelo, Victim Assistance Ministry, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the incident occurred outside this diocese, our Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate diocese. Please keep in mind that one always has the right to report abuse to civil authorities, and civil law requires that any abuse of a minor must be reported.

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**Reportar Abuso Sexual**

La Diócesis Católica de San Ángelo está firmemente comprometida a crear y mantener el ambiente más seguro posible para nuestros niños y adultos vulnerables. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por cualquier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de trasciencia o herido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarlo. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Angelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. Un intérprete de español está disponible. Si el incidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a tratar su preocupación a la atención de la diócesis correspondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de reportar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado.
Mi batalla con el coronavirus

Obispo Michael J. Sis
Diócesis de San Ángelo

El coronavirus se había estado propagando en nuestra área ya por ocho meses. Le agradecí a Dios por el don de la salud, que me permitió seguir sirviendo a nuestro pueblo en un momento de grave pandemia y agitación social. Aquí en San Ángelo, llevábamos mucho tiempo planeando un foro de relaciones raciales, en el cual incluiríamos encuentros comunitarios, funcionarios gubernamentales, portavoces universitarios, y pastores de varias iglesias. Yo tenía grandes esperanzas en su potencial para enfrentar el racismo. Sin embargo, dado que el número de casos aumentó, decidí posponer el evento.

La mañana después de que el evento se hubiera llevado a cabo, empecé a sentirme febril en mi oficina. Empaque mi computadora portátil y me dirigí directamente a la instalación de pruebas rápidas. Una hora más tarde, me contactaron con la buena noticia de un resultado negativo, diciendo que ya podía volver al trabajo. Sin embargo, no confiaba en el resultado, porque todavía no había explicación para mi fiebre persistente. Mantuve una auto-cuarentena solo para estar seguro. Busqué una prueba de PCR y logré encontrar una en una farmacia local. Dos días después, la farmacia me envió el fático correo electrónico. Antes de abrirlo, oré: “Señor, hágame tu santa voluntad. Dame la gracia de afrontar cualquier resultado”. La noticia de la farmacia incluía la palabra escrita en rojo — positivo.

Mi lucha contra el coronavirus se prolongó durante días. No recuerdo nunca en mi vida haber tenido una fiebre que duró tanto. Tenía un gran deseo de evitar la hospitalización, en la medida de lo posible, ya que los recursos hospitalarios aquí en el oeste de Texas son escasos. Tomé vitamina C y medicamentos como si estuvieran pasando de moda. Hice varios descubrimientos fascinantes, como el hecho de que el Pedialyte sin sabor sabe mucho mejor que el saborizado. Dormí más que nunca, porque la fiebre estaba agotando mi cuerpo.

Pasar por la enfermedad día tras día me puso en contacto con mi propia debilidad y vulnerabilidad humana. Me ayudó a identificar más de cerca con la vulnerabilidad de otras personas en todo el mundo, incluyendo los que están enfermos, ancianos, personas sin hogar, en prisiones, hospitales, hogares de ancianos, campos de refugiados, y en los cuidados paliativos. En mi enfermedad me sentí más conectado con la familia humana en todas partes. Abracé un sentido de solidaridad con los que sufren, los que cuidan de los enfermos, los que sufren una pérdida, y los que sienten miedo y ansiedad.

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Es difícil ser productivo cuando estás en cuarentena, especialmente si estás luchando contra una enfermedad. Hay varios proyectos en los que estaba trabajando que se han retrasado. Esto es frustrante, porque me gusta hacer las cosas bien. Sin embargo, es un recordatorio de que el núcleo de nuestra vida como seres humanos no está en nuestra productividad, sino más bien en el hecho de que estamos hechos a imagen y semejanza de Dios. Nuestro “ser” es, en última instancia, más importante que nuestro “hacer”.

Me sostuvieron las oraciones de muchos de ustedes, y estoy muy agradecido por eso. También encontré mucho consuelo en el rezado del Rosario y en la meditación de los Salmos del Oficio Diario. Como tengo una capilla en mi casa, celebro la misa todos los días, que era la mayor fuente de gracia. En la Eucaristía, pude rezar en unión con todos ustedes y con todo el Cuerpo Místico de Cristo.

En la profundidad de mi enfermedad, con tos, fiebre, y una opresión en mi pecho, y preocupado por las posibles complicaciones pulmonares, me sentía muy cerca de Jesús. Recordé lo que había leído hace años en diversos estudios académicos que, colgado en la Cruz, una de las muchas cosas que Jesús sufrió fue la dificultad para respirar y falta de oxígeno suficiente. Jesús sintió el dolor y la lucha de no poder tomar suficiente aire. Por lo tanto, nuestras dificultades respiratorias de COVID-19 pueden conectarnos más íntimamente con Jesús. Entonces, en mi oración, le pedí a Jesús que uniera mi enfermedad a su experiencia en la Cruz, para que yo pudiera compartir en alguna manera sufrimiento redentor por el bien de la humanidad.

En medio de mi experiencia con el coronavirus, un día en el que no me sentía nada bien, estaba en una teleconferencia con algunas viejas amistades. Uno de ellos hizo una declaración que me pareció profundamente cristiana. Ella dijo: “Asegúrate de orar por nosotros mientras estés enfermo, porque las oraciones de los que están sufriendo son especialmente poderosas.” Ella me inspiró a hacer oraciones adicionales de intercesión durante mi enfermedad por las necesidades de las personas en todas partes.


Místico de Cristo.

Cuando el Papa Francisco reflejó en este pasaje del Evangelio, hizo resaltar varias cosas que llamaron y enviaron correos electrónicos. Estos incluyen a los que se pusieron en contacto conmigo, los que dejaron cosas en mi porche, los sacerdotes que cubrieron las Misas de misa programado para celebrar, las personas que llamaron y enviaron correos electrónicos, y los muchos que ofrecieron oraciones a Dios en mi nombre. Esas oraciones han hecho una enorme diferencia positiva. También estoy agradecido por todos los que trabajan en instalaciones médicas y farmacias. Todos los días ellos se enfrentan al peligro de contraer una infección; sin embargo, luchan con valentía para ayudar a otros a sanar. Les estará eternamente agradecido a todos ustedes.

Estamos juntos en este barco. Debemos remar juntos y poner nuestra confianza en Dios.
Steubenville conferences to host Advent ‘Night of Hope’

The free conference for adults will be livestreamed Dec. 12

STEUBENVILLE, Ohio — On December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Franciscan University of Steubenville will host its second “Night of Hope” adult conference. The night of prayer, worship, and empowerment will be livestreamed from Finnegan Fieldhouse from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. CST. There is no charge for this online event.

“Night of Hope” includes a keynote presentation titled “Mary, Spouse of the Spirit.” Mary Bielski, national conference speaker and youth minister, will speak about the Blessed Mother as a model for openness, humility, and radical receptivity.

Dr. Bob Rice will lead worship. Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, president of Franciscan University of Steubenville, will lead a time of Eucharistic adoration.

Other presenters include Peter Herbeck, vice president of Renewal Ministries, and Mark Joseph, vice president for Outreach and Evangelization at Franciscan University.

“Our country, not unlike our world, is experiencing trying times, where many are in a place of despair,” said Joseph. “Night of Hope, where people get to experience the saving love of Jesus Christ, can help to eliminate that despair, remove the fear, and provide hope for them and their families.”

“Following our first Night of Hope in July with over 44,000 online participants, we received an overwhelming response of requests to host another,” said Joseph. “We realized just how much people hunger for hope and immediately set to work planning our next Night of Hope.”

For a full schedule, registration, and to view the livestreamed event, visit steubenvilleconferences.com/night-of-hope.

Necrology of Priests and Deacons

Please pray for our departed clergy

December

1 Rev. John A. Pierce (1979)
2 Rev. Larry Cyr, CPPS (2017)
4 Rev. James Aaron (1999)
6 Deacon Nestor Perez (1993)
7 Rev. Peter Valtinis (1968)
11 Rev. Noel Britto (2011)
12 Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (1975)
14 Rev. Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (1975)
16 Rev. Robert Kelly (1999)
17 Deacon Horacio Yanez (2015)
18 Deacon D.J. Goetz (2003)
19 Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (2009)
20 Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (2009)
21 Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (2009)
22 Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (2009)
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30 Bishop Thomas Tschoepe (2009)
Supporters of the Diocese of San Angelo donate $137,334 for iGiveCatholic day of giving

By Mercedez Rassi

The Diocese of San Angelo participated in the 2020 iGiveCatholic day of giving on Dec. 1. iGiveCatholic is the nation’s largest day of giving for Catholic organizations. Forty dioceses from across the nation participated in this year’s iGiveCatholic, which included 2,500 Catholic organizations.

Eleven parishes, three schools, and six ministries or organizations participated from the Diocese of San Angelo. The top earners from our diocese for the day were Catholic Charities of Odessa, St. Stephen Catholic Church in Midland, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and Shrine in Midland, Our Mother of Mercy Mission in Merkel, and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Abilene. In total, the diocese earned $137,334 in donations for the day.

While the online platform is closed for donations, donors can still support their favorite Catholic organization's campaign by going to their website or sending them an offline gift by cash or check, making sure to note this is for their #iGiveCatholic project. Thank you for making a difference, for giving back, and Giving Catholic.

For questions about iGiveCatholic or to see how you can support next year’s day of giving, please visit igivecatholic.org or contact Mercedez Rassi, Director of Stewardship & Development, at mras@sanangelodiocese.org or 325-651-3717.

The participants from the Diocese of San Angelo this year are below:

**Schools:**
- Holy Cross Catholic High School, Midland/Odessa
- St. Ann’s Catholic School, Midland
- Angelo Catholic School, San Angelo

**Parishes:**
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and Shrine, Midland
- St. Francis of Assisi, Abilene
- Our Mother of Mercy Mission, Merkel
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Ozona
- St. Mary’s Catholic Church, San Angelo
- St. Ann’s Church, Midland
- San Miguel Arcángel, Odessa
- St. Stephen’s Catholic Church, Midland
- St. Margaret of Scotland Church, San Angelo
- St. Joseph Catholic Church, San Angelo

**Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo**

**Father Wade found joy where others would find no joy**

By Jimmy Patterson

Two summers ago, a few hundred feet into our hike around the base of Devils Tower in Eastern Wyoming, I heard it. It was unmistakable. The sound of joyous laughter. And I knew that laugh. I had heard it many times before.

Karen and I crested a rise in the trail, the giant tower on our left. There, just ahead, sitting on a park bench and staring up at the tower, was the man behind the laughter.

It was Father Hubert Wade, pastor of St. Mary, Star of the Sea Parish in Ballinger, a small farming community up from San Angelo about 35 miles.

What was Father Wade doing all the way out here? And what, I wondered, were the chances of running into this man a thousand miles from our hometowns in a place where cattle outnumbered people (not unlike our own hometowns, I might add)?

We sat and chatted for several minutes, Father Wade occasionally looking up to watch the rock climbers ascending Devil’s Tower (also known as Bear’s Lodge by the indigenous peoples). Turns out he had recently traveled to nearby Rapid City, SD, for the funeral of his best friend, Father Bob Baden. Rough weather in Dallas, through which he had to fly to successfully get back to Ballinger, had prompted the cancellation of his return flight, so he had taken a day to make a side trip to this gorgeous rock, where he was filled with his usual joy.

We parted ways, Karen and I eager to see what lie ahead on the trail, Father Wade content with remaining benched to behold the climbers — and laughing, always laughing.

Several minutes later, after we had stopped for a couple of water breaks, we looked up to find Father Wade and some bearing down on us as the trail circled back toward the visitors’ center. He was slow, but he wasn’t giving up.

We paused to talk again even though he was less interested in stopping this time. He was more focused on completing his walk. And that’s when it became even more interesting.

Father Wade told Karen and me that he hadn’t been getting around as well lately because his cancer had returned. He had first been slowed by it when lymphoma had invaded his bones several years earlier. At the time, he told me the cancer had already found its way into his bloodstream before it had been discovered. The disease and the pain would, for several years, come and go, and...
Use of Pfizer, Modena COVID-19 vaccines is morally acceptable, say bishops

By Julie Asher
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — While confusion has arisen in recent days in the media over “the moral permissibility” of using the COVID-19 vaccines just announced by Pfizer Inc. and Moderna, it is not “immoral” to use them, the chairmen of the U.S. bishops’ doctrine and pro-life committees said Nov. 23.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, addressed the issue in a memo to their brother bishops.

A copy of the memo was obtained by Catholic News Service Nov. 24.

“Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development or production,” the two prelates said. “They are not completely free from any connection to abortion, however, as both Pfizer and Moderna made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products.

“There is thus a connection, but it is relatively remote,” they continued. “Some are asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.”

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann cited three Vatican documents that “treat the question of tainted vaccines”: the 2005 study by the Pontifical Academy for Life, “Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived From Aborted Human Fetuses”; paragraphs nos. 34-35 in the 2008 “Instruction on Certain Bioethical Questions” ("Dignitatis Personae") by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; and the 2017 “Note on Italian Vaccine Issue,” by the Pontifical Academy for Life.

“These documents all point to the immorality of using tissue taken from an aborted child for creating cell lines,” they explained. “They also make distinctions in terms of the moral responsibility of the various actors involved, from those involved in designing and producing a vaccine to those receiving the vaccine. For all of these, they added, “they all make it clear that, at the level of the recipient, it is morally permissible to accept vaccination when there are no alternatives and there is a serious risk to health.”

In a Nov. 21 statement, the president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, Mercy Sister Mary Haddad said CHA ethicists, “in collaboration with other Catholic bioethicists,” used the guidelines released by the Vatican’s Pontifical Academy for Life in 2005 and 2017 on the origin of vaccines and “find nothing morally prohibitive with the vaccines developed by Pfizer and BioNTech (Pfizer’s German partner) and Moderna.”

She also said CHA “believes it is essential that any approved COVID-19 vaccine be distributed in a coordinated and equitable manner,” because COVID-19 “has had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, low-income communities, persons with preexisting health conditions, and racial and ethnic minorities.”

CHA encouraged Catholic health organizations “to distribute the vaccines developed by these companies.”

Pfizer Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann did not point to any specific media outlets claiming the moral unacceptability of the vaccines. However, after Pfizer and Moderna announced their vaccines, at least two Catholic bishops warned against using them, saying they are morally tainted.

On Nov. 11, Pfizer and BioNTech announced results of a large ongoing study show its vaccine is 95% effective; the vaccine is already being manufactured and has been since October. Five days later, Moderna said preliminary data from its phase three trial shows its coronavirus vaccine is 94.5% effective in preventing COVID-19.

Pfizer and Moderna are applying to the U.S. Food and Drug administration for emergency approval of the vaccines, which would quickly pave the way for distribution of the vaccines. The FDA is to meet Dec. 10.

On Nov. 16, Bishop Joseph E. Strickland of Tyler, Texas, tweeted: the Moderna vaccine “is not morally produced. Unborn children died in abortions and their bodies were used as laboratory specimens! I urge all who believe in the sanctity of life to reject a vaccine which has been produced immorally.”

In a Nov. 18 video posted on his diocesan website and subsequent interviews with local media, Bishop Joseph V. Brennan of Fresno, California, weighed in on the vaccines, saying: “We all want health for ourselves and for others. We want to promote that also ... but never at the expense of the life of another.”

In May, the Trump administration launched Operation Warp Speed, the moniker of its initiative to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to Americans as quickly as possible. The program has funded the manufacturing of six promising vaccine candidates, two of which are the ones announced by Moderna and Pfizer.

As soon as the FDA approves their vaccines for distribution, Operation Warp Speed hopes to distribute 300 million doses around the country by January. Because Moderna and Pfizer’s vaccines involve two shots per person, this would be enough to immunize 150 million Americans.

Other COVID-19 vaccines on the horizon include one being developed by AstraZeneca with Oxford University.

By Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann, John Brehan, director of institutional relations at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia, said a recent interview on the “Current News” show on NET TV, the cable channel of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, that the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were not themselves produced using cell lines derived from aborted fetal tissue.

He expressed “great respect for Bishop Strickland,” calling him “a bold courageous witness to the faith,” who is saying “something true about issues that go back decades in pharmaceutical research and development,” in the production of vaccines for measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox and other diseases.

Brehan noted that while the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, Brehany emphasized, any connection to aborted fetus cell lines is extremely remote.

For Dr. Robert Tiballi, an infectious disease specialist in Chicago and a member of the Catholic Medical Association, this indirect use raises an ethical issue for Catholics.

“The fetal cell lines were not directly used in the Moderna vaccine, but they were indirectly used several steps away from the actual development of the vaccine,” he told “Currents News” in a separate interview.

Any such cell lines were derived from tissue samples taken from fetuses aborted in the 1960s and 1970s and have been grown in laboratories all over the world since then.

In a 2005 study, the Pontifical Academy for Life said Catholics have a responsibility to push for the creation of morally just, alternative vaccines, but it also said they should not sacrifice the common good of public health because there is no substitute.

“Catholics can have confidence if there is a great need and there are no alternatives, they are not forbidden from using these new vaccines,” Brehan told “Currents News.” He added: “There is much the church calls us to do in seeking out alternatives and advocating for alternatives.”

Catholics “need to provide the urgency and advocacy” to get pharmaceutical companies to understand there are alternatives to using fetal cell lines to develop vaccines, “so they can see the need for this,” he added, echoing the Pontifical Academy for Life.

A case in point is the decision by Sanofi Pasteur to no longer use an aborted fetal cell line in producing its polio vaccines, a move recently approved by the FDA.

Sanofi is one of the companies currently developing a COVID-19 vaccine by utilizing “cell lines not connected to unethical procedures and methods,” Inovio Pharmaceuticals and the John Paul II Medical Research Institute are other such companies.

“Follow Asher on Twitter: @jlasher

‘Exodus 90’ recommended for men

Exodus 90 is a 90-day spiritual exercise for men based on three pillars: prayer, asceticism, and fraternity. To date, more than 30,000 men from every state in the U.S. and more than 65 countries worldwide have participated. Exodus 90 is based in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The local bishop, Bishop Kevin Rhodes, approves this apostolate and recommends it for its tremendous impact on men’s spiritual lives and relationships, a true benefit to the church. Significantly, 40% of participants are young adults.

The participant who recently completed Exodus 90 is Deacon Fred Camarillo of Holy Redeemer Parish in Odessa, who said “it was an awesome experience.” Invited to participate by his son-in-law, Deacon Camarillo found the experience has improved many aspects of his life. “My ‘why’ was to be a better husband, to be the spiritual leader of my house, to be a better father, grandfather, and Catholic Christian,” he said. “We all want to be the best version of ourselves.”

Deacon Camarillo has also tried to continue living the benefits he found through the program. “I took it as a challenge, and I’m still trying to live my 91st day,” he said. He also wants others in the diocese to share in his positive experience: “I’d like every man in the diocese to do it — to try, at least.”

Deacon Sunday Visitor funded a Tracking Study to analyze the impact of Exodus 90 on the men who participated. The findings are quite impressive. In practically all areas measured, there was significant improvement. For example, men reported significant quantitative and qualitative growth in daily prayer, particularly in silent prayer. Many began the program struggling with wasting time and screen time. This struggle decreased significantly through Exodus 90. Married men reported improved relationships with their wives and children. Those who had struggled with addictions like pornography reported progress in overcoming addictions and experiencing greater freedom in their lives.

Through Exodus 90’s discipline of prayer, asceticism, and fraternity, men have grown in freedom and self-mastery. They report a more intentional Christian life, thus experiencing more peace and joy in their lives. They have become more active in the practice of the faith, in parish involvement, and in stewardship. In a word, they have become closer to God and to the church.

For information see www.exodus90.com. Exodus 90 is now also offered in Spanish.
Pope creates 13 new cardinals, including Washington archbishop

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — One by one 11 senior churchmen, including two U.S. citizens — Cardinals Wilton D. Gregory of Washington and Silvano M. Tomasi, a former Vatican diplomat — knelt before Pope Francis to receive their red hats, a cardinal's ring and a scroll formally declaring their new status and assigning them a "titular" church in Rome.

But with the consistory Nov. 28 occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis actually created 13 new cardinals.

Cardinals Jose F. Advincula of Capiz, Philippines, and Cornelius Sim, apostolic vicar of Brunei, did not attend the consistory because of COVID-19 travel restrictions; however, they are officially cardinals and will receive their birettas and rings at a later date, the Vatican said.

In his homily at the prayer service, Pope Francis told the new cardinals that "the scarlet of a cardinal's robes, which is the color of blood, can, for a worldly spirit, become the color of a secular 'eminence,'" the traditional title of respect for a cardinal.

If that happens, he said, "you will no longer be a pastor close to your people. You will think of yourself only as 'His Eminence.' If you feel that, you are off the path."

For the cardinals, the pope said, the red must symbolize a wholehearted following of Jesus, who willingly gave his life on the cross to save humanity.

The Gospel reading at the service, Mark 10:32-45, included the account of James and John asking Jesus for special honors. "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left," they said. But Jesus reproaches them.

"We, too, pope and cardinals, must always see ourselves reflected in this word of truth," Pope Francis said. "It is a sharp reminder that it proves painful, but it also heals, liberates and converts us.

"According to canon law, cardinals are created when their names are made public "in the presence of the College of Cardinals." While many Rome-based cardinals attended the consistory, most members of the college were "present" online.

The pandemic also meant the gathering was unusually small, each cardinal was accompanied by a priest-secretary and could invite a handful of guests, so there were only about 100 people in the congregation at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica.

Also missing were the "courtesy visits," a reception lasting several hours in the early evening when the general public was invited into the Vatican to greet the new cardinals.

In addition to some Rome-based cardinals, the congregation at the consistory included the pastors or rectors of the 13 Rome churches to which the new cardinals were associated. Cardinals are given a "titular" church in Rome, formally making them members of the Rome diocesan clergy, which is what the church's first cardinals were.

In fact, the formula for the creation of cardinals, recited in Latin by Pope Francis, says, "It chiefly concerns the church of Rome, but it also affects the entire ecclesial community: We will call certain of our brethren to enter the College of Cardinals, so that they may be united to the Chair of Peter by a closer bond to our apostolic ministry."

Cardinal Gregory's titular church is Immaculate Conception parish on the ancient Via Flaminia in the Grottarossa neighborhood of northern Rome. The church was built in 1935 and became a titular church for Cardinals in 1985.

Cardinal Tomasi's titular church is the Basilica of St. Nicholas in Prison, a 12th-century church with a 16th-century facade built on the site of an earlier church that was constructed over the ruins of an ancient temple.

Mexican Cardinal Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, retired bishop of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Mexico, told Vatican News Nov. 27 that the new cardinals are called to reconfirm their commitment to making Christ the center of their lives and "to collaborate with the pope in his ministry as bishop of Rome, and so we are assigned a parish in this city, as a sign of communion between that community and the one who presides over this local church, which is the pope."

Maltese Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, was the first mentioned by the pope Oct. 25 when he announced he was creating new cardinals. As such, it fell to Cardinal Grech to address the pope on behalf of the new cardinals.

"Convoked in consistory at such a serious time for all humanity because of the pandemic, we want to turn our thoughts to all our brothers and sisters enduring hardship," the cardinal said. He prayed that people would react to the pandemic as an "opportunity to rethink our lifestyles, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, especially, the meaning of our lives."

Cardinal Grech also led the others in the recitation of the Creed and of an oath of fidelity and obedience to Christ and his church and to Pope Francis and his successors.

The new cardinals came from eight countries: Italy, Malta, the United States, Brunei, the Philippines, Mexico, Rwanda and Chile.

Cardinal Gregory, like the other new cardinals coming from outside Europe, was tested for COVID-19 before flying to Rome and again upon arrival. Even after testing negative, he and the others were required to quarantine for 10 days and were tested again immediately before the consistory. Cardinal Gregory stayed at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where Pope Francis lives, and his meals were left outside his door.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, the cardinal said he hopes Pope Francis will find him to be "supportive, encouraging and trustworthy" in his role as a cardinal, but his primary ministry is still to be the archbishop of Washington.

Of course, he said, he regrets that "my two sisters are not here, and the many people I know and love from Chicago and Belleville (Illinois) and Atlanta and Washington," who were watching the livestream instead.

One of Cardinal Tomasi's guests was the pastor of his boyhood parish, San Rocco in Casoni di Mussolente, a town of fewer than 8,000 people in northern Italy. In the past 80 years, the cardinal told CNS, the parish has produced more than 100 priests and religious sisters, "and now also a cardinal. I hope it will help to continue the flourishing of vocations from the parish."

With the consistory the College of Cardinals now has 229 members, 128 of whom are under the age of 80 and eligible to enter a conclave to elect a new pope. Pope Francis has given the red hat to 57% of electors.

With Cardinals Gregory and Tomasi, who was born in Italy but is a U.S. citizen, the number of U.S. cardinals rose to 16; nine of them are cardinal electors.

Entering the college Nov. 28 were Cardinals:

— Grech, 63.
— Marcello Semeraro, an Italian who is prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, 72.
— Antoine Kambanda of Kigali, Rwanda, 62.
— Gregory, 72.
— Advincula, 68.
— Celestino Aos Braco of Santiago, Chile, 75.
— Sim, 69.
— Paolo Lojudice of Siena, Italy, 56.
— Mauro Gambetti, custos of the Sacred Convent of Assisi in Assisi, 55.
— Arizmendi, 80.
— Tomasi, 80.
— Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the papal household, 86.
— Enrico Feroci, 80, former director of Rome's Caritas.
St. Nicholas of Myra, inspiration for the ages

One of our most popular secular Christmas traditions is the poem by Clement C. Moore, “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” that was inspired by the venerable, dignified 4th century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor. Although our modern Santa Claus is in stark contrast to this 4th century saint, the two share the same generous spirit and concern for children which has been translated into the gift giving of the holiday.

Nicholas was still a lay person when he was acclaimed bishop of Myra, the capital city of Lycia in Asia Minor. Few details exist regarding his life and experience. Biographers agree that Nicholas led the diocese in 325 where he argued strongly against Arius, who was promulgating Arianism, the heresy denying the divinity of Christ. Paul Burns writes in Butler’s Lives of the Saints that Nicholas was a great champion of justice, often intervening with the Roman governors on behalf of prisoners who had been unjustly condemned.

According to Malcolm Day, writing in A Treasury of Saints, Nicholas was one of the few saints to escape martyrdom and to die naturally of old age in his cathedral around 350.

He has been described as the most human of saints. Many legends associated with his life were made into the miracle plays of the 12th and 13th centuries.

The most popular of these legends is when Nicholas helped a father and his three daughters. The father had lost all his money, and this deprived his daughters of dowries. If they failed to find husbands, they would be forced to become slaves or prostitutes. Nicholas gave them bags of gold, which later came to be the sign for pawnbrokers and bankers.

Other legends credit Nicholas with saving mariners who were in danger of perishing in a powerful storm at sea. After they appealed to him for help, he prayed for the storm to stop and everyone was brought safely to port.

Nicholas’s cult was clearly established in the East from the 6th century and became widely known in the West in the 10th century. His relics were taken to Bari in southern Italy in the 11th century. From there, devotion to Nicholas spread all over Europe and he soon became the most venerated and colorful saint in all of Christendom after the Virgin Mary. In the Middle Ages more than 400 churches were dedicated to him in England.

These legends and his popularity crossed the Atlantic with explorers and sailors. The Dutch knew him as Sint Nikolaas and they celebrated his December feast day with gift giving at Christmas. When the Dutch Protestants arrived in the New World in the 1600s and settled New Amsterdam (New York), they brought their national festivals with them. Sint Nikolaas became Santa Claus Day, a day of merriment and gift giving.

St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia, Greece, and the Italian city of Bari. His feast day is Dec. 6.

The American illustrator Thomas Nast later drew the robust figure of Santa Claus from the description of him from Moore’s poem, which he wrote and read to his children in 1822.

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

It is our prayer for each of us this Christmas season to enter more fully into the life of the Holy Family, icon of the Holy Trinity: to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, risen, and seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven; to be reconciled with God who, through us, can effect reconciliation in our families and communities through forgiveness; to imitate Blessed Mother Mary and St. Joseph in their loving obedience and faithfulness to God’s will; to unite our trials and sufferings with the Father Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

Father Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker is a retired priest of the Diocese of San Angelo, ordained under the Pastoral Provision which allows for the reception of married former Episcopal priests into the Catholic Church. He and his wife, Sandie, write a monthly column for the West Texas Angelus.

Oh, Holy Family, intercede, pray for us here below.
For human family Jesus bleeds, salvation we may know.

May we all be one family through Church, our Savior’s Bride.
Teach all of us humility; in Jesus all abide.

May we forget about the past, forgive each other’s sins.
Let Son for us the future cast, make whole world new again.

Oh, Holy Family, draw us in through your own ceaseless prayers
To your new life that’s free from sin and from the Devil’s snares.

St. Joseph, our protector be, and guard us with your hands
That through each one of us all see Messiah’s holy land.

Dear Mary, hold us in your lap, give us a mother’s love,
And when it’s time to wake from nap, show us the Spirit’s Dove.

Lord Jesus, God in human flesh, impart to us your Self.
Your Sacred Heart with our hearts mesh in perfect human health.

Oh, Holy Family, pray that we be lost in Trinity;
There find ourselves with you—be free for all eternity.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." John 1:14

In the love of the Holy Trinity and the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph:
Fr. Knick and Sandie

Mary, and Joseph, in perfect human health.
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Mary Lou Gibson speaks of Saints
Advent traditions for the pandemic

Note: By the time you read this, we will be well into the season of Advent. However, it is not too late to take advantage of this beautiful liturgical season.

I had a friend tease me once that I claim every liturgical season as my favorite. “Do you realize,” she said, “that I’ve heard you claim at different times Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Triduum, and Easter as your favorite liturgical season? The only one you seem to never say is your favorite is ordinary time.” She’s not wrong. At different points of my life, the different liturgical seasons have been what I needed for that time. Yes, even ordinary time.

Some years, I have needed the Lenten season to remind me that there is beauty in the desert; among the dry land, there can be found a variety of oases to soothe the parched soul. The Triduum has been a reminder that suffering serves a purpose. Christmas has been a reminder that God is always with me. Easter has been a reminder that there is always hope.

While the various liturgical seasons have had their place and were loved by the author, the author’s son, 84 years old, has occupied that top spot more than any others. Most years, it is because it has provided a much-needed season to slow down and focus on my spiritual needs. As one with workaholic tendencies, at times I have needed that outside influence to remind me it is okay to slow down sometimes.

While some may say that Advent this year is difficult or not as meaningful due to the COVID pandemic, I would argue that circumstances this year could lead us into Advent more deeply and truly appreciate the gifts this season has to offer.

Advent is meant to be a time of preparation. It is a time for us to slow down and focus on the important things in life. With some of the restrictions currently in place, many of us have been forced to slow down. The challenge this Advent is to find useful ways to spend our extra time. Instead of bingeing more shows on the streaming platform of your choice, maybe you pick up an Advent devotional, or read the daily Mass readings and spend time reflecting. Since Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year, maybe this intentional time of prayer and reading will become a new year’s habit.

Some may be sad that they cannot take part in all the usual Advent rituals and traditions they normally do. There is beauty in the fact that, for all of us under the age of 102 years, Advent has never been done this way. That means we have the opportunity to be creative and adapt our normal rituals and traditions.

Do you normally spend time during Advent feeding the hungry at a soup kitchen? While you may not be able to serve a meal directly to those in need, you can still put together a box of food to donate to a food bank, hand out gift cards to fast food restaurants to those on the streets who may need a warm meal, or find a family in need and provide groceries for their holiday meal this year.

Some families will often donate gifts to various giving trees. Many organizations who run those have even more requests for help this year. Include friends and extended relatives in the giving and join together to buy for two or three families this year instead of one. Online shopping, as well as curbside pickup, is available for many retailers and can help you shop in a safe way while still helping the less fortunate.

Do you normally go Christmas caroling? This year the history behind your favorite Christmas songs and discuss them as a family. Do you know the history of “The 12 Days of Christmas” or “Silent Night”? They would be a great starting point for this activity.

Your family could also find some new traditions. One option would be to take a Silent Night Star Walk on Christmas Eve. Take a walk as a family after dark, and spend time looking at the stars. Think about the magic, mystery, and beauty of the time. When you get home, take time to discuss what everyone saw during the walk that reminded them of the beauty and majesty of God.

Do a Jesse tree. The Jesse tree tells the story of Jesus from Creation to Christmas. Each day typically includes a Scripture story and an ornament. While there are some places where you can buy the supplies, consider making them yourself. Again, there are free resources online to help you with the ornaments and that will explain what story goes with each ornament/symbol. The ornaments can be displayed on a branch, a

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Only two categories

One of the first words that toddlers hear is “no.” Watchful parents are constantly on the lookout for anything that might harm their little boy or girl. On the other hand, if there is an observed action that they approve of, an enthusiastic “yes” is often proclaimed.

Long before we understand the meaning of words, we understand that we should not do things where a no or a “bad” is heard while feeling comfortable doing things that our guardians frown upon, like “yes” or “good.”

Teaching children the difference between good and bad, right and wrong, what is acceptable behavior and what is not, is critical to their social development. This process continues outside the family, as well, when children attend daycares, religious education programs, preschools, and all the grades that follow.

It is comforting to be able to see life from this dualistic perspective where everything is either a member of one class or the other. That comfort begins to diminish, however, as we get older and our “black or white” classification system moves steadfastly into increasingly more “gray” areas. The lines that had been drawn with such great resolution and precision become more and more blurred.

We are often told that smoking is bad for you and something we should never do, but yet, we see our mother smoking in direct opposition to her protestations. “Using bad words” is something that bad people do, but Uncle Joe, who we love, emits a string of them when he whacks his left thumb with a hammer. Drinking alcohol is not healthy for us we are taught, but Grandpa is 84 years old and he is still knocking them down. We love our daughter and her boyfriend, but have major problems with the man she loves and to whom she is engaged.

More and more, things seem to increasingly fall into gray areas and make the application of our beliefs and the interpretation of actions more difficult.

The difficulty of clear-cut classifications is not limited to just us. We see that judges, whom we entrust with the ability to determine right and wrong, are themselves, often equally as conflicted. A lower court makes a decision, only for it to be reversed by an appeals court that still may yet be reversed by an even higher court ruling. And then there is the problem of inconsistency. One political party decries the death penalty while actively supporting the murder of babies in the womb. The other stands firm in its support of life but has no problem with executions.

This dilemma of gray areas often causes us great stress as we struggle to have clarity in an increasingly chaotic world. We are told to believe that this is the thing we need to eat to become more healthy and then, before long, that claim is disputed by new research. Bombarded by conflicting information on almost every topic, we often grow frustrated, stressed and depressed, longing for the days of our youth when everything seemed to fit so neatly into one of two categories.

After many years of battling the “grays” of life, 25 years or so ago, I once again began putting everything into two categories and my life has been more peaceful ever since. The first category is “immediate good.”

Writing this for you right now is in that category. So is being with my two dogs, being able to walk, talk, see, hear, feel, smell and just about everything else. I try to thank God for the wonderful moments I experience daily and do not do a very good job doing so.

Sometimes it requires a little creativity to be able to see immediate good. Not long ago, after a full day and night, I looked forward to getting in my car and driving home. Instead, I found it resting on a flat tire. As I mumbled to myself about how much I didn’t need this right then, I was hard pressed to see any immediate good in the moment … until I saw and heard an 18-wheeler barreling down the interstate in the same direction I would have gone. I wondered if that truck “had my name on it” and perhaps if I had been able to get in my car and drive away, I might have been killed. Worse yet, maybe I would have not seen that guy that just emerged from the darkness and killed him. Once again, another entry in the immediate good category.

I can find a way to interpret just about everything that happens to me and everything I see as immediate good. But every once in a while, something is so bad that I cannot do it, no matter how closely I look and how hard I try. A young mother of three dies of cancer … a child spends most of their young life in hospitals being treated for an incurable disease … a family loses everything they have in a flood or fire. Try as I might, I can see nothing in these “Why did God allow this to happen?” moments. It is then that I know it is in the only other category possible … “eventual good.”

But how will I know when to place a thing in one category or another? I had a friend tease me once that I claim every liturgical season as my favorite. “Do you realize,” she said, “that I’ve heard you claim at different times Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Triduum, and Easter as your favorite liturgical season? The only one you seem to never say is your favorite is ordinary time.” She’s not wrong. At different points of my life, the different liturgical seasons have been what I needed for that time. Yes, even ordinary time.

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Bishop Sis extends dispensation from Mass to include holy days of obligation

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Bishop Michael Sis informed pastors Nov. 30 that he has dispensed Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo from the obligation to attend Mass on holy days of obligation until further notice. This is in addition to a dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, which has been in effect in the diocese since March 17.

Upcoming holy days of obligation affected by this decision include the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Dec. 8, Christmas on Dec. 25, and the Solemnity of Mary on Jan. 1.

COVID-19 distancing restrictions lead to Christmas Mass adjustments

The new realities of pandemic life have led the church to make a few changes to the rules that normally govern Masses this Christmas. Since our parishes have limited seating due to the distancing requirements in effect to help limit the spread of the coronavirus, some exceptions have been put in place to help allow those who wish to attend Christmas Mass an opportunity to do so.

The Holy See has informed bishops that they may choose to allow for Christmas Masses on Christmas Eve earlier than the normal 4:00 p.m. time. Bishop Michael Sis has granted permission for local priests to choose to offer Masses of the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord any time after noon on Christmas Eve if necessary for the spiritual needs of the people of the parish.

Another possible change in some parishes this year is more Masses. Priests are ordinarily encouraged not to exceed three Masses in a single day, but the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Cardinal Robert Sarah, has granted local bishops the option of allowing their priests to celebrate up to four Masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2020. Bishop Sis has granted this permission within the Diocese of San Angelo for any priests who deem it necessary to schedule more Masses for their parishes.

Please check with your parish about Christmas Vigil and Christmas Day Mass opportunities.

Priests accept roles on diocesan board, council

Four priests of the diocese have recently been elected or appointed to diocesan advisory boards.

Father Patrick Akpanobong was re-elected to the Priest Personnel Board, representing the priests of Group 3, for a four-year term until Nov. 1, 2024.

Father Tom Barley was appointed by Bishop Michael Sis to the Presbyteral Council for a three-year term until Oct. 2023.

Msgr. Larry Droll was elected as an at-large member of the Presbyteral Council for a three-year term until Oct. 2023.

Father Michael Udgbunam was elected as the Abilene Deanery representative to the Presbyteral Council for a three-year term until Oct. 2023.

Angelus seeks stories of pastoral plan implementation

The parishes and ministries of the Diocese of San Angelo have completed the first year of the current diocesan pastoral plan, “A Future Full of Hope.”

We know there have been many challenges during this time. However, we have also discovered many blessings through the creativity of our clergy, parishioners, and parish staff members. Therefore, you are invited to share the good news from your parish about various ways you have sought to implement our diocesan pastoral plan. This could inspire other parishes to try something similar.

If you would like projects in your parish highlighted in the West Texas Angelus, please contact Brian Bodiford at bbodiford@sanangelodiocese.org for submission of articles or photos.
Stay alert during Advent and you'll see God's love everywhere, archbishop says

By Catholic News Service

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Catholics must be "on the lookout" for God, said Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez in a homily Nov. 29, the First Sunday of Advent.

"He is all around us! He is with us. If we watch for him, if we stay alert — we will see his love everywhere around us," the archbishop said during Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

The Mass was livestreamed online and aired on television for the millions of Catholics in the archdiocese to join remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My brothers and sisters, Advent is about getting ready for our Lord to come. But it is also a reminder that he has already come. He has already entered into the reality of our human existence and he is still with us," the archbishop said. "Advent reminds us that Jesus is always arriving.

"In the people he sends into our lives. In the challenges we face every day. In the burdens we carry. Even in our sufferings."

Advent reminds Catholics "that God is faithful! His love is true. Let us never doubt it. This is why he sent his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world in the first place. To share our sufferings, to walk with us and strengthen us," he added.

It is easy "to turn away from God, to push him into the background," and give "many other things priority before him," Archbishop Gomez said.

"And of course, we can understand how that happens. We have so many anxieties, so many daily responsibilities," he said. "And it is getting even harder now, with all the pressures of the coronavirus pandemic."

But Advent is the time to ask whether we are being "mindful" of God, whether we are "doing what is right" and "serving God in everything we do," as the first reading from the prophet Isaiah pointed up, the archbishop said. "Is that how we are living? Are we really aware of God’s presence? Do we see him working in the world? Do we feel his love and mercy in our lives?"

In the day’s Gospel, Jesus told the faithful to "watch and you will be surprised at what you see! You will see things you’ve never noticed before," Archbishop Gomez explained. "Watch and you will see! All the hidden beauty. All the little acts of kindness. All the tender mercies that God is sending our way at every moment in every day.

"Be alert! and we will become aware of all the hidden ways that God is still working in the world. Watch! And we will see — all the beautiful ways that He is working out his plan of love in our lives."

Advent "reminds us that Jesus is always arriving. In the people he sends into our lives, in the challenges we face every day. In the burdens we carry. Even in our sufferings," said Archbishop Gomez, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

He said there are some practical ways for Catholics "to open our hearts to his Word," by asking for "the grace to renew our commitment to find time to pray and to do it more personally ... the grace to talk to Jesus all the time" Also Catholics should find time to read and reflect on the Word of God, he said. "The church gives us readings for every day of the year."

Doing these things every day "helps us to be alert to God’s hidden presence everywhere in our lives," Archbishop Gomez added.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has established an Advent webpage, lacatholic.org/advent2020, to provide prayers, music, videos and other resources for Catholics to celebrate the season of Advent safely at home and online during the pandemic.

The archdiocese is also calling on Catholics to pledge to put time aside for prayer, together as a family, and share how they are preparing spiritually this Advent season by using the hashtag #ItsStartsAtHome.

"Across the country, in Michigan, the Adrian Dominican sisters have invited all Catholics and their families to join them in virtual celebrations of Advent, Christmas and New Year’s via livestream from the Weber Retreat and Conference Center and St. Catherine Chapel in Adrian. The link is at http://adriandominicans.org/Live-Stream."

The first Monday morning Advent prayer was celebrated around the Advent wreath from the Weber Center Nov. 30 — the next Monday Advent prayers are Dec. 7, 14 and 21 at 9 a.m. EST.

The Christmas Eve liturgy will be celebrated at 7 p.m. EST Dec. 24, begin-

El Salvador church hails U.S. Catholic women as models of solidarity

By Rhina Guidos

Catholic News Service

CHALATENANGO, El Salvador (CNS) — In one of the regions of El Salvador most battered in a bloody war funded by American dollars, four Catholic women from the U.S. were hailed as examples of solidarity, of Christian faith and martyrdom, as Salvadorans remembered them Dec. 2, the 40th anniversary of their assassination.

"Sometimes we only see history from one point of view," said Bishop Oswaldo Escobar Aguilar of Chalatenango, where Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford served. "But a government is one thing and people are another."

Along with Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, a laywoman, the Maryknolls were raped, killed and thrown in a common shallow grave in the Central American nation Dec. 2, 1980, after being abducted by Salvadoran military on their way home from the airport. The four had fled the violent conflict, shuttling children and civilians to safety, bringing them food and clothes as war was about to erupt in El Salvador.

"The people of the United States showed a lot of solidarity with our people," and the women showed what that effort looked like, Bishop Escobar said.

For the poor in Chalatenango, that solidarity came in the form of the two Maryknolls. The nuns, inspired by Archbishop Oscar Romero, now a saint, put their lives at risk and ultimately lost them for the poor, said Father Alfredo Rivera. He met the Maryknolls as a young man in Chalatenango, months before they were killed.

Sometimes he would ask Sister Ford, with whom he was close, how things were going. Father Rivera recalled during a Mass for the Martyrs of Chalatenango, where the women have been included as focal points of the observance for years. She replied, "It's difficult," he recalled.

"But she said they had to help people, the poor, figure out how were going to cloth them, feed them, get medicine for them," Father Rivera said.

The women could have easily left but they made a conscious decision to stay, he recalled.

"They were a testimony of people of prayer, a testimony of service," Father Rivera said. "They were humble, simple, had great generosity. They deeply marked our lives."

And even in death, they didn't abandon Salvadorans. Father Rivera said about the Maryknolls custom of being buried where they died.

Four decades after the women's murders, even a pandemic did little to discourage those who wanted to pay homage to them. In small groups, some visited the tomb of the Maryknolls, but also brought photos and banners that included the names of two women who died with them.

Seminarians from the diocese stopped to play songs in the cemetery in Chalatenango, during a ceremony joined by Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chavez, who kissed the plaque of Sister Clarke and quietly prayed before the tomb. Others placed photos and posters of other Salvadoran Catholics who also died during the conflict, including soon-to-be-beatified Franciscan Father Cosme Spessotto and Jesuit Rutilio Grande, along with two lay companions who died with him when he was shot.

The Salvadoran bishops chose to end their Jubilee Year of Salvadoran Martyrs with the Mass in Chalatenango, placing special focus on the U.S. women. The women were not the only notable deaths in the church in 1980. Archbishop Romero and Father Spessotto were violently assas-

sinated that year, as well as a group of more than 600 civilians, hailed as martyrs.

"Martyrs are those who walked in the footsteps of Jesus," Cardinal Rosa Chavez said during the Mass. "And the U.S. women represent that in this country."

Though born elsewhere, the women incarnated the rampant persecution of the country's civilians, many of them Catholics, said Bishop Escobar, who also lost two family members — a sister who was disappeared and a brother who was assassinated — during the conflict.

Chalatenango, in particular, was a "seat of ecclesiastical persecution," of catechists, ministers, and other members of the church who were killed because they believed in the cause of social justice, the bishop said. But Salvadorans, as the U.S. women showed, were not alone in that fight for justice in the country, he said.

The celebration showed the importance of citizens of other countries who left behind homes and safety to be present in that fight, Bishop Escobar said.

"In this martyrial Salvadoran church, Spain, Italy and the United States were present," he said. "We can't lose sight of that, because you can't go where you're headed if you don't know where you've come from. And we will never forget these martyrs, our brothers and sisters."
Installation of pastor and blessing of renovations at St. Mary, Brownwood

Bishop Michael Sis was on hand to cut both a cake and a ribbon at St. Mary Queen of Peace Church in Brownwood Oct. 7, 2020. Bishop Sis celebrated the Mass of Installation of the new pastor, Father Bhaskar Mundem and blessed the renovations to the parish hall.

COURTESY

St. Joseph in San Angelo offers virtual and in-person RCIA

COURTESY

Catholics say they're able to deepen their approach to Advent season this year

By Maria Wiering
Catholic News Service

ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS) — Despite the pandemic-related death of holiday parties and typical social engagements that — for many — stuff the weeks before Christmas, Jolene Gerads said she’s feeling a special excitement about this year’s Advent.

“There’s more time, more space, more energy, she said.

In the past, she, her husband, Robert, and their four boys, ages 9 and under, spent the holidays traveling to different parts of the state to celebrate with both sides of the family. That meant that many traditions they started on the First Sunday of Advent — such as the Jesse Tree — petered out as Christmas drew near, and never saw completion.

For the Geradses, this year’s quieter season of preparation at home means potential for greater focus and completion.

“Busy Advents of the past pushed the Geradses to extinguish their Jesse Tree,” she said.

Other families also rooted some of their children’s Advent traditions in practicing selfless behavior. One common practice is putting a piece of straw in an empty manger each time a child makes a sacrifice, making a home for Jesus in their hearts as they make one for him in the creche.

Gerads admires a friend’s tradition, where family members write down their sacrifices on paper and put them in a designated “stocking for Jesus.” On Christmas Eve, the stocking is emptied and their selfless deeds are read aloud.

“It’s how we do life,” she said. “It’s how we do life.”

For Catholics who live alone, virtual Advent resources abound, many with opportunities to connect online for faith-sharing.

Local parishes also have retrofitted their typical Advent offerings for virtual participation.

ST. Thomas More in St. Paul created an at-home Ignatian Advent with daily prayer material and weekly, web-based small group meetings. The parish also gave parishioners the book The Lord Is Coming: Praying Through Advent With Pope Francis and its director of liturgy, Lucas Emmison, wrote a guide for a simple Advent wreath candle-lighting ritual.

At St. Michael and St. Mary in Stillwater, Father Michael Izen and Father Austin Barnes are offering near-daily Advent reflection videos that focus on the season’s saint feast days and memorials, and liturgical themes.

At St. Bridget of Sweden in Lindstrom, Theresa...
Appeal assists elderly sisters, brothers, priests in religious orders

The Diocese of San Angelo will hold the Retirement Fund for Religious collection Dec. 12–13. The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) coordinates this annual appeal and distributes the proceeds to assist eligible U.S. religious communities with their retirement needs. Nearly 30,000 senior sisters, brothers and religious order priests benefit.

Last year, the Diocese of San Angelo donated $80,133.59 to the collection. “The generosity of U.S. Catholics enables us to continue our ministry for aging women and men religious,” said Presentation Sister Stephanie Still, the NRRO’s executive director. “We are overwhelmed with gratitude.”

In 1988, Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious collection to help address the deficit in retirement funding among U.S. religious congregations. Each congregation is responsible for the care and support of its members. Financial distributions from the collection are sent to a congregation’s central house and may be applied toward immediate expenses — such as medications or nursing care — or invested for future eldercare needs.

Historically, Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests served for little to no pay. Today, many religious communities lack sufficient retirement savings. Of 531 communities providing data to the NRRO, only 29 are adequately funded for retirement. Rising health-care costs and a growing number of senior members compound the challenge to meet retirement expenses.

The 2019 collection raised $26.2 million, and in June, the NRRO disbursed $25 million in financial assistance to 341 religious communities. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated for resources and services that help communities improve eldercare delivery and plan for long-term retirement needs. For example, a new online webinar offers professional guidance on adapting care protocols to address issues arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

“During these trying times, we know the best way to support senior religious is to continue helping their communities address retirement and eldercare challenges,” said Sister Still. “Our grateful prayer is with all whose love and generosity sustain this mission.”

Visit retireredigious.org to learn more.

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Cleveland (CNS) — Laid off from her information technology job last Thanksgiving, then evicted for falling behind on the rent two months later and having to keep six children fed, Bianca Simone needed options.

Even though her boyfriend, Drew Tunnell, still had his job in plumbing sales, the couple faced yearslong waiting lists for an apartment. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit.

For eight months they shuttled from place to place, mostly staying in hotels and motels but occasionally in their car. As savings dwindled, the couple struggled to keep the kids fed.

"We felt like we were in a tailspin. We didn't have any place to stay. The kids are hungry," Simone, 36, told Catholic News Service Dec. 1.

Simone decided it was time to seek help. She was like millions of people nationwide who had never sought assistance but were struggling economically during the pandemic.

Simone and Tunnell, 38, and their children are not alone in their food insecurity. Nearly 26 million people said they did not have enough food at least some of the time during late October and early November, according to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey.

The number represents a 30% increase in hunger compared with Census Bureau data from late February and early March, just before the pandemic hit, when 19.7 million people reported difficulty in obtaining food some or much of the time.

Experts said the number of people with who are hungry is the highest in decades, perhaps since the Great Depression.

Jane Stenson, vice president for food and nutrition and poverty reduction strategies at Catholic Charities USA, said the demand for food is greater than she has ever seen. "We've seen bad times regionally, but this is everywhere," she told Catholic News Service.

Ray Offenheiser, director of the Pulte Institute for Global Development at the University of Notre Dame, said the level of food insecurity has rapidly expanded from poor communities "to your neighbor." "People are juggling paying the rent, keeping the car, paying the gas, feeding their children and keeping the lights and heat on in winter, and they have to figure out which among those different things they're going to cut back on as they lose their jobs," Offenheiser said.

In Simone's case, a social services hotline referred her to Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego. The agency had expanded its food distribution network from three pantries to 21 distribution sites in San Diego and Imperial counties in southernmost California in response to growing hunger in the early days of the pandemic.

Simone cautiously reached out, hesitant because she did not want to "feel like a number." What she found, she said, was relief. Instead of showing up to stand in a long line, the agency scheduled an appointment for her to pick up food.

"They do everything that they can to recognize your humanity and respect," she said. "I respect that a lot."

Like numerous other families nationwide, Simone and Tunnell received Farmers to Families food boxes as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. By year's end Farmers to Families is expected to have distributed 123.4 million boxes of fresh produce, meats, dairy and other products.

Vino Pajanor, CEO of Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego, credited the program for providing much-needed food at a difficult time for families hurting from the fallout caused by the pandemic.

"We have distributed more than 1 million meals since March," four times the amount of the same period in 2019, Pajanor said.

Those who have come to the agency's distribution sites span wide demographics and include many people who never needed assistance before. "When staff and volunteers started hearing the stories, it comes to light that everybody is just one paycheck away from being homeless or hungry," he told CNS.

San Diego's circumstance parallels those across the country. Catholic Charities of Corpus Christi, Texas, reported a 60% increase in people seeking food assistance this year. The Florida Catholic Conference reported that it has distributed 26 million pounds of food at 62 distribution sites since January, an increase of 75% over the previous year.

At Catholic Charities of Buffalo in New York, Eileen Nowak, director of parish outreach and advocacy, shared how one of its pantries illustrates the growing food insecurity confronting people.

She said the agency's pantry in suburban Lackawanna saw the number of families served spike from 60 to 90 a day before the pandemic to 190 a day in mid-November as the number of coronavirus cases surged.

Nowak said the increase is fueled by new rounds of layoffs.

"We're seeing first timers because of being laid off," she explained. "We're seeing first timers who probably should have come before but they were managing. They were just on the edge and managing week to week."

The agency saw the number of clients decrease during the summer as families used the $1,200 in emergency aid under the CARES Act. Numbers began climbing again by late summer.

The seven pantries operated by Catholic Charities of Corpus Christi have seen a 52% increase in the number of people seeking assistance this year, said Angelina Garcia, senior director of program and grants.

The pandemic has caused oil and natural gas drilling to retrace in rural areas of the diocese, leading industry workers who once had well-paying jobs to seek help, she explained Dec. 1 between runs to deliver food to a pantry in Corpus Christi's Flour Bluff area.

"We have a mixture of folks who are making a good living and those who are barely making a living," Garcia said of the clients. Federal emergency pandemic relief funds have helped people with utility and rent payments as well.

At Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Alice, about 45 miles west of Corpus Christi, parishioners and Knights of Columbus members distribute up to 500 Farmers to Families boxes a week.

Garcia expressed concern about the pandemic continuing until the latter half of 2021 because some federal food programs have not been extended. "We are sharing lots of prayer and believing in faith that God’s going to keep providing so we can support the community and the people who are hurting," she said.

The pandemic pushed Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami to build a food distribution program. CEO Peter Routis-Arroyo said delivering food through pantries "has never been a core service" during the agency's 90-year history, but "with this pandemic we made the conscious decision that we didn't have a choice."

"As the people were hurting, it was an obvious need. We've got the ability and the resources to be able to do it," he told CNS.

Statewide in Florida, the emergency response by Catholic entities has expanded beyond food to include face coverings, hand sanitizer and bleach, said Gabie Tischler, emergency management specialist at the Florida Catholic Conference.

He said many distribution sites had opened at parishes since March. He credited Catholic Charities agencies' experience in mobilizing after devastating hurricanes for being able to ramp up quickly.

Looming ahead is an expected new surge in need as early as January. More than 12 million self-employed workers and company employees will see pandemic emergency unemployment benefits end Dec. 26 unless Congress extends CARES Act provisions.

Then, five days later, the moratorium on housing eviction ends, potentially affecting millions more people.

See FOOD, Page 22
Our wounds, our gifts, and our power to heal others

Nearly fifty years ago Henri Nouwen wrote a book entitled The Wounded Healer. Its reception established his reputation as unique spiritual mentor and he went on to become one of the most influential spiritual writers of the past half-century. What made his writings so powerful? His brilliance! His gift for expression? He was gifted, yes, but so are many others. What set him apart was that he was a deeply wounded man and from that disquieted place inside him issued forth words that were a healing balm to millions.

How does this work? How do our wounds help heal others? They don’t. It’s not our wounds that help heal others. Rather our wounds can color our gifts and talents in such a way that so they no longer educe resistance and envy in others but instead become what God meant them to be, gifts to grace others.

Sadly, the opposite is often true. Our gifts and talents often become the reason we’re disliked and perhaps even hated. There’s a curious dynamic here. We don’t automatically, nor easily, let the gifts of others grace us. More often, we’re reluctant to admit our beauty and power and we resist and envy those who possess them and sometimes even hate them for their gifts.

That’s one of the reasons we find it hard to simply admire someone. But this reluctance in us doesn’t just say something about us. Often it says something too about the persons who possess those gifts. Talent is an ambiguous thing: it can be used to assert ourselves, to separate ourselves from others, to stand out and to stand above, rather than as a gift to help others. Our talents can be used simply to point to how bright, talented, good-looking, and successful we are. Then they simply become a strength meant to dwarf others and set ourselves apart.

How can we make our talents a gift for others? How can we be loved for our talents rather than hated for them? Here’s the difference: we will be loved and admired for our gifts when our gifts are colored by our wounds so that others do not see them as a threat or as something that sets us apart but rather as something that gifts them in their own shortcomings. When shared in a certain way, our gifts can become gifts for everyone else.

Here’s how that algebra works: Our gifts are given us not for ourselves but for others. But, to be that, they need to be colored by compassion. We come to compassion by letting our wounds befriend our gifts. Here are two examples.

When Princess Diana died in 1997 there was a massive outpouring of love for her. But this was not by chance. Here’s my interpretation: I’m normally not given to grieving over celebrities, yet I felt a deep sorrow and love for this woman. Why? Because she was beautiful and famous! Not that. Many women who are beautiful and famous are rejected for it. Princess Diana was loved by so many because she was a wounded person, someone whose wounds colored her beauty and fame in a way that induced love, not envy.

Henri Nouwen, who popularized the phrase “the wounded healer” shared a similar trait. He was a brilliant man, the author of more than forty books, one of the most popular religious speakers of his generation, honored at both Harvard and Yale, a person with friends all over the world; but also a deeply wounded man who, by his own repeated admission, suffered restlessness, anxiety, jealousies, and obsessions that occasionally landed him in a clinic. As well, by his own repeated admission, amidst his success and popularity, for most of his adult life he struggled to simply accept love. His wounds forever got in the way. And this, his wounded self, colors basically every page of every book he wrote. His brilliance was forever colored by his wounds and that’s why it was never self-assertive but always compassionate. No one envied Nouwen’s brilliance; he was too wounded to be envied.

Those words, wounded and healer, order each other. I’m convinced that God calls each of us to a vocation and to a special work here on earth more on the basis of our wounds than on the basis of our gifts. Our gifts are real and important; but they only grace others when they are shaped into a special kind of compassion by the uniqueness of our own wounds. Our unique, special wounds can help make each of us a unique, special healer.

Our world is full of brilliant, talented, highly-successful, and beautiful people. Those gifts are real, come from God, and shouldn’t be denigrated by God’s name. However, our gifts don’t automatically help others; but they can if they are colored by our wounds so that they flow out as compassion and not as pride.

... 

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website, www.rronrolheiser.com. Now on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Our wounds, our gifts, and our power to heal others

In the wake of the publication of Pope Francis’ most recent encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti, there was a great deal of negative commentary regarding the pope’s attitude toward capitalism and private property. Many readers interpreted Francis to mean that the capitalist system is, in itself, exploitative and that the holding of private property is morally problematic.

Like most who write in a prophetic mode, Pope Francis is indeed given to strong and challenging language, and therefore, it is easy enough to understand how he excites opposition. But it is most important to read what he says with care and to interpret it within the context of the long tradition of Catholic social teaching.

First, in regard to capitalism, or what the church prefers to call the “market economy,” the pope has this to say: “Business activity is essentially ‘a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving activity is essentially ‘a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving the market economy as an arena for the exercise of human creativity, ingenuity, and courage, and who endeavored to draw ever more people into its dynamism. He also reiterates the teaching of the founder of the modern Catholic social tradition, the great Leo XIII, who, in Rerum Novarum, strenuously defended private property and, using a number of arguments, repudiated socialistic economic arrangements. So I hope we can put to rest the silly canard that Pope Francis is an enemy of capitalism and a cheerleader for globalism.

Now, without gainsaying any of this, we must, at the same time, point out that, like all of his papal predecessors in the social teaching tradition, without exception, Francis also recommends limits, both legal and moral, to the market economy. And in this context, he insists upon what classical Catholic theology refers to as the “universal destination of goods.” Here is what Francis states the idea in Fratelli Tutti: “The right to private property is always accompanied by the primary and prior principle of the subordination of all private property to the universal destination of the earth’s goods, and thus the right of all to use” (123).

In making these observations, Francis stands firmly in the tradition of St. John Paul II, who saw private property as a right, but not an “inviolable” right — if by that we mean without qualification or conditions — and saying so is not tantamount to advocating socialism.

What we might characterize as something of a novelty in Pope Francis’ encyclical is the application of this distinction to the relations between nations and not simply individuals. A nation-state indeed has a right to its own wealth, garnered through the energy and creativity of its people, and it may legitimately maintain and defend its borders; however, these prerogatives are not morally absolute. In Francis’ words, “We can then say that each country also belongs to the foreigner, inasmuch as a territory’s goods must not be denied to a needy person coming from elsewhere” (124). This is not “globalism” or a denial of national integrity; it is simply Thomas Aquinas’ distinction between ownership and use, extrapolated to the international level.

Once more, lest we see Pope Francis’ teaching here as egregious, I would like to give the last word to Leo XIII, ardent defender of private property and equally ardent opponent of socialism: “When what necessity demands has been supplied, and one’s standing fairly taken thought for, it one’s standing fairly taken thought for, it none is needed, the duty is done, and no one can lay claim to the surplus” (Rerum Novarum, 22).

... 

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

"Todo tiene su momento, y cada cosa su tiempo bajo el cielo: Tiempo para nacer y tiempo de morir, tiempo de plantar y tiempo de arrancar, tiempo de llorar y tiempo de reir, tiempo de pelear y tiempo de paz, tiempo de cazar y tiempo de acuñar piedras, tiempo de recoger y tiempo de tirarlas, tiempo de abrazar y tiempo de separar".

Durante esta terrible pandemia, las palabras de Eclesiastés 3 arriba son buen consejo para nosotros. Aunque parece desmañado largo, el momento del COVID-19 va a pasar.

Nuestra esperanza y desafío es el aprender y salir mejor de esta experiencia, no sólo en inmunidad sino en espiritualidad, fuerza moral y solidaridad con nuestros camaradas humanos por todo el mundo.

Un terrible número de muertes en nuestro país, cientos de miles más que en cualquier otro país en el mundo, se debe a la iniquidad y la falta de preocupación y compasión por los demás. Por eso, este es un tiempo para abrazar a toda la humanidad, para destruir los muros, sean los de poder o de odio o de odio o de odio, y reconociendo que venceremos el virus solo si luchamos unidos.

Dentro de nuestras fronteras tenemos que trabajar por la seguridad de todos, sin distinción de color de piel o credo, inmigrante o ciudadano, libre o preso, pobre o rico, trabajadores esenciales como los campesinos que plantan, cultivan y cosechan, y procesa nuestro alimento y los médicos, enfermeras, choferes de ambulancias y los anónimos que limpián, arreglan y, como todos, arriesgan su vida.

Aunque agotados y abrumados, no se rinden en su lucha por la vida de sus pacientes y están presentes hasta el último suspiro de las víctimas.

En verdad, este es el tiempo para morir y para el dolor. También es el tiempo para vivir plenamente, sean pocos o muchos nuestros días. Para el Día de Acción de Gracias, no basta agradecer nuestra abundancia sino también ejercer nuestra creatividad para levantar la voz en favor de los desafortunados.

Si tenemos casa o departamento, podemos abogar por los que lo han perdido todo debido al desplome de la crisis.

Mira SANDOVAL, Página 23

Para remediar la plaga de la división, comencemos con la amistad

El título me llamó la atención: “¡Tú ya no eres mi madre!” El artículo, publicado en inglés por la agencia Reuters un día antes de las elecciones presidenciales estadounidenses del 2020, compartía la historia de una madre a quien su hijo ya no le reconocía como tal. La razón: diferencias políticas.

Lamentablemente esa historia no es novedosa. La hemos escuchado muchas veces. Quizás muchos de nosotros podemos contar nuestra propia versión porque hemos experimentado algo similar en nuestras familias y comunidades. Es una plaga.

Tanto los padres dejan de reconocer a sus hijos y los hijos a los padres; cuando los esposos dejan de hablar; cuando ciertos familiares ya no son bienvenidos en nuestros hogares y cuando las amistades terminan abruptamente, todo por razón de diferencias políticas e ideológicas, tenemos que reconocer que hay algo que no anda bien.

Aunque las personas no podemos compartir juntos; cuando las familias son excluidas de sus parroquias porque ya no “encajan” con el resto de la comunidad; cuando los católicos comienzan a buscar predicadores y maestros que compaginen convenientemente con sus convicciones no religiosas; cuando nuestra identidad católica es cuestionada, todo por razón de diferencias políticas e ideológicas, tenemos que reconocer que hay algo que no anda bien.

Una sociedad, una comunidad de fe o una familia que considera que la fidelidad a un líder o un partido político o a una ideología —sin importar qué elementos de bien puedan tener— es más importante que los lazos de amor que nos deben unir como padres de familia, hijos, espíritus, vecinos, feligreses y amigos, no tiene futuro.

Como católicos, tenemos la obligación de confrontar estas realidades. No podemos favorecer actitudes y prácticas que generan división y rener. Hacer esto en las relaciones entre naciones y no simplemente individuos. De hecho, un Estado-nación tiene derecho a su propia riqueza, obtenida a través de la energía y la creatividad de su pueblo, y puede mantener y defender legítimamente sus fronteras; sin embargo, estas prerrogativas no son moralmente absolutas. En palabras de Francisco, “Cada país es el asunto del extranjero, en cuanto cuantos de un territorio no deben ser negados a una persona necesitada y que pone énfasis en otro lugar”. Esto es “globalización” o una negación de la integridad nacional; es simplemente la distinción de Tomás de Aquino entre propiedad y uso, extrapolarlo al nivel internacional.

Una vez más, para que no veamos la enseñanza del Papa Francisco aquí como atractivo, me gustaría dar la última palabra a León XIII, arzobispo defensor de la propiedad privada y el derecho de la propiedad privada: “Cuando los pobres los propietarios no se quite de su posesión, después de haber dejado en paz el entorno de su casa, que lo constatan y dictaron, y de la puerta de su casa en los momentos de la noche y del día, y de que esté en el recinto de su propiedad, si protestede los objetos, no quisiera los objetos, y que jamás lo cueste. La forma más sencilla de captar la distinción entre propiedad y uso es imaginar el escenario de un hombre hambriento que viene a la puerta de tu casa tarde en la noche y pide sustento. Aunque estés en tu propia casa, que te impide a poseer, y de la puerta de tu casa en los momentos de la noche y del día”. (Rerum Novarum, 17).

Mira OSPINO, Página 23

El Papa Francisco, ‘Fratelli Tutti,’ y el destino universal de los bienes

Tras la publicación de la carta encíclica más reciente del Papa Francisco, ‘Fratelli Tutti’, hubo muchos comentarios negativos sobre la actitud del Papa hacia el capitalismo y la propiedad privada. Muchos lectores interpretaron a Francisco como un defensor del socialismo: “Pero cuando se ha atendido su propiedad privada del bien de la tierra y, por tanto, el derecho de todos a su uso” (123). Al hacer esa distinción entre propiedad y uso, el Papa Francisco está escuchando a Santo Tomás de Aquino y San Juan Crisóstomo de la siguiente manera: “Cada país es un derecho, pero no un derecho “inviolable” —si queremos decir con esto sin calificación ni condiciones, sin que no valga para abogar por el socialismo.

Lo que podríamos caracterizar como algo novedoso en la encíclica del Papa Francisco es la aplicación de esta distinción a las relaciones entre naciones y no simplemente individuos. De hecho, un Estado-nación tiene derecho a su propia riqueza, obtenida a través de la energía y la creatividad de su pueblo, y puede mantener y defender legítimamente sus fronteras; sin embargo, estas prerrogativas no son moralmente absolutas. En palabras de Francisco, “Cada país es el asunto del extranjero, en cuanto cuantos de un territorio no deben ser negados a una persona necesitada y que jamás lo cueste de otro lugar”.

Hosffman Ospino
Catholic News Service
Caminando Juntos

Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service
Buscando Vida

Obispo Robert Barron
Word on Fire Ministries

Mira SANDOVAL, Página 23
**Should I get vaccinated?**

**Father Tad Pacholczyk**  
Making Sense of Bioethics

Recently, many people have been reaching out with questions about vaccines. So, I thought it would be helpful to mention some of the most common ones and try to provide some answers.

Are there sound medical reasons to oppose vaccination? There can be, but vaccines typically provide a path towards individual protection and herd immunity that involves less burden and risk than becoming infected with a disease. Today’s childhood vaccination schedule protects against more than a dozen different diseases. Some individuals, though, may need to decline vaccines if they have a compromised immune system or an allergy to one of the ingredients. When a vaccine is determined to be safe and effective, it will often make sense for healthy individuals to choose, on their own initiative, to get immunized.

Are vaccines safe? The safety profile of vaccines is typically verified by extensive clinical trials involving more than 30,000 participants. Even after successful safety testing, children or adults can develop symptoms or problems, apparently from an inoculation they received. When the problem is further investigated, it may turn out to be a separate health issue unrelated to vaccination. Still, vaccines are not a zero-risk proposal, and on rare occasions, adverse events do occur. No medical intervention is ever completely risk-free. The risk of complications or side effects from vaccines, being reasonably low overall, can be deemed acceptable when compared to the prospect of complications that may arise from the disease itself. For generations, some of those complications included family members living in an iron lung after being ravaged by polio, married individuals rendered infertile from mumps, and infants dying due to whooping cough. Recent generations have been shielded from these types of devastating outcomes through the availability of vaccines.

Are there ethical reasons not to receive vaccines? Certain concerns of conscience arise when cell lines derived from abortions are used in the development and production of vaccines. Vaccines should not be manufactured in this way, and pharmaceutical companies should not make use of these fetal cell lines. The Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has noted, however, that when vaccines have been produced this way, it is morally permissible to receive them. When equivalent alternative vaccines that don’t rely on such cell lines are available, however, those should clearly be the preferred option.

Why wouldn’t it be wrong to receive a vaccine made from aborted fetal cell lines? No moral evil is committed by those who get inoculated with vaccines made from problematic cell lines; rather those who originally exploited aborted children for their cells, or established pharmaceutical company policies that rely on the abortion-derived cells, commit moral evils. The one receiving the vaccine has no causal connection to these wrongful decisions made previously by others, and the end user cannot be held culpable for their wrongdoing. Even so, the Vatican emphasizes that when we receive vaccines manufactured in this way, we should take steps to register our disagreement and call on pharmaceutical companies to reformulate their vaccines using alternative and ethically acceptable cell sources. Fortunately, none of the 2020-2021 flu vaccines used aborted fetal material, a common concern as the winter season draws near. However, even if they did, it would be ethically permissible to receive the vaccine as an end user, as explained.

If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available, would we be obliged as Christians and as citizens to take it to defeat the spread of the virus? Each person must evaluate his or her individual situation and make a good prudential judgment regarding the benefit-to-burden ratio when accepting a COVID-19 vaccine. For example, healthcare workers who have not been exposed to COVID-19 should seriously consider the benefits of getting vaccinated, and their workplace may even require it. The elderly and other vulnerable populations should carefully consider the benefits as well. For younger individuals with very low chances of detrimental outcomes there may be less urgency, particularly if they do not have any contact with vulnerable populations. Governments should not compel citizens to accept COVID-19 vaccinations, but rather inform them of the benefits and risks while encouraging them to carefully decide for themselves.

What about the new technologies behind RNA vaccines which have never been used before in humans? The criteria for vaccine safety and efficacy are generally well-established and won’t differ fundamentally for a COVID-19 RNA vaccine when compared to other more standard types of vaccines. In light of the various studies that have already been done in animals, and presupposing rigorous human clinical trials, it should soon become clear whether mRNA vaccines are as safe and effective as other vaccines. These kinds of questions about vaccinations and human health merit attention, as they manifest an important desire both for sound scientific information and ethical clarity. — Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D.

earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.

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**The gift of light**

**Maureen Pratt**  
Catholic News Service  
Living Well

In Spring 2015, I attended an exhibition on the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. It was a fascinating display that illuminated aspects of the places and cultures in which Jesus and the disciples had moved and ministered—an intriguing way to both learn and grow in present-day faith.

As I wand through the various photos, recreations and explanations of the material presented, I became eager to share everything with those who could not be with me that day. That eagerness turned into something tangible when I went into the gift shop and found packages of candles made in Israel. The connection of where they were made, the place of light: the light of faith, the light of giving, the light of warm love.

The memory of the enthusiastic reception of those candles resurfaced recently, as I looked at my calendar and saw Advent and Christmas fast approaching. With so much darkness in our world, it seems fitting to not only mark this season with special light, but think of ways to share it, too. Here are some suggestions among the many possibilities.

For those who want to send something wrapped, boxed, and bow-tied, “regular” candles can be found in many places online and in local stores. However, I favor craft sites, where individual, small-batch candles and other items seem to carry a more personal touch, or several Catholic websites that carry specific, faith-related candles (for Advent, for example). (Be sure to check the size required for your particular wreath or holders.)

For those who want to avoid live flames, battery-operated candles are easily purchased and shipped (and might be preferred at, say, senior living facilities).

Adding a card that expresses something from the heart can make any candle present personal. For example, when I was a choir director, one Christmas I wrote an individual note expressing how much I appreciated each member’s unique, wonderful qualities.

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Healing the malady of division, start with friendship

**Hosffman Osipno**  
Catholic News Service  
Journeying Together

The headline grabbed my attention: "You are no longer my mother!" The Reuters article, written a day prior to the 2020 U.S. presidential election, shared the story of a mother disavowed by her own son. The reason: political differences.

The story, unfortunately, is not new. We have heard it far too many times. Many of us perhaps can tell our own version because we have experienced something similar in our families and communities. It is a malady.

When parents disavow their children and children their parents, when spouses stop talking to one another, when relatives are not welcomed into our homes anymore, long and friendships abruptly end, all because of political and ideological differences, we must acknowledge that something is not OK.

When Catholics fail to see one another eye to eye, when families are exiled from their parishes because they "do not fit" any model a nobler way of being church and society: the way of Christ, the way of communion.

We have an obligation as Catholics to confront these realities. We cannot foster attitudes and practices that fuel division and rancor. Doing so negates the Gospel. If I have done so in any way, I apologize. As Catholics, we have a responsibility to model a nobler way of being church and society: the way of Christ, the way of communion.

The malady of division that pains our families and communities today did not emerge overnight. Decades of messaging, strategizing, silencing and being silent, tolerating intolerance and ignoring our shared responsibility to sustain the common good as a priority are yielding bitter fruits.

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See FRIENDSHIP, Page 22
Catholic Voices

Why the nation's first Black cardinal matters

When Pope Francis appointed Atlanta Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory to become the first African American to lead the Archdiocese of Washington in 2019, many observers considered it a foregone conclusion that the Catholic Church would soon have its first Black cardinal from the United States.

Five of Cardinal Gregory's six immediate predecessors had ascended into the highest-ranking body of church officials while leading the powerful and historically significant Washington archdiocese in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Pope Francis' demonstrated commitment to more equitable representation in the College of Cardinals—including his historic appointments of the first Black cardinals from Haiti and Saint Lucia in 2014—raised the chances of Cardinal Gregory's selection even higher.

In addition to his strong legacy in the United States, his selection still held my breath.

More than anything, church history has taught me to be radical in my prayers but reserved in my expectations. Yet, on Nov. 28, via livestream, I witnessed a miracle. Pope Francis, the Catholic Church's first leader from Latin America, formally elevated Wilton Gregory, a devout Black Catholic man from the South Side of Chicago who currently leads a former seat of power of the United States, still held my breath.

More than anything, church history has taught me to be radical in my prayers but reserved in my expectations. Yet, on Nov. 28, via livestream, I witnessed a miracle. Pope Francis, the Catholic Church's first leader from Latin America, formally elevated Wilton Gregory, a devout Black Catholic man from the South Side of Chicago who currently leads a former seat of power of the U.S. church's slaveholding elite, to the College of Cardinals as a potential choice to one day lead the world's largest Christian denomination. And, I proudly said with all the church's angels and saints: Amen.

I say amen because I, as a historian of the Catholic experience, know well all that it has taken to get the church to this monumental milestone.

What the McCarrick report means for the church

Two years ago, Pope Francis called for a full accounting of how Theodore McCarrick was able to rise through church ranks, and he promised to make the report public. Some people disbelieved such a report would ever see the light of day.

Others feared it would.

On Nov. 10, Pope Francis kept his word. The report is unprecedented, reading like no other Vatican document I can recall. It is not clothed in dense church-speak or vague references to misdeeds. It is at times graphic and always revealing. As a whole, it is a devastating portrait of personal deception and institutional blindness, of opportunities missed and faith shattering.

For those of us who have experience with Vatican documents and Vatican investigations, the report is amazing in its efforts to be transparent. At 449 pages, the report is exhaustive and at times exhausting. Not only were over 90 interviews conducted, but extensive quotations from relevant Vatican correspondence and documents reveal the internal back and forth between individuals and offices.

There are heroes to be found, even in the unsettling story of how McCarrick rose through the ranks despite persistent rumors that he was sharing his bed with seminarians and priests. Cardinal John J. O'Connor, for one. He not only raised his concerns, he did so in writing, trying to stop McCarrick's ascendancy to the cardinaleate of New York.

More courageous still were the victim survivors who tried to speak up, the mother who sought to protect her children, the counselors who warned of the allegations they were hearing.

Unfortunately, the lasting impression is that those who wanted to raise concerns were not listened to, and rumors were dismissed rather than investigated thoroughly.

Like many large and not particularly efficient organizations, the church is a series of silos, inhibited to, and rumors were dismissed rather than investigated thoroughly.

I also shout alleluia because I understand exactly why the nation's Black sisters (the first representatives of the African American community to embrace religious life), priests and lay members joyously but also tearfully state that they never thought this day would come.

To be sure, Pope Francis' appointment of Cardinal Gregory is first and foremost a recognition and celebration of the pioneering Black prelate's long and distinguished record of moral and servant leadership; the white-dominated and former slaveholding U.S. church; the myriad of racial, cultural, sexual, and gendered experiences; the Black Catholic community; and the power of the church's long and largely unreconciled histories of colonialism, slavery, segregation, and exclusion in the Americas.

Indeed, one cannot accurately tell the story of the Black Catholic community that seeded Cardinal Gregory's rise without acknowledging the foundational African roots of the U.S. church and reckoning with the church's long and largely unreconciled histories of colonialism, slavery, segregation, and exclusion in the Americas.

Yet, the story of Black Catholics in the United States is not all pain and suffering. Cardinal Gregory is also the product of a longstanding tradition of Catholicism that has fought against racism and white supremacy at every turn from the earliest days of the church to the present day.

It is a tradition that has always understood that Black lives matter and that Black history in the United States president.

After all, the roots of the nation's original sins of slavery and racism do not lie in colonial Virginia in 1619 despite popular contention. Instead, those roots lie in the Spanish Catholic colony of St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, where the church inaugurated over four centuries of slavery and segregation in the land area that became the United States.

While some might feel inclined to argue that Cardinal Gregory's African American heritage should not matter in this conversation, the fact remains that race has mattered in the modern Roman Catholic Church since the dawn of the transatlantic slave trade and Europe's violent colonization of the Americas and Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries.
By Mary Farrow
Catholic News Agency

DENVER (CNA) — For the past 16 years, Elf on the Shelf has become a tradition, both hated and loved, for families in the days leading up to Christmas.

Based on a book and accompanying doll, the elf is a scout for Santa Claus, who watches children’s behavior during the day and reports back to the North Pole every night. There are rules about how to interact with the elf and a myriad of ideas for the things he can do.

Whether Elf on the Shelf is a “footless creep” or a beloved tradition, the concept sparked the idea for Mary on the Mantel, a traveling doll that aims help children enter more deeply into Advent.

Erica Tighe Campbell, founder of the Catholic lifestyle products company Be A Heart, was pregnant with her first child last year when she came up with the idea of creating a Mary doll.

“I was doing my baby registry, and... I saw a closet for a doll, and I thought, ‘What doll needs outfits?’” Campbell told CNA.

“Then I started thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, wait, Mary has so many outfits in all of her different appearances. What if there was a really beautiful Mary doll that looked like other things that are selling?’”

The outfits could help teach children about Mary and her messages in the different apparitions she has made, Campbell added.

“On feast days, you could talk about the different apparitions with your children by getting out her Guadalupe dress or getting out her Fatima dress, and recognizing that she is the same person, but she appears to us differently,” Campbell said.

Campbell said she wanted the doll to help foster a deeper relationship with Mary for children.

“I wanted my daughter to have a doll to teach her about the comfort that Mary brings,” she said.

“In my own life, Mary’s motherly love and care is what has brought me through so many difficult times. As a child, going through things with my family in high school, I would always turn to the Hail Mary, that was my go-to,” she said. “And as I’ve grown as a woman, I really look to her yes... saying yes to God, even when things are uncertain.”

Campbell made her first Mary doll this year, with a simple blue veil and linen dress, available in three different skin tones.

The idea to use the Mary dolls for “Mary on the Mantel” first came from her web developer, who is the father of four children. He suggested that Mary somehow replaced Elf on the Shelf.

Campbell started thinking of ways to tweak the idea of the traveling elf to better suit Advent, and about the ways Christians can prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

“Elf on the Shelf reports back to Santa if girls and boys are good or bad, and really in my own spiritual life, I have had to kind of undo that theology of ‘I’m good when I do this and I’m bad when I do this, and God is watching,’” Campbell said.

“God is not like Santa, she said, in that he’s not a “transactional God, where as long as I’m doing good, then I will reap the rewards of a gift under the Christmas tree. In my own parenting, I didn’t want to pass that message along to my children.”

“And so I started conceptualizing: what could Mary do instead of being this watchful tattletale? That’s going to create a friendship with her? How do we teach children to be friends with Mary?”

“I started thinking about what Mary was doing, even before they got the census announcement? She was probably preparing her house, preparing all of these things. She went on a trip to see Elizabeth. There are so many ways that we can recognize the personhood of Mary, and talk about that with our children — that she was a girl, she had normal daily tasks that she needed to do.”

In late November, Campbell posted to social media, announcing the idea for Mary on the Mantel — a Mary doll that would show up in different places around the house every morning of Advent.

Instead of Elf on the Shelf’s brand of mischief, Mary would be caught doing things to prepare for the coming of baby Jesus, like washing baby clothes, or reading a pregnancy book, or planning her journey to Bethlehem for the census.

“I have this image of Mary taking our hands and leading us to her Son, a little bit like how I imagine for my own self, having the baby and wanting people to meet her,” Campbell said.

“We get to prepare ourselves for Christmas, and putting up our Advent wreath and our Christmas tree and cleaning the house and wrapping presents — that is similar to our preparation. We prepare homes just as a mother prepares her home to welcome her new baby.”

Instead of reporting on the children’s bad behavior, every morning Mary would be found with a message encouraging children to do a specific act of kindness each day. The acts can be left in Mary’s tote bag, which comes with each ‘Be A Heart Mary’ doll.

“How do we really become like the people who are prepared to meet the baby Jesus in the manger? We can do acts of kindness for others,” Campbell said. Because the parents can write whatever message they want and place it in Mary’s bag, they can choose acts of kindness that are tailored to their child’s development and what they are capable of accomplishing.

“There are simple things to do. You could read a book to your sibling, or you could do a chore without being asked, or you could write letters to your grandparents, or call a friend, little things like that,” she said.

“Children could go through their toys and find toys that they don’t play with that are still good, that could be donated to another child who needs them. But the parents are in control, so it doesn’t get overwhelming.” Mary’s linen dress has room for paper towel or tissue stuffing to make her belly “grow,” Campbell added, as Christmas nears and she prepares to give birth.

And for parents struggling to come up with new ideas, Campbell’s blog post on the idea includes long lists of ideas of activities that the Mary doll can do, and ideas for age-appropriate acts of kindness.

The Mary on the Mantel project can be done with any Mary doll or figurine, Campbell added. After her Mary on the Mantel post, the Be A Heart dolls sold out, though Campbell is hoping to have more in stock soon.

Campbell is also planning the first dress for Mary, which will be the Our Lady of Guadalupe dress. And she has plans for a St. Joseph doll, a baby Jesus doll, a donkey for them to ride on, and more.

The Mary on the Mantel tradition also differs from Elf on the Shelf in that parents do not have to put Mary away once Christmas arrives, Campbell said. In fact, the Mary doll is meant to be a companion all year long.

“We really just think that journeying with Mary is an important way for children to enter into the Advent season,” Campbell said.

“It allows for something fun, and something that parents can do that’s not super complicated, hopefully, and that kids can wake up and be excited for, and be excited about doing things for other people every day,” she said.

“I’m interested to see what comes of it as people use their own imaginations with it.”
A called-off Christmas: Seven ways to make it the best one ever

The 1991 blockbuster Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves might not be worth a revisit this holiday season (not with the kids, anyway) but if you saw it back in the day, Christmas 2020 probably brings to mind Alan Rickman's Sheriff of Nottingham bellowing, "Cancel the kitchen scraps for lepers and orphans, no more merciful beheadings and call off Christmas!"

Virus concerns and public health mandates mean this Christmas is sure to look different than Christmases past. But that doesn't mean it can't be meaningful and memorable ... in a good way.

Family undertakings: This is the year
The silver lining of the COVID-19 shutdowns for many families has been a step back from overscheduling and busyness. Perhaps there's finally time in our schedules for prayerful devotional activities like a Jesse Tree or a Christmas novena, fun and crazy projects for decorations and gifts, Christmas baking with kids and reading chapter books together as a family.

Busting out grandma's cookie recipes can be an opportunity for family togetherness (and growing in patience) and also a good way to deliver some homemade Christmas joy to neighbors and friends whom we might not be seeing in person this year.

Charitable giving
The Sheriff of Nottingham canceled the kitchen scraps, so it's up to us to help. Especially this year, when the livelihoods of so many families have been affected by the shutdowns, many of us can stand to tighten our belts and help out those less fortunate.

Charitable organizations can help put us in touch with needy families who could use our financial help with gifts and Christmas dinners. Those of us who are able can donate our time at a shelter.

Tune in for the "urbi et orbi" blessing
Remember that very moving extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) offered by Pope Francis on March 27? This beautiful traditional blessing is offered every year from the Vatican on Christmas and Easter. The faithful who participate via television or livestream can gain a plenary indulgence (subject to the usual conditions).

Gathering together as a family for this special blessing Christmas Day is a beautiful tradition just begging to be instituted in this unique year.

There's an at-home version for that
There's no getting around the fact that some beloved traditions at our schools and parishes are going to get the axe this year. But that doesn't mean we have to give them up completely. We've been doing a family-at-home Nativity play after Christmas dinner for the last decade and a half.

With dad's T-shirts for costumes and stuffed animals and household objects for props, it has resulted in many memorable moments over the years. (Find a printable version of the script at CatholicAllYear.com.)

Remember that Christmas is a season
In our home we like to observe the traditional — but not necessarily liturgically current — "Twelve Days of Christmas." We've been focused on waiting during Advent: waiting for Christmas treats and Christmas music and Christmas shows.

So we jump in and celebrate with those things on Christmas Day ... and for the next 11 days as well. On each day we sing or listen to carols and enjoy a different type of Christmas cookie and watch a different Christmas movie together as a family.

We observe fun traditions associated with the different saints' days that fall during the week after Christmas. The tree is still up (at least until Epiphany); there are toys in the living room; there are pajama days; there are more songs and prayers and treats and screens than usual. It truly feels like a unique and special season.

Maybe we can't travel this year, but the Wise Men will
We observe Advent as a season of preparation, and we use incremental decorating in our home to help make that principle visible.

We put out the pieces of our Nativity scene slowly over the course of Advent, with at least a nod to historical accuracy. First the stable and the manger on the First Sunday of Advent, then the animals and other "extra" characters the second week, then Mary and Joseph the third week, and then on Christmas Eve we add baby Jesus with great fanfare, and ... we start the Wise Men on their journey.

Our three Wise Men start out on the mantle with the rest of the set on Christmas Eve, but as far away as possible from the other pieces and pointing in the other direction. Each morning between Christmas and Epiphany, the kids look around to see where the Wise Men are stopped. (They only travel at night while watching the star, of course.)

Occasionally, the kids will find that the Wise Men haven't moved overnight. This can happen if a camel gets sick or there's a sandstorm or something. But not to worry, they always catch up and make it through the house and back to the mantle on Epiphany.

Have an eternal perspective
Our Catholic faith gives us an eternal perspective and a long memory. We know that Christmases have been celebrated by the faithful through war and famine and plague and persecution.

The beautiful traditions of the church can give us a framework for a joyful, memorable, noncancelable Christmas.

Tierney is a wife and mother of 10 who, in her spare time, authors the blog Catholic All Year. Her books include The Catholic All Year Compendium. A Little Book About Confession for Children, and O Come, Emmanuel: Advent Reflections on the Jesse Tree for Families.

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CNS PHOTO | CORI FUGERE URBAN, VERMONT CATHOLIC
A glass Nativity set catches the sun in a display area at the home of Shirley Squires of Guilford, Vt., Oct. 23, 2019. Families can decorate for Christmas incrementally. They can wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve, and have the Wise Men "travel" closer to the Nativity set each day until the feast of the Epiphany.
Lange and Sister Thea Bowman, Sister Henriette Delille and Father Augustus Tolton, Bishop Harold Perry and Sister Teresita Weind, holy women and men who made a way out of no way and blazed Cardinal Gregory's path to the Vatican.

While the individual and structural barriers of anti-Black racism persist in our society and continue to circumscribe the moral leadership of our church, Cardinal Gregory's very presence in the College of Cardinals marks an important new beginning.

Cardinal Gregory is a powerful reminder of where the Catholic Church has been and where we must go if racial justice, reconciliation and peace are ever to be achieved: forward ever and backward never.

And for that alone, let the church say amen.

Shannon Dee Williams is the Albert Lepage assistant professor of history at Villanova University. She is completing her first book, Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle. This is the first of her new Catholic News Service column, "The Griot's Cross," where she intends to honor the legacy of Sister Thea Bowman by telling "true truths" about the Catholic Church and its longstanding Black faithful. Follow her on Twitter at @Bikmunhistorian.

**FOOD**

Continued from Page 15

A bipartisan group of senators has announced a new $908 billion coronavirus relief bill that would address some of those needs and support state and local governments struggling to aid people who lost jobs because of the pandemic.

As of Dec. 3, no vote on the measure has been scheduled in either the House of Representatives or the Senate.

Notre Dame's Offenheiser called on Congress to act immediately to stave off massive homelessness in the middle of winter. "This is the time the government should be intervening," he said.

Stenson at Catholic Charities USA urged people with dwindling funds to pay for rent, utilities, health care and other basic needs and to go out to seek food assistance because the networks that local agencies have established since March remain intact.

"If that helps you stay housed, then by all means seek assistance," she said. "Keep your house together.

Meanwhile, Simone plans to continue visiting the Catholic Charities pantry in San Diego even though she recently landed two part-time jobs, working a total of 55 hours a week. She earns $13 an hour, the minimum wage in California.

As for housing, the couple and their kids, ages 6 to 15, have settled in an extended stay hotel. One room costs $450 a week. When Tunnell’s children return from their time with their mother, the cost jumps another $250 a week. "That doesn't even include the cost of having things in storage for $200 a month," Simone said.

The income from the new jobs will allow for shopping at a grocery store to buy a special item or two from time to time, Simone said.

"We can afford something fancy like everyone’s favorite flavor of ramen or a sour dough bread for Drew. Being able to have a little bit of that flexibility is a big help."
tollerancia o ser una buena persona. La amistad comienza con el amor.

"El amor al otro por ser quien es, nos mueve a buscar el mejor para su vida. Sólo en el cultivo de esta forma de relacionarnos haremos posibles la amistad social que no excluye a nadie y la fraternidad abierta a todos," insistió el papa Francisco (No. 94).

La amistad exige lo madurez y la intencionalidad de querer hacer de el bien común una prioridad están cosechando frutos amargos.

¿Cómo salimos de esta situación? ¿Qué podemos hacer? También tomará décadas, quizás generaciones, para sanar y reconstruir las relaciones y las estructuras sociales que hacen posible que el bien común y la comunidad eclesial florezcan. Hay que comenzar de alguna manera. Propongo el camino de la amis-

En su encíclica Fratelli Tutti, Sobre la fraternidad y la amistad social (2020), el papa Francisco nos recordó la importancia de la amistad social. La amistad no se reduce a un simple conjunto de acciones benéficas, nos dice el papa. La amistad exige más que

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Alison Pope es un director asociado de la Diócesis de San Angelo's Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

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Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.

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ERLANDSON

Continued from Page 19

by allegation, but it also demands that allegations not be ignored.

The sin of abuse, the sin of covering up or ignoring the abuse will not disappear with this report. Pope Francis, who himself failed to meet his own standards in places like Chile, knows the challenge. He must continue to press for accountability and transparency without fear or favor, and both laity and clergy must continue to press for reform and renewal.

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