To enable youths to hear God’s call, this year Focus 11, an annual diocesan vocations awareness event, offered almost 600 students the opportunity to learn about vocations to religious life, the priesthood and marriage, and how to discern to which one God is calling them. The two-day event was held Feb. 14-15 at Holy Family Parish in Orlando.

Students made rosaries, participated in a scavenger hunt and listened to vocation stories. And each day began with Mass.

Click on the ORLANDO DIOCESE above for more on this story.

The air was filled with love as married couples, dressed in their Sunday best, clutched hands and filled the pews at Ascension Parish for the annual diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass. Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito greeted couples sitting at the Feb. 11 celebration honoring couples with outstanding marriage records and milestone wedding anniversaries. The event was held as the Church celebrated World Marriage Sunday Feb. 12, also recognizing those selecting the vocation of marriage as part of their life journey.

Click on the PALM BEACH DIOCESE above for more on this story.

Bishop Frank J. Dewane welcomed the women to their annual conference and visited with them throughout the day. He also celebrated the closing Mass. In his welcome address, he took the opportunity to thank the women for all they do.

“It’s the feminine genius that makes many things happen in the Parishes and throughout the Diocese. It’s all of you with your presence, your prayers, your encouragement and we are most grateful for that,” he said. “In the end, it allows others to be ‘the more’ they are called to be.”

Click on the VENICE DIOCESE above for more on this story.
Kids learn God calls everyday people

ORLANDO | In a time when the noise and busyness of the world get in the way of time set aside to grow in faith, hearing God’s call becomes difficult.

To enable youths to hear that call, this year Focus 11, an annual diocesan vocations awareness event, offered almost 600 students the opportunity to learn about vocations to religious life, the priesthood and marriage, and how to discern to which one God is calling them. The two-day event was held Feb. 14-15 at Holy Family Parish in Orlando.

Students made rosaries, participated in a scavenger hunt and listened to vocation stories. Each day began with Mass, reminding the students that Christ accompanies them in this journey and created each person with a particular vocation in mind.

Bishop John Noonan pointed to the question Jesus asked the blind man in Mark 8, “Do you really want to see?” This is the key, explained Bishop Noonan. “It’s the same with us,” he said. “Sometimes we don’t want to see. And Jesus is encouraging us to see the truth.” He referred to the difficulties people have letting go of personal plans in order to follow the truth in which Jesus wants everyone to share and live.

Referring to the story of Noah, he said, “God asked Noah to build an ark. This was a monumental task, but God helped him. Noah was open to God’s help and guidance. Sometimes God asks great things of us and we are afraid.”

Father Josh Swallows, parochial vicar at Annunciation Parish, Altamonte Springs, related his experience. “There was this part of my calling that’s attractive and terrifying,” he said. Through prayer and discernment, he was able to come to terms with it and overcome his fears.

The day was spent unpacking those two precepts: truly wanting truth to be revealed, and then having the trust to surrender and embrace God’s will for our vocation.

The vocation stories of the panel of sisters, priests and seminarrians were as diverse as squares on a patchwork quilt. From Sister Rachel Gosda of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary hearing an inner voice that would not rest, to God helping Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Anthony Aarons find a coconut — leading to his discovery that God answers prayers — each witness was a testament to God’s desire to meet us where we are.

Speaking for the call to marriage, Regina and Dan Boyd shared the story of their courtship and how God revealed his will for them. Their journey led them to a long period of patient waiting, discernment and prayer before they embraced God’s will.

“It’s all very personal for each individual,” said Sister Christine Hernandez of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

“For me, I was working in my car and I felt a voice way above me telling me, ‘You should be nun.’ It was a strong voice, not a scary voice. And I knew that it was something bigger than me, outside of me, because I had never thought of it. I didn’t even know nuns existed.”

Everyone agreed that discerning their vocation required asking God what he wanted for them. Father Benjamin Lehnertz, parochial vicar at Holy Family Parish, said, “When I did, I started asking, ‘Lord, help me to want what you want. Help me to desire what you desire. Help me to choose what you choose.’ And that is when I started to be drawn with a desire to the priesthood.”

Daniel, a sixth-grade student from Holy Family Catholic School, said what most impressed him was, “what they (religious) actually go through to achieve this beautiful thing, and that they can do this all through trusting in God.”

His takeaway was, “God will do anything for you, from really big things to small things, like just giving you a coconut. It helps me listen more to God instead of what I want to do. I learned to pray to God before I make a big decision that might impact peoples’ lives.”

In closing, Father Swallows said, “We are all called to follow Jesus in a radical way, no matter what your vocation is. How do you want to give your life?”

Above, Sister of St. Joseph Kathleen Power, associate vocations director, shares her story with Catholic school students at Focus 11. At right, students from St. John Vianney Catholic School ask questions to a panel of religious brothers, sisters, and priests at Focus 11.
Lenten music helps souls to soar

GLENDA MEEKINS
of the Florida Catholic staff

ORLANDO | During the Lenten season, the Church offers the faithful many ways to remember and reflect upon the passion of Christ. Stations of the Cross invite parishioners to walk the Way of the Cross with Jesus, and Scripture readings place the people among the disciples and crowds on Good Friday. Several musical presentations scheduled during Lent will offer a unique and beautiful way to encounter Christ through music.

Charles Thatcher, director of music for the Diocese of Orlando and St. James Cathedral in Orlando, will direct “Music and Meditations on the Passion of Christ,” a moving prayer service set to Lenten music, presented March 24 by the St. James Cathedral Schola Cantorum. Musicians that will be presented are traditionally associated with the Lenten season, especially the liturgy of Good Friday. The central piece will be a sung version of the Passion according to St. John by the 16th-century Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria.

“I think that music is an important part of what it means to be human,” Thatcher said. “Music communicates on a level beyond speech, it has the capacity to give expression to profound feelings and emotions, it engages the whole person, and it can express identity as well as bring about unity among people who are gathered together. These are some of the reasons that music is part of the very fabric of liturgical prayer rather than something which simply happens in the background, a decoration, as it were.

“So many of the texts of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours are psalms, hymns and inspired songs,” he explained. “It is part of the nature of all of these texts to be sung, and singing opens up depths of expression and meaning which mere recitation cannot. As we know from Scripture, we follow the example of Jesus when we sing to the Lord. What would Jesus do? He would sing.”

One ancient service that will be presented this Lent is the “Tenebrae” (Latin for “shadows and darkness”) performed by the choir of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe, 8300 Vineland Ave., Orlando.

“Music ... engages the whole person, and it can express identity as well as bring about unity among people who are gathered together.”

— Charles Thatcher

Music in the liturgy remains the same — to honor, worship and glorify the Lord. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship describes the transformative power of music in the document “Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship”: “A cry from deep within our being: music is a way for God to lead us to the realm of higher things.”

William Picher, director of the Basilica Choir, agrees. “Music gives flight to texts and helps souls to soar toward the divine,” he said. “Liturgy without music is certainly valid. However, music well executed brings everything to the next level. Music, if it is well prepared and presented, can bring us a glimpse of heaven like no other art form.”

Charles Thatcher, director of music for the Diocese of Orlando and St. James Cathedral, directs the choir at the diocesan Chrism Mass. (FC FILE PHOTO)

Members of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe will perform the Tenebrae April 7 (FC FILE PHOTO)

UPCOMING EVENTS

"Music and Meditations on the Passion of Christ," Friday, March 24, 7:30 p.m., St. James Cathedral, 215 N. Orange Ave., Orlando.

Tenebrae with the Basilica Choir, Friday, April 7, 7:30 p.m., Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe, 8300 Vineland Ave., Orlando.

‘Music ... engages the whole person, and it can express identity as well as bring about unity among people who are gathered together.’

— Charles Thatcher
Celebrating a new beginning this Lent

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In the beginning of this month, many of us were all about the Super Bowl — which team we hoped would win and where our allegiance would take us for future Super Bowls. As Catholic Schools Week was celebrated just before the Super Bowl, there was a lot of chatter about the Super Bowl as I visited different schools throughout the diocese. My visits always began with the celebration of Mass. At one of the schools, my question to the students was, “What is going to happen on Sunday?” I expected the reply to be the Super Bowl. Instead, a faith-filled young lady said, “We are going to Mass.”

I admit that I was so impressed with this reply. And, for a brief moment, I thought how trite it was, so focused was I on a Super Bowl response. This is the perspective that God gives us through the prophet, Isaiah: No matter what is happening in your life, you are my priority. I will never forget you. This is exactly what this young student was saying to me. No matter what is happening in her life, God is her priority. She would not forget God because there is some other celebration to be had. She is following God’s law.

A few weeks ago, I spoke with you about the beautiful invitation from God to follow his law. Like the student I mentioned earlier, she prioritized her intentions as best as possible. She gave us an example of making a firm purpose to use the day well for the intention of living as best we can in conformity with God’s Law. How do we do this?

Anticipate what tasks, transactions and occasions for serving God we may meet today. To what temptations will we be exposed, such as anger, self-centered love or some other difficulties? Carefully prepare ourselves to defend against the temptation of whatever might hinder us from authentically following God’s law.

The season of Lent begins March 1. Pope Francis says, “Let us become a new beginning, a path leading to the certain goal of Easter, Christ’s victory over death. This season urgently calls us to conversion. Christians are asked to return to God ‘with all their hearts’ (Jl 2:12), to refuse to yield to mediocrity and to grow in friendship with the Lord.” During the season of Lent, let us make a holy resolution to grow in the love Jesus exemplified. St. Francis de Sales teaches us that to prepare ourselves to put this resolution into practice, we must ask our Savior to help us make the best use of the means available to us to grow in holy love and serve him.

Pope Francis teaches us, “Lent is the favorable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the Sacraments and in our neighbors’ needs.” Let us begin our Lenten journey by reading the book of the Old Testament daily, as Pope Francis does. As we approach the beginning of this Lenten season, “may the Holy Spirit give us the grace to respond to Jesus’ invitation to conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God’s love, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need.”

All of our efforts to seek first the kingdom of God yield a winning team for God all the days of our life. 

The Catholic Relief Services’ Rice Bowl campaign opens. The Catholic Relief Services’ Rice Bowl campaign is global in its reach, bringing tangible goods and support to millions of people throughout the world. Twenty-five percent of the money collected will go to support CRS humanitarian and development programs overseas, providing life-saving assistance to vulnerable and communities.

CRS Rice Bowl materials are available in print, on the web and available in English and Spanish. Call 1-800-222-0025 or visit crsricebowl.org to place an order. Follow CRS Rice Bowl on Twitter @CRSRiceBowl, like CRS Rice Bowl on Facebook and download the app from the iTunes or Google Play stores.

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Appointments

Bishop John Noonan has made the following appointment:

Effective Feb. 13:
Father Fernando Gil as vicar of Hispanic Ministry for Holy Redeemer and St. Rose of Lima parishes. Father Gil will continue to serve as judicial vicar of the Tribunal.

Fundraising breakfast to be held

Bishop John Noonan invites all to attend “Achieving Their Dreams,” a fundraising breakfast for Bishop Grady Villas, Friday, March 31, 8 a.m., at the Doubletree by Hilton Orlando, 60 S. Ivanhoe Blvd., Orlando.

Participants can make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities in Central Florida by attending this free fundraising breakfast. They will get to know the people served by Bishop Grady Villas by participating in an inspirational program where the clients share their accomplishments and dreams. Support will help persons with disabilities to use their God-given gifts to achieve greater independence, physical and emotional well-being, and spiritual growth. All proceeds benefit Bishop Grady Villas.

Send a comment or more info have a story suggestion? Leave your feedback on www.thefloridacatholic.org; click reader feedback button on left of screen.
Ministry center blessed

GLENDA MEEKINS of the Florida Catholic staff

WINTER PARK | There was standing room only Feb. 5 at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Winter Park as Bishop John Noonan processed into the church to celebrate Mass, bless the new ministry center and inaugurate festivities for the parish's 50th anniversary kickoff.

Bishop Noonan recalled the early beginnings of the parish in 1967, when Masses were celebrated in San Pedro Center's "laundry room." Later the community moved to a Baptist church and even an elementary school until the first building, referred to as "the dome," was built in 1969.

When the new church was built in 1980, the dome became a center for social activities, and the social hall was converted to a childcare center. Throughout the years, the parish continued to grow, adding on another building with classrooms and a large meeting room.

With almost 50 active ministries, the parish has expanded to roughly 3,000 families, a far cry from the first building, which sat 200 people. Greeter Miguel Vargas has been a parishioner for 19 years. His daughter was baptized in the dome. "This is wonderful," he said. "The growth is noticeable. I hope that the new building brings an increase in people." Father Derk Schudde, pastor, explained, "We no longer had enough space to accommodate all the meetings and activities of a large, busy parish. The ministry center will allow us to fulfill this need."

The new building has six large rooms, each accommodating 50-75 people. Three of the rooms have moveable walls to allow various configurations for even larger groups and meetings.

The center is two stories and will also house staff offices and a reception area. "By combining all our parish offices together upstairs, I hope we will be a more cohesive and effective team," Father Schudde said. "With a centralized and highly visible space, the new center will become the hub of ministry and activity for the parish. And this will give us the flexibility to add more ministries to serve the people in this area." In his homily, Bishop Noonan spoke of how the parish's nameakes, Sts. Peter and Paul, were flawed human beings who "loved the Lord" and were committed to ministry. "Today, we are going to bless your ministry center — a building that is going to inspire us too, because the building is only symbolic."

"Ministry is faith in action," he continued. "We are called to be living symbols like Peter and Paul. We are called to be dedicated to the Lord: a city on a hill, a point of direction. It is not enough to say, 'I am a Christian. I am a Catholic.' What do I do when I go out the door?"

He added, as St. Paul says in the Gospel, "It is the spiritual power of God that enables us to go out and proclaim." Both Bishop Noonan and Father Schudde had a bounce in their step as they entered the ministry center and sprinkled each office and meeting space with holy water with effusive joy. Boy Scouts from resident Troop 613, then led tours of the building.

Looking forward, the parish has a year full of activities to mark its 50th anniversary — from a beautification project and parish picnic to 50 Hours of Prayer — "to remind us of how we have become such a beautiful, faithful and special parish," Father Schudde said.

Bishop Noonan’s final prayer gave insight to the road ahead, which has been paved through great labor and love, "May this building be a source of strength. May it be the city on a hill to guide us on our journey, our journey as St. Paul tells us, to the Lord, that we too can bring Christ to the world, for we are the disciples. We are the messengers."
Laura Dodson
Florida Catholic reporter

Melbourne | Two priests of the Diocese of Orlando — Father Eamon Tobin, pastor of Ascension Parish in Melbourne, and Father David Scotchie, pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish in Oviedo — are passionate about proclaiming the word of God, both in their parishes and to people around the world. Both pastors have recently published books on prayer and are touching lives with their writing.

Father David Scotchie, left, pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish in Oviedo, (courtesy) and Father Eamon Tobin, pastor of Ascension Parish in Melbourne, each wrote newly published books on prayer.

(Tam Stimpson | FC)

Father Eamon Tobin "I have no background in writing or English grammar," said Father Tobin. "I started writing booklets for RCIA, and Sister of Notre Dame Margaret Gifford, who was at St. Joseph's Parish in Winter Haven encouraged me to send the booklets to Ligouri. They accepted two: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in 1983."


The book was revised and re-released this January from Dynamic Catholic with two new chapters and a new title: "13 Powerful Ways to Pray." It is divided into two sections: "Four Keys to an Effective Prayer Life" and "Thirteen Forms of Prayer."

"People can be frequent 'pray-ers,' but at the same time fearful of God, judging others, with little or no compassion for the poor, so prayer doesn't impact their lives," Father Scotchie explained. "I truly believe that these words should be more widely shared. "I'm Yours." Is a prayer of surrender intended for people in overwhelming situations, such as divorce, death, addiction."

"The book is a presentation and explanation of one simple prayer of six words that a person can remember: 'I Can't. You Can. I'm Yours,'" explained Father Scotchie. "It's specific to those in need of hope, embraces the grieving, ill and despairing. The prayer admits. I can't handle this God, I know you can. I trust you.' It renews that relationship with God."

Ordained in 1993, Father Scotchie explained that people see his collar and expect him to offer to pray with them.

"I've never had the words for spontaneous prayer and I felt un-comfortable praying for people publicly," Father Scotchie explained. "I've learned over the years to pray with another on the spot. When we pray with someone, we do what Jesus did and invoke God's power. Jesus didn't say, 'I'll pray for you'; he did it. As the priesthood of people, we do what Jesus did. It changes the relationship from sympathy to giving witness to God in our lives."

Thus, his latest book, "Can I Say a Prayer with You? A Beginner's Guide to Praying with Someone," seeks to overcome the reluctance or fear of spontaneous prayer and provide the training and desire to help others become prayer for and with others. Susan D'Aulerio is a parishioner at Most Precious Blood Parish who read both of Father Scotchie's books and took action.

"I was at Dunkin' Donuts and overheard a young man phoning various social service agencies," D'Aulerio explained. "His wife kept going outside crying. She told me that they were living in their car and trying to get some help. I remembered from reading Father David's book that we should pray on the spot. I asked them if I could pray for and with them. I have never been comfortable praying out loud for someone, especially strangers in the middle of Dunkin' Donuts. It was truly the words of the Holy Spirit that flowed from my lips, I held their hands, we embraces. I bought them something to eat and explained the concept of 'I can't. You can. I'm yours.' Both of Father David's books have impacted my life, which in turn impacted this young couple's life as well."

"I encourage people to write their own books," Father Scotchie said. "You don't have to be a published author. Everyone has a story and why not share it? It's my message."

OBITUARY

Sister Divilly, founding member of Divine Mercy School

Staff Report

Merritt Island | Sister of Mercy Mary Divilly, a founding member of Merritt Island's Divine Mercy Parish and one of the first teachers in school, died Jan. 27 in County Galway, Ireland. She was 74.

Sister Divilly came to Florida from Ireland in 1964 with three other sisters to teach at the newly opened Divine Mercy School. At first, she taught in a small aircraft hanger until the school building was completed in 1966.

"There was a time when she was principal in the morning and taught kindergarten in the afternoon and vice versa," said Julie Harris, interim school principal. "She is the heart and soul of the school. We exist because of her. She built the school from the ground up."

Sister Divilly was a "hand-grabber," Harris said. When she spoke to you she would grab your hand. "I felt such a presence with her. There was something in that hand squeeze. She was listening to me and talking to me."

The steely, determined nun went with the flow but was not afraid to stand up for the right thing. "She knew her own mind and stood by her convictions," Harris said. But she wasn't an attention-seeker. "She was quietly wonderful."

Always quick to tell a joke, see the humor in just about any situation and awesome at jump rope, Sister Divilly also taught second grade for a number of years. She worked hard and played with her students.

"She had a loving teaching style," remembered Harris. "Her expectations and standards were high, and she was loving and respectful of all of her students. They wanted to please her and make her proud of them. That was definitely her gift with the little ones."

Although she loved all of her students, "I think she loved the naughty ones more," Harris said. After retiring from the classroom, Sister Divilly was Divine Mercy Parish's administrative assistant for 12 years.

"Sister Mary was the glue that held the parish together. She was always present and available, and always with a smile," said Father Michael Farrell, retired pastor of Divine Mercy who knew Sister Divilly for 46 years.

She also could accept everyone as they were. "That is a gift," he added.

In her parish role, Sister Divilly worked with, among many others, the homeless and the elderly.

"She had a tremendous memory. She remembered things from 50 years ago. She met people and had a great way of remembering them and being at home with them," Father Farrell said.

Sister Divilly retired from the parish in April 2016. She moved back home to Ireland to be closer to her family, according to Father Farrell.

"I was her good friend and she was my good friend too," he said. "I will miss her."
Betrothal ceremony sets sacramental nature of marriage

ANNE DIBERNARDO

MIA MI | Matthew Mangiaracina and Lia Del Guercio surprised family and friends when it was announced the couple’s engagement party would be preceded by a betrothal ceremony. But the millennial couple figured it would give them a spiritual edge in preparing for their subsequent marriage in the Catholic Church.

The revived Rite of Betrothal has its roots in St. John Paul II’s papacy, in 1992, when in 1992 he initiated revisions to the code of Canon Law. Galda has made it difficult for people to seek help. We want to help people understand how mental health affects physical health. We also look beyond the immediate concern and find the root causes of a problem that are often the result of a traumatic episode.”

Prior to her position with Catholic Charities, Galda conducted two trainings in Florida following the Pulse nightclub shooting in June. She led “Coping With Tragedy and Grief: Ministering in the Wake of Crisis” Aug. 18, 2016, at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Winter Park. She also led a similar training session in August in Tampa at a statewide Catholic Charities conference.

Galda will work with United Way of Brevard County and the Space Coast Health Foundation to determine which services are most critical. She will also meet with Brevard pastors and parish leaders to find out what their needs are and what will be most beneficial.

Calendar available for Lent

During Lent, which begins March 1, Ash Wednesday, Catholics remember the call to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Catholic Charities of Central Florida has prepared the 2017 “40 Ways to Mercy” calendar. This resource has practical, spiritual and inspiring ways to share God’s love through prayer, service and almsgiving. The calendar also includes resources to help guide you through Lent, including a gratitude prayer and weekly catechesis readings. Each day’s suggested act of mercy will offer the opportunity to walk with a brother or sister in need. Christ has assured his people that whatever they do the least of our brothers and sisters, they do for him (Mt 25:40).

Catholic Charities invites participants to share their witness to mercy on social media with the hashtag: #MercyCFL. To download the calendar, visit www.flcc.org/40-ways.
**DIOCESAN EVENTS**

**CRS Operation Rice Bowl**, begins March 1. Catholic Relief Services’ Lenten program for families and parishes. Administered through the Office of Advocacy and Justice. A simple cardboard rice bowl inspires prayers, fasting and giving to provide meals and hope to millions around the world. For materials: Office of Advocacy and Justice, 407-658-1818, ext. 1086; advocacyjustice@cflic.org.

**40 Days For Life**, March 1-April 11. A nine-week campaign of prayer, fasting, and public activism, repentance, and bringing an end to abortion. For information on vigils and to sign up for a time to pray and witness: https://40daysforlife.campaigns-or.org or Office of Advocacy and Justice, 407-658-1818, ext. 1086.

**E3 Youth Ministry**, March 11, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Nativity Parish, 3255 N. County Road 427, Orlando. Training to enliven, equip and empower adults to serve youths. Cost $35, includes lunch and $15, includes lunch. Offered by diocesan Secretariat for Family and Life. 407-246-4910, sfl@orlandodiocese.org.

**Catholic Days at the Capitol**, April 4-7, Tallahassee. Every year, the Office of Advocacy and Justice joins hundreds of Catholics from around the state for three days of learning, advocating, networking and praying. advocacyjustice@cflic.org. 407-658-1818, ext. 1086.

**Vocation services workshop**: Saturday, April 22, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Mary Magdalen Parish Life Center, 710 Spring Lake Road, Altamonte Springs. Learn about the best practices and pitfalls of vocation awareness. Featuring a culture of vocations. Features priests, religious men and women, parish leaders and consultants for youth ministers, and young men and women discerning calls. Darcy Dinich, 407-246-4875.

**“Flat Days” for young women**: Friday, April 28-Sunday, April 30, San Pedro Center, 2400 Dike Road, Winter Park. Sacred, informative and joyous weekend for women 13-12 to discuss their future vocations whether marriage, religious life or single life. The weekend will consist of their future vocations whether marriage, religious life or single life. The weekend will consist of daily Mass, informative talks, quiet contemplation as well as enjoyable and fun activities. Cost: $15; includes meals, materials and accommodations. Scholarships available. San Pedro Center. Power: 407-246-4928, kpower@orlandodiocese.org.

**COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**2017 Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)** Multimedia Youth Arts Contest: Deadline: March 1. Open to all diocesan youths in middle school and high school (grades seven-12) to learn about causes of poverty and Catholic response. Theme: “Being witness to God’s Common Home.” Sponsored by the CCHD and RCL Benzinger. All entries are due March 1; entries will be judged by the office of Advocacy and Justice, 1819 N. Semoran Blvd., Orlando FL 32807 by March 1 to be able to judge and contest prize and money. 407-658-1818, ext. 1086; advocacyjustice@cflic.org.

**Local business open house**: Feb. 25, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Mary Magdalen Parish Life Center, 710 Spring Lake Road, Altamonte Springs. Shop over 50 businesses, hear a Mass celebrated at 10:30 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. by DeGuisepe Funeral Homes. Reservations for presentation by Sandy, 407-325-4390, CCWSM@MaryMagdalen.org. Sponsor: St. John Paul II Foundation of Catholic Women.


**Seminar on wills and estate planning**: Wednesday, March 15, noon-3 p.m., St. Mary Magdalen Parish, 861 Maillain Ave., Altamonte Springs. Learn the best practices and pitfalls of estate planning during a culture of vocations. Features priests, religious men and women, parish leaders and consultants for youth ministers, and young men and women discerning calls. Darcy Dinich, 407-246-4875.

**“Patron of Reflection” for women**: Friday, March 17, 1-3:30 p.m., St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 5323 E. County Road 462, Wildwood. Refreshments provided. R.S.V.P. by noon, March 10, to parish office, 352-330-0220.

**“Music and Meditations on the Passion of Christ”**: Friday, March 17, 7:30-10 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi School, 1311 W. Trinity Road, Spring Hill. Featuring the high energies of a Maundy Thursday celebration of Mass each Thursday. Each program is discussion material. Free, but donations encouraged.

**“Jesus is Lord Day”**: Saturday, March 18, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Hyatt Regency Orlando, 9801 International Drive, Orlando. Training, resources and tool for parish leadership and those interested in making stewardship their way of life. Presentation available in both English and Spanish. Visit www.cfloc.org and click on Statewide Stewardship Day banner.

**MASSES/PRAYER SESSIONS**

**Talèz prayer service**: Tuesday, March 14, 7-8:30 p.m., Mary, Mother of God Church, San Pedro Center. An American Sign Language interpreter will be provided to sign. Enrich your Lenten experience with this beautiful candlelit, contemplative prayer. Requested donation: $5.

**Interpreted Mass for the deaf**: Sundays, 11 a.m., Mass. Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 1014 N. Halfax Ave., Daytona Beach. An American Sign Language interpreter will be provided to sign. Meet in the cafe, 10:15 a.m. for a “deaf” coffee chat with pastries. 386-255-0433.

**American Federation Pueri Cantores Orlando Choral Festival and Mass for Mixd Voice and Treble Choirs**: Saturday, April 22, 4:30 p.m., St. Peter and Paul Parish, 300 Old Howell Branch Road, Winter Park. For more information please call 407-393-8926 or www.sfoc.org. Join together who in league one in another choir to sing liturgical music from Gregorian chants to 21st century

**RETRAITS/DAYS OF REFLECTION**

San Pedro Center retreats:

**FYI**

To submit parish, school or diocesan related event information to be considered for publication in the Diocese of Orlando newspaper and/or on the website, please visit www.orlandodiocese.org/our-diocese/events-calendar/ and click “Suggest Event.” Submissions should be received 6-7 weeks prior to the date of the event. Not all submissions will be printed due to space limitations and other considerations.

**A7 YOUR ORLANDO COMMUNITY**

**Florida Catholic** Feb. 24-March 9, 2017

**EVENTS WITH BISHOP NOOONAN**

**“Achieving Their Dreams” fundraising breakfast**: Friday, March 31, 8 a.m.-noon, Doubletree by Hilton Orlando Airport, 2500 Mahaffey Blvd., Orlando. Your support will help physicians with disabilities to use their God-given gifts to achieve greater independence, physical and emotional well-being and spiritual growth. Proceed benefits Bishop Grady Villas. Reservations required. R.S.V.P. to Laurel Hayward: 407-892-6078, ext. 201.

**Chirsm Mass**: Wednesday, April 12, 8:30-9:30 a.m., St. James Cathedral, 215 W. Church St., Orlando. Bishop John Noonan will bless the holy oils: sacred chrism, oil of catechumens and oil of the anointed. Also, funds raised during this Mass will also go to support the Orlando Family Assistance League.

**Consented by His Love … Impelled to Serve” retreat**: Friday, Feb. 24-Saturday, Feb. 25, Miami. For single women 18-35 who would like to seriously discern if God is calling them to religious life. Sister Faustina, miaimicomenandsee@outlook.com. For information and to sign up visit: www.carmelitesistersodc.com.

**Carriehayward@bishopsgradyvillas.org. 407-892-6078, ext. 201.**

**Volunteers Needed**

**Sign language interpreters**: Parishes throughout the diocese need volunteer American Sign Language interpreters to help deaf or hearing-impaired individuals fully participate in the celebration of Mass each week. Position requires yearlong commitment to serving one Saturday or Sunday Mass per week. Must be 18 and older. Background screening. Must be 18 and older. www.cflic.org/volunteer.

**Naples Diocesan Volunteer/Americo Program based at Hope Community Center, Apopka**, is recruiting additional volunteers for the Notre Dame Americo Corps. Opportunities still open to serve community while gaining job skills, earning a stipend of $8,265, an education award of $2,890, as well as health insurance. Service sites in Apopka and Ocoee provide teaching assistants, serving survivors of domestic violence, working at a credit union, being an educator around farmerwork rights, providing residential services in low-income neighborhoods and serving in other social justice-related positions. Background screening is required as helpful but not necessary. Service term begins January 1, 2018 and runs through August 2018. Must be 18 years of age; requires 35-40 hours a week. Accepting applications through Jan. 31, 2018. For more information, call 407-484-7736, lfiitel@cfcc-or.org. Hope Community Center, 407-880-4673, ext. 2022, or visit www.hopeva.org and click on Apopka.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Catholic Charities food pantry needs donations. Participating in the Celebration of the Month of March to keep shelves stocked and the community fed. Ottawa’s donation is canned chicken. Semoran food pantry, 1771 N. Semoran Blvd., Orlando. Donations can be brought to the following locations Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 407-658-1818, ext. 2335.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
OSCEOLA COUNTY

Virtual pilgrimage takes parishioners to Lourdes

A group of 250 parishioners from St. Rose of Lima Parish in Poinciana and Holy Redeemer Parish in Kissimmee went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France, Feb. 12 even after leaving their pets. Thanks to technology and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality North American Volunteers, parishioners were able to experience a virtual pilgrimage that included a 90-minute experience enabling them to draw near to God in the company of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette.

Through projected images and music similar to what would be heard at the pilgrimage site, parishioners were transported to Lourdes from their own seat, minus the jet lag. Participants were able to touch a piece of the grotto rock and water from the grotto spring, received a Eucharistic blessing and participated in a candlelight rosary.

Granting by the Apostle of the See, seminarians were even able to get a plenary indulgence as they would on an actual pilgrimage.

More than 115,000 pilgrims have experienced the Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage since it began in 2004. St. Rose of Lima parishioner Jacqueline De Fazio was born 20 minutes from Lourdes and attended Catholic school there. De Fazio, who has been to Lourdes several times, said attending the virtual pilgrimage “was like going back to my childhood. It shows the beauty of the mountains, the valley and the altar. And when you touch the rock, it reminds me of the times you felt peaceful and it is very serene.”

Lynn Carter, also from St. Rose of Lima, has helped bring the pilgrimage to the two parishes for the past three years. “It was one of the most spiritual events in my life,” said Carter, who has also been to Lourdes. “What they brought to us and to people who can’t go is Lourdes. I felt closer to the Blessed Mother. It made an impact on my life.”

POLK COUNTY

Council supports seminarians with chocolate

The Council of Catholic Women at St. John Neumann Parish in Lakeland has been holding its annual chocolate festival for more than 20 years. The event was made even sweeter with the knowledge that the money raised went to support the seminarians at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach. Barbara Speziani, a member of the council at St. John Neumann for the past 14 years, said, “We take care of the seminarians because without them we don’t have a tomorrow.” She and the members of the council adopt a seminarian each year. They pray for them, offer Masses on their behalf, and send care packages for birthdays and holidays as a reminder to each seminarian of how much they are thought of and appreciated.

The annual event offers chocolate of every kind, from the traditional cakes, cookies and brownies to truffles and pretzels covered in chocolate. “If you can cover it in chocolate, we’ll take it,” Speziani said. This year’s hit was a Snickers salad, she said. The concoction of Snickers, pineapples, apple slices and whipped topping “was wonderful. The kids were ecstatic.” The council raised over $400 so far and donations are still coming in for the cause.

Students live out corporal works of mercy

Nearly 20 teens from Resurrection Parish in Lakeland, ages 12 to 17, participated in the Heart at Home Service Retreat Feb. 1, a day of service and reflection. Aimed at teens with a passion for service, the youths traveled with adults to local agencies and residences to make a difference and shine Christ’s light and love on those in need. The teens served clients ages 71 to 96 from Volunteers in Service to the Elderly (VISTE) and St. John Neumann Parish’s public housing development for the elderly. From raking leaves, helping with projects such as cleaning and painting homes, to packing lunches and defrosting freezers, and filling out paperwork, the teens made a conscious effort to live out the corporal works of mercy and be the face of Christ in the world.

After the projects were completed, they reflected on what it means to put another person first. Kai, a 14-year-old freshman on the retreat, said, “We live in a world where there’s a lot of hate and bad things happening. Today was about love and good.”

This was the sixth annual Heart at Home Service Retreat. Youth ministry director Maggie Gowan explained that each year the teens attend Catholic Heart Workcamp in the summer, a mission that enables living out one’s faith through service to the neglected, brokenhearted and marginalized throughout the United States and abroad. McGowan said she her youth ministry likes to take the days throughout the year to serve at home as well.

“We are all called to be disciples of Christ, which means living out his love every day,” she said. “On days like this, we have given and received his love. When we serve God’s people on a day like this, it’s like being conscious of being a servant in our day-to-day lives. These teens are now challenged to go out and live God’s love in their lives.”

VOLUSIA COUNTY

Hi-5 for feeding the hungry

The human services ministry at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in New Smyrna Beach has been serving those in need for more than 20 years. Most recently, close to 70 volunteers spent a few hours packing 3,500 pounds of lunch snacks for children in five elementary schools throughout the county. The program, called Hi-5, provides a snack of milk, macaroni and cheese, and other items for students who are at risk of suffering hunger over the weekends when free school lunches are not available.

The meals packed will sustain the children for weekends from the end of January through the conclusion of the school year. Children in this program must qualify for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 70 percent of the children in Volusia County fall under that category.

Elise Woz and her husband have been a part of the ministry for the past eight years. “We got involved when we heard the statistics,” Woz said. “There’s an elementary school near where we live. We heard there were quite a large number at that school who were of families that didn’t have enough money to put food on the table. We were frankly so taken aback and shocked we felt we had to do something to help. Being able to pack the lunches brought it to home that these lunch packs will be put in their backpacks and will help them not be hungry, and they’ll be alert enough to learn. This is the least we could do.”

ORANGE COUNTY

Ministry brings statue to local parish

The Haitian ministry of Our Lady of Fatima Mission in Orlando was instrumental in bringing the statue of a Pilgrim Virgin, Our Lady of the Cap-de-la-Madeleine, from Quebec to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Apopka. More than 500 people journeyed to see the statue brought by Father Wedner Béard.

Marie Delouis, a member of Our Lady of Fatima Mission, helped coordinate the event. She felt this was an opportunity for Mary to come to those who could not go the Our Lady of the Cape Shrine in Quebec, the largest North American pilgrimage site to the Virgin Mary.

“I was真的 important for me to come, and also to stay focused spiritually,” she said. “It is a provision for you to keep going. Especially in the Haitian community right now where people are frustrated and scared. This is the prayer that they need to know that it is OK. Mama is here.”

This pilgrimage enabled them to feel the comfort and presence of Our Lady. Pilgrims first met at Our Lady of Fatima Mission to hear talks and reflections on Our Lady. Delouis spoke of the Visitation of Mary and the blessedness of Mary herself coming to visit, and how she taught us to serve with humility. She reminded participants that Elizabeth said, “What have I done that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Father Gaëtan Bourqui, diocesan director of Haitian Ministry, welcomed parishioners and spoke along with Father Béard, who shared the history and story of Our Lady of the Cap-de-la-Madeleine and the various miracles attributed to her. After the talks, pilgrims traveled to St. Francis of Assisi Parish where several altars were set up. After Mass, the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of Our Lady processed from altar to altar, stopping at each one to offer prayers and song. There were altars for the sick, for youth, for families and many others. Each altar was adorned with Scripture and pertinent items such as a wheelchair or a photo of the Holy Family.

Delouis said, “Mary reminds us to be humble. That it’s not about you; it’s about God. The glory is for God any time and every time. When you remind people of the miracles, of what God did… that reminds them that it could happen for me too.”
The air was filled with love as married couples, dressed in their Sunday best, clutched hands and filled the pews at Ascension Parish for the annual diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass.

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito greeted the men and women sitting with family members and friends at the Feb. 11 celebration honoring couples with outstanding marriage records and milestone wedding anniversaries. The event was held as the Church celebrated World Marriage Sunday Feb. 12, also recognizing those selecting the vocation of marriage as part of their life journey.

“What a day it is to be here with you to celebrate,” Bishop Barbarito said as he thanked the couples for attending, and then praised them for being dedicated to their marriage vocation and sticking it out through thick and thin.

“You are truly a gift to the Church, to your families and to our society,” he said. “Your commitment of love is what life is all about, and I thank you.”

Traditionally, the Diocese of Palm Beach has two Wedding Anniversary Masses in February, the month of love. This year, the second diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass was celebrated Feb. 18 at host St. Lucie Parish in Port St. Lucie. Both events are organized by the diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life. A reception follows the Masses through the generosity of the host parish.

The Florida Catholic covered the event in the southern part of the diocese, and in total, 94 couples from 22 parishes attended. Seven couples celebrated 25 years of marriage, two couples celebrated their 40th anniversary and 21 were marking 50 years of marriage. A total of 35 couples on hand were marking 51 to 60 years. And a grand total of 23 couples at the Mass celebrated 61 or more years.

A highlight of the annual event is the “renewal of commitment,” when couples renew wedding vows, pledging to remain faithful and true witnesses of love and dedication.

Millie Quillard, a parishioner of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Boca Raton, was on hand with her husband, Robert, in a front pew. “We are celebrating 68 years,” she said as she clutched her husband’s arm. When asked about any key to a long happy marriage, she gave three. “Trust, respect and, of course, love,” she said. “He has a good sense of humor. I call him Mr. Wonderful.”

Carlo, 91, and Virginia LaManna, 90, of Holy Spirit Parish in Lantana, sat in a front row. They were married April 15, 1946, in Chicago and represent 71 years of marriage. They have 11 children, 50 grandchildren and at last count 21 great-grandchildren. Several of their family members attended the Mass in their honor.

“They are all about the Catholic Church,” said Rock LaManna, fifth child of the family, sharing his parents’ well-known secret to a long and happy marriage.

He pointed out that his parents have attended daily Mass and supported several parishes over the years, and that family and family events are at the center for them. “We have a big family, and the children are still coming,” he said with a smile.

Bishop Barbarito concluded the Mass by giving thanks to all attending, and also thanking parish leaders and diocesan officials who organized the event. Then he gave one last praise to the married couples. “You make a tremendous difference in our world today,” he said. “May God bless you. We all congratulate you.”
The call of Ash Wednesday

On Wednesday, March 1, the season of Lent begins as we are marked with ashes upon our foreheads. Ash Wednesday is perhaps one of the best-known days of the Church’s liturgical year. Churches around the world are filled with so many people who desire the mark of the cross from this day. Why is this? One may wonder why the ashes are so sought after by so many people of deep faith in the Catholic Church as well as by those who seem to be on the periphery of Church life, perhaps only coming to church on rare occasions.

Ashes are not a sacrament. There is no obligation to receive them. One does not have to be in a state of grace to receive them. While only a priest or deacon may bless them, ashes may be brought by one person assisting the priest and deacon. Ashes are in themselves nothing but the remains of burnt palm and truly can be considered as waste. Yet, there seems to be a call from the ashes to all people no matter how great or lesser their practice of the faith may be. It very well may be that the minimalism of what ashes are is what attracts everyone to them and why their symbolism speaks so loudly.

Everyone is entitled to receive ashes. They are a sign, no matter how minimal it may personally be, of faith. While the symbolism of ashes is very minimalistic, we cannot deal about the season of Lent, the mark of ashes identifies those wearing them as members of the Catholic Church. It seems, then, that so many come on Ash Wednesday insofar as it is a sign that many seek faith and spiritual values in their lives and identify with the Church at the place where these can be found. It would be a discouraging day if attendance at church on Ash Wednesday and the desire to receive ashes became minimal. It would be a sad day if those who receive ashes were to wipe them from their foreheads after leaving the church so as not to be identified as Catholic. Ashes mark us all as equal before God and as worthy of his love and mercy no matter who we may be — from the pope himself to the person who only comes to church on Ash Wednesday. To be denied ashes is to be denied a call — a call on Ash Wednesday. To be denied a call — a call from the pope himself to the faithful no matter who we may be — from the pope himself to the person who only comes to church on Ash Wednesday. To be denied ashes is to be denied a call — a call from the Lord even though we are very imperfect and sinners. As Jesus so mercifully says, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Lk 5:32). Whoever receives ashes, receives not an award of spiritual distinction, but a mark of being a sinner and in need of God’s mercy. That is why ashes are so much sought after whether one realizes it or not.

Ash Wednesday is a wonderful day that begins the season of Lent. It is the beginning of a penitential season of 40 days, but a season that always ends with joy. As we take upon ourselves the season of Lent, there is a great joy in realizing that it is the Lord who has taken our sins upon himself in order that we might have life. There is absolutely nothing that can prevent God from loving us and bestowing his mercy upon us, as long as we continue to journey to him amid the struggles, failures and sins of our lives.

As the ashes are placed upon our foreheads, we are reminded that we are also dust and will return to dust, but it is God’s life that makes the difference and gives us meaning and purpose. We are reminded that we need to turn away from our sins and to turn more to the good news of Jesus Christ in order to experience the joy that only he can give us. As so many people gather as Ash Wednesday, we realize that we are not alone and that we are part of God’s family, the church, which is divided yet whole, and that this is our frailty. It is only God who infuses that family with his love and so we can be redeemed in him. Ash Wednesday is a sign to us as a family that we seek to grow in the Lord through the sacraments of initiation, His family continues to grow.

Each year the pope gives a special message for the Lenten season. This year, Pope Francis has given us a wonderful reflection titled, “The Word Is a Gift. Other Persons Are a Gift.” In his message, Pope Francis reminds us that Lent is a new beginning which leads us to Easter and that we are all called to conversion during the season of Lent. Lent is a “favorable season” during which we come to terms with ourselves and the need that we all have for conversion within our lives. The practices of fasting, prayer and almsgiving help in us this conversion in order that we might better understand who we are and who God is in relation to us as the center of our lives. Pope Francis uses the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (cf. Lk 16:19-31) as the basis for his message. This beautiful parable reminds us of God’s mercy and of our tendency not to respond to that mercy, and that other things are more important in life. The rich man forgets that he is human and believes that he is above humanity and to ignore them, he had this in life. Because of this, he ignores Lazarus, a poor man, who comes to him for food. Both the rich man and Lazarus eventually die. Lazarus is taken to the bosom of Abraham but the rich man goes to Hades where he now and upon his death he says that Lazarus came to his assistance. Abraham makes the rich man clear that he had lived in a way solely for himself and this led to his rejection for eternity. It was the rich man who made the choice for his eternal life and Lazarus, the poor man, who did the same by living in the opposite manner than the selfish man.

The Holy Father stresses that the message for all of us in this parable for the season of Lent is that we need to listen to the word of God that is always present to us. We also need to respond to every other person in our life as a gift, and not to ignore them because we are too turned in upon ourselves. Pope Francis tells us that, “The rich man’s real problem (thus) comes to the fore. At the root of all his ill was the failure to heed God’s word.” As a result, he no longer loved God and grew to despise his neighbor. The word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God. When we close our heart to the gift of the holy word, we end up closing our heart to the gift of our brothers and sisters.”

I have always been fascinated by Abraham telling the rich man that even if someone were to rise from the dead and go to speak to his brothers, they would not listen to him. Abraham stresses that if they will not listen to the prophets, they would not listen even if someone were to speak to them from eternity. Sometimes we can think that if an extraordinary thing happens, we would be more open to God’s presence among us. His word is present to us and speaks to us. He is alive in his word and if we do not listen to that, we are not going to listen to anything else.

His word reminds us of the wonderful gift of his life that is present among us especially in the people which God has given us. Those people include our families and friends as well as those of whom we are not always aware. We need to open our hearts to all men and women as gifts from God who possess the same dignity that we do. On Ash Wednesday, as so many people with whom we are not all familiar may come to the church, the pope’s words are a good reminder for us. As we heed the call of Ash Wednesday and begin the season of Lent, may the ashes remind us of God’s love and mercy and that before him we are all equal. May we listen more intently to his word each day and be receptive to all people who are gifts from God. In doing so, may we come to a greater freedom and joy in our lives within and know the victory of Christ as we open our hearts more to him.

A joyful Ash Wednesday. A blessed Lent!}

BISHOP’S SCHEDULE

Feb. 24 — 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Meeting, board of trustees, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach; 6 p.m., Mass/ reception/dinner, seminary alumni gathering, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary.

Feb. 25 — 10 a.m., Confirmation, St. Jude Parish, Boca Raton.

Feb. 26 — 10:30 a.m., Confirmation, St. Andrew Parish, Stuart.

March 1 — noon, Ash Wednesday Mass, Pastoral Center, Palm Beach Gardens; 5:30 p.m., Ash Wednesday Mass, Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola, Palm Beach Gardens.

March 4 — 10 a.m., Confirmation, St. Jude Parish, Tequesta; 7 p.m., Rite of Election, Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola.

March 5 — 10 a.m., Confirmation, St. John Vianney Parish, Palm Beach; 2:30 p.m., Rite of Election, Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola.

March 8 — 10 a.m., Lenten day of reflection for priests, Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center, North Palm Beach.

March 11 — 10 a.m., Confirmation, St. Lucie Parish, Port St. Lucie; 5:30 p.m., Confirmation, Emmanuel Parish, Delray Beach.

March 12 — noon, Confirmation, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Port St. Lucie.

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YOUR PALM BEACH COMMUNITY


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Priests still serve through golden years

Four retired clergy tell of retirement life, concerns for the future

JIM DAVIS
Florida Catholic correspondent

PALM BEACH GARDENS | They’ve served all their lives. Baptisms, Marriages, Consoling those who grieve.

Now Catholics can help priests through the upcoming Annual Collection for Diocesan Retired Priests, now in its second year.

“They’ve given their lives for our parishes and schools,” said Msgr. James Burke, 78, who still celebrates Mass at a diocesan parish. “In their later years, we need to be supportive of them.”

As the diocese prepares for the collection on Feb. 25-26, we spoke to four priests about their later years, we need to be supportive of them.

EXPLORING MINISTRIES
Msgr. John McMahon calls himself retired, but he keeps a schedule that might tax men two decades younger than his 76 years. His schedule includes a Mass or two each weekend at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Boca Raton. He also answers intake calls at Covenant House, a ministry to street youths, and he works with Kairos, an international ministry that runs Cursillo-like retreats for prison inmates.

“These are all ministries I didn’t have time to do when I was a full-time priest,” Msgr. McMahon said in an interview. “I wanted to explore other ministries.”

He counts himself as one of the lucky ones. St. Joan of Arc Parish in Boca Raton, where he served for 25 years, bought him a house across the street. He sleeps in one bedroom and uses the other as an office. That house, along with Social Security and his priestly pension from the diocese, helped him transition comfortably in retirement.

In the fall, he stays with folks in Queens, PLEASE SEE RETIRED, A4

Collection helps retired diocesan priests

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

PALM BEACH GARDENS | One initial collection in parishes here last year was extremely well received, providing witness of the love that the faithful have for their aging spiritual “Fathers.” These men, who promised obedience to the local bishop, have been there 24/7, through good times and bad, joyous occasions and Eucharistic celebrations, and are now, perhaps, moving a little slower, maybe living alone without family support, but still on fire for the Lord, and continuing to serve the local Church and its people in whatever way they can.

The special “Collection for Retired Diocesan Priests” is scheduled to take place again this year in parishes Feb. 25-26 to assist the diocese’s retired priests, and once again Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito is asking for everyone’s “generous assistance.” The collection is exclusively for assisting retired diocesan priests. It is totally different from the national December “Retirement Fund for Religious Collection,” which provides religious orders with financial support for elderly religious sisters, brothers and order priests.

“The diocese is responsible for the welfare of its priests who are in retirement,” said Bishop Barbarito in a statement as the collection launched last year. “I know you will agree that after serving the people of our diocese for so long and so well, they deserve to be free of financial worries in retirement.”

The lifetime commitment of a diocesan priest to the local Church after earning degrees and spending anywhere from four to 12 years in seminary, and their dedication to the bishop and people here, is a two-way street. Bishop Barbarito and diocesan leaders are also committed to making sure that the spiritual, pastoral and human needs of the diocesan priests are provided for, and that senior priests entering into retirement and in stages of later life with the potential of challenges, serious illness and dependence are looked after and provided the necessary assistance and care.

Retired priests receive a pension. Payments of health insurance premiums and car insurance for those who still drive are also benefits once given by the parish the priest last served, PLEASE SEE COLLECTION, A4.
N.Y., and audits courses at St. John's University. His current interests are theology and American history. "I want to keep my mind sharp," he said. "And I like to find out where young people are at."

He keeps fit physically as well, with a 20-minute regimen each morning: stretches, leg lifts, crunches, walking on an elliptical machine. He also works out with light weights two or three times a week at a nearby gym. For leisure time, he goes scuba diving each summer with friends in Boca Raton who own a commercial boat. "I choose to wear out rather than rust out," Msgr. McMahon said.

FRIENDS, MUSIC, SERVICE
"I'm not as active as I used to be," said Msgr. James Burke. Yet, for a 78-year-old, he's pretty active. Since his retirement, he's worked as senior associate at St. Paul of the Cross in North Palm Beach, his original parish. He celebrates weekday Masses and conducts classes for adult converts to Catholicism. He leads monthly Charismatic meetings. He does sick calls and funerals when Father Tom Lafeniere, the pastor, is away. He still joins in Easter and Christmas celebrations with the elderly at St. Edward Parish in Palm Beach, one of his former parishes, and gives spiritual counseling. Fortunately, he lives in a condo in North Palm Beach, less than 15 minutes from St. Paul. But he allows time for leisure as well. He occasionally golfs with parishioners from St. Paul. He also accompanies some of them to musicals at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts.

Quiterius pursue includes reading; he likes James Patterson novels, as well as a commentary by Francis Martin on the Gospel of John. In the summer, he visits family up north. And every Thursday, he visits a friend in Margate, a former organist with the Archdiocese of Miami.

Money isn't a problem right now, Father Burke said. He gets by on his diocesan pension plan plus Social Security. He even donates to Catholic Relief Services' work in Haiti.

"My lifestyle is simpler, so I can donate more," Father Burke said. "But I know a lot of priests who need that help, especially the elderly priests. When you get in nursing homes, it's extremely expensive. As a whole, the diocese needs financial support for the priests."

A 'BLESSSED LIFE'
"I want to keep busy as long as I can," said Father Seamus Murtagh. And the 81-year-old priest has built a blend of spiritual and social concerns into his retirement.

He calls a condo in Palm Beach Gardens his home, but Tuesdays find him celebrating Mass at McKeen Towers in West Palm Beach, home to a few retired priests. On Saturdays and Sundays, he celebrates Masses in English at Holy Cross in Indiantown.

He also helps raise funds and other resources for Holy Ground, a service for homeless mothers that works out of St. Francis Parish in Riviera Beach. Holy Ground puts the young women in motels and tracks them into jobs or school. And for 14 years on Thursdays, he makes sandwiched and handed them out at St. Ann Place, an outreach to the homeless in West Palm Beach.

"I don't have much spare time," Father Murtagh said with a laugh. "(But) it's good for me. I find myself raised up just working with the people there."

He also enjoys down time. He likes magazines, especially America, Commonwealth and U.S. Catholic. Most mornings he walks three miles at the Garden Mall in Palm Beach Gardens. And every year, he visits Ireland to keep up with the folks: two brothers, three sisters, and 39 nieces and nephews.

Sometimes he even takes long walks with his nieces, as he did two years ago, when they did a five-day walk to the pilgrimage site in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. "It was a good experience," he said. Despite his seeming workaholism, Father Murtagh said he'll "take it easy when I want. I've lived a blessed life from day one."

HELPING BROTHER PRIESTS
Father Michael Edwards retired in June at 69. Like other retired priests, he likes to keep his hand in the work. He helps with Masses at St. Helen in Vero Beach, his most recent parish, while living in a house on the premises. He also lends a hand at Holy Family in Port St. Lucie, St. Anastasia in Port Pierce and St. John of the Cross in Vero Beach. He's also diocesan director for the Propagation of the Faith which is dedicated to helping support the Church's effort to bring the message of Christ to the four corners of the world, and helping missionaries who carry out this work.

Social Security, his pension and stipends from parishes where he helps out also free him to concentrate on his role as Bishop Gerald Burbidge's assistant to retired priests. He continues pastoral duties for parishioners: weddings, annulments, baptisms. And reading and exercise, he added.

"Retirement relieves me of administration," he said. "A lot of priests draw pension and still work, like myself. But one day, they won't have much to do."

During the year, he plans to meet all 26 of his fellow retired priests — two or three at a time, often over lunch. They'll also have his cellphone number and email address. Keeping in touch gets more important with growing age and frailty, he said.

"They may say 'I'm just fine,' because they never want to be a burden," he said. "And they rightly want to maintain their independence. For most people, your extended family can look in to see how things are going. That's what I'm trying to do for my brothers priests."

CONFRONTING RETIREMENT ISSUES
All four priests have faced similar issues in retirement. First, of course, was where do you live when the next pastor needs your house?

There are the usual expenses like electricity, water, insurance, trash collection and maintenance that go along with living in a house or condo. And there is, of course, food.

The Diocese of Palm Beach takes care of health and insurance for retired priests, but priests are responsible for car payments. They also pay for everyday inci- dels, like socks, toothpaste and turnip soup. "(But) it's good for me. I find myself raised up just working with the people there."

"(But) it's good for me. I find myself raised up just working with the people there."

"Even if you save, $100,000 to $200,000 is nothing," Msgr. Mc- Mall said. "People will have to change. So the diocese has to think ahead."

And where can you go if you can no longer care for yourself? When Father Edwards was diocesan chancellor in the late 1990s, he got two priests into McKee Tower.

"When I visited them at McK- een, one said, 'Thank you so much! I didn't know how bad off I was!'" Father Edwards recalled. "And they lived for several more years."

Retirement homes, though, can be costly, even those run by orders, like the Carmelite-operated McK- een — another reason for the up- coming collection. We'll have to appeal to the generosity of the people to help the priests who helped us, just as they would take care of an elderly parent or grandparent," Father Edwards said. "Even if you didn't use a priest, the priest was there for you."

COLLECTION: Retired diocesan priests benefit from important collection as many continue to serve Church
Event plants seeds to grow vocations

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

BOYNTON BEACH | Students arrived in busloads and stood in a long line to shake the hands of seminarians. Feb. 9 before entering St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary’s chapel for a day of learning, fellowship and awareness.

“Welcome everybody,” shouted main program coordinator Deacon Martin Dunne III, a seminar-ian for the Diocese of Palm Beach, as he greeted nearly 350 sixth-grade students accompanied by chaperones.

The young people dressed in school uniforms filled the pews of the chapel from the front to the back, and were there for a morning program of prayer, sing-ing, talks, testimony and Mass.

The students were from various Catholic schools in the Diocese of Palm Beach. Represented were St. Ann, St. Luke and St. Juliana of West Palm Beach, St. Clare of North Palm Beach, All Saints of Jupiter, St. Vincent Ferrer of Delray Beach, St. Joseph of Stuart, and St. Joan of Arc and St. Jude of Boca Raton.

“It is so exciting to be together,” said enthusiastic Deacon Dunne, who will be ordained this spring. “This is really special. With such a special day, I can’t think of anything better than to begin with prayer. We ask God to open us up to whatever he wants to show us. Throughout this day, please open our hearts and help us to always maintain our peace and calm. We know that what you bring to us is a gift.”

The special awareness day at the seminary is aimed at introducing sixth-graders to whatever voca-tion they are considering. It also seeks to open young minds to vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, and the possibility of choosing the life of a religious sister, brother or priest.

“Statistics show that at age 11, children begin to think about life,” said Deacon Leon Phillips of Ascension Parish, who is a member of the Serra Club of South Palm Beach, an organization that sponsors the event and is dedicated to promoting vocations to the religious life and the priesthood.

“Statistics show that they begin making a plan,” he added, about youngsters beginning to mature and become more inquisitive and questioning.

“This year, several religious women from the Servants of Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary from Miami were present and led songs. Sister Veronica Schueler, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucha-rist who resides with other members of her order on the seminary campus, also took part and shared her life story about answering the call to serve the Lord.

The day also included tours of the campus and lunch. “My job was to bring you pizza,” Deacon Phillips said with a smile.

Matthew Gomez, a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Miami, greets students as they arrive at the seminary.

Consecrated life honored, celebrated

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

WEST PALM BEACH | Men and women serving in vocations to the consecrated life gathered with Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito and renewed their vows during Feb. 5 ceremonies at host Mary Immaculate Parish.

“I commit myself anew to serve the Church in the ministry entrusted to me from my congregation,” pledged the men and women. “May the light and joy of God’s love shine in me and through me all the days of my life.”

The annual diocesan gathering in celebration of the World Day for Consecrated Life — an event declared by St. John Paul II gathering women and men in consecrated life for prayer — is celebrating 20 years. The Church day also invites all to reflect on the life of religious sisters, nuns, brothers and order priests and all they do as part of their lives dedicated to ministry.

Sister Joan Dawson, episcopal delegate for religious and a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany for 55 years, coordinated the event. She gave a short welcome and presentation, pointing out that the Diocese of Palm Beach is served by 80 religious priests from 16 various orders, four religious brothers from three communities, and 90 women from 26 religious communities.

“They work in education, health care, spiritual formation and pro-vide (a positive faith) presence,” she said. “They are here to show their dedication and renew their vows.”

Bishop Barbarito thanked the men and women for their dedication to ministry. “You truly are the light of the world and the light of our diocese,” he said. “Your life makes a difference. In the world today, it is the quality of life that matters. We thank you. I express my deep-est personal gratitude to you. God bless you.”

Also present were members of the Third Order Secular Franciscans, lay Carmelites, associate members of the religious congregations in the diocese, friends and family members.

All are encouraged to continue to pray for religious men and women and order priests.

Deacon Martin Dunne III, a diocesan seminarian, speaks to sixth-graders visiting St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary.

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito joins those who have answered the call to consecrated life during the diocese’s annual gathering Feb. 5.

Religious women gather at the altar to renew vows during ceremonies held in celebration of the World Day for Consecrated Life.
Vatican astronomer keeps eyes on stars

LINDA REEVE
of the Florida Catholic staff

BOYNTON BEACH | A Jesuit re-
searcher with an asteroid named after
him for his outstanding me-
etorite studies — 4597 Consol-
smagno — visited St. Vincent de Paul
Regional Seminary this month, shing a bright light on the Vati-
can’s centuries-old interest in meta-
torites, the galaxy and its billions of stars and their solar systems.

“We were so pleased to wel-
come Brother Guy Consolmagno, to the seminary community for
such an engaging and stimulat-
ing evening,” said Msgr. David
Toups, rector of the first Boynton
Beach seminary. “It is so im-
portant for our future priests to
be able to engage the world with-
out fear. Certainly Brother Guy
equipped us with confidence that
indeed the Church is not afraid of
science, technology or the ques-
tions that are being raised and
asked in discoveries yet to be made.”

Brother Consolmagno, ap-
pointed director of the Vatican
Observatory by Pope Francis in
Sept. 2015, gave a most interesting
presentation. Not only was the au-
thor, teacher, public speaker and
scientist fascinating, but also hu-
morous and very passionate when
speaking about his work and the
Church and science.

He began work at the Vatican
Observatory based at the pope’s
summer residence south of Rome
in 1993 after earning a doctoral
in planetary science from the Uni-
versity of Arizona. He was a post-
doctoral research fellow at Harvard
and at the Massachu-
setts Institute of Technology. Af-
ter graduating he began teaching
astronomy, but at one point heard
the call to serve.

“I joined the Peace Corps,”
Brother Consolmagno said about
his sudden decision to drop ev-
erything. He headed to Africa to
serve the poor of Kenya. It was
there that he realized how much
he enjoyed astronomy and teach-
ing. He returned home and joined
his teaching order, becoming a Je-
suit in 1989.

During the evening presenta-
tion, Brother Consolmagno spoke
about his work at the Vatican Ob-
servatory, where he studies meta-
torites and asteroids. He explained
that the observatory also runs a fac-
ility with a state-of-the-art tele-
scope in Arizona, where he also
spends time. He showed pictures
of facilities and the equipment
used.

During Brother Consolmagno’s
presentation, titled “The Heav-
en Proclaim,” he discussed the
Church’s interest in astronomy
that stems back to the astronomi-
cal basis of the Gregorian calen-
dar. An astronaut was hired to
help establish the efficient calen-
dar spearheaded in 1582 by Pope
Gregory XIII.

During the evening, he contin-
ued to affirm that science and
the study of God’s universe and
creations is a “good thing,” and
that the Church isn’t afraid of sci-
ence. He explained that his study
for the Vatican is to “present the
truth” and offers him a chance to
“spend time being intimate with
God.”

The Jesuit who made the galaxy,” he
said. The Jesuit brother showed a
photo of Pope Francis visiting the
observatory. Pope Francis, a Je-
suit, earned a master’s degree in
chemistry from the University of
Buenos Aires. “Pope Francis has
dataid scientific research should be
of great joy,” he said.

The evening presentation at St.
Vincent de Paul was just one ex-
ample of many fine opportunities
that the seminary offers its semi-
narians and faculty, supporters
and the public. Don Bosak, a pa-
rishioner of St. Vincent Ferrer in
Delray Beach, attended the eve-
ning and thought the presentation
was excellent and informative.

“it was so inspiring that I went
home and Googled him,” Bosak
said about wanting to know more
about Brother Consolmagno to
share with his grandchildren.

“He was amazing. It all came
together.”

KENDEL JORDAN
Special to the Florida Catholic

PALM BEACH GARDENS | Some diocesan
students skipped school Jan. 27,
or to hang out in the mall.
Some diocesan students skipped
school Jan. 27, but not for a beach
trip or to hang out in the mall.

Among the group from the dio-
cese were siblings Anna, Nicholas
and Mary Elizabeth Beckwith, pa-
ters were Anna, Nicholas
and Mary Elizabeth Beckwith, pa-
ters were Anna, Nicholas
Worth. The Beckwiths drove first
and Mary Elizabeth Beckwith, pa-
ters were siblings Anna, Nicholas
and Mary Elizabeth Beckwith, pa-
ters were siblings Anna, Nicholas
Worth. The Beckwiths drove first

“Besides the crowd and the cold,
what also left an impression on
Nicholas and his sisters was the fact
that the majority of those present
for the march were young people
like themselves.

“We feel it was important for us
to be in Washington because while
we have a voice, the unborn do not,”
said Anna, 17, who was attending
her third March for Life. “As teen-
agers, our voices are being heard
more and more in today’s age and
culture. We need to use them for
important things.”

Many participants expressed the
pervading sense of optimism at this
year’s March for Life.

“We were joined by feminists,
atheists, scientists and former
abortionists,” said Adrienne Gar-
lade, a parishioner of Holy Spirit
in Lantana, who is currently in his
last semester of university studies.

“There was no chaos or hate or
destruction. Even with those who
were not religious, there was still a
sense of overwhelming peace unit-
ing us.”

Christina Sheehan, a high school
student who attends Mass at both St.
Clare in Palm Beach and Holy Spirit
in Lantana, is a leader member of
the 40 Days for Life Youth Team
in the Diocese of Palm Beach. The
group promotes pro-life and in-
volvement in pro-life events, espe-
cially 40 Days for Life events twice
a year — a time when people are
encouraged to pray, fast and wit-
ness prayer for respect for life. Even
though she was not able to attend
this year’s March for Life, she knows
that this does not mean she is out of
the fight for life.

“Pro-life isn’t something we put
on and take off like our scarves
and our boots, but rather it’s how we
live,” she said. “That means it con-
tinues once we get off the planes
and buses, when we return to our
own communities. The march and
also the Vigil Mass for Life at the
Basilica of the National Shrine of
the Immaculate Conception inspire
us with the knowledge that we are
not alone. The liberal media won’t
be able to convince us otherwise.
We’ve prayed, marched, cried and
cheered with thousands of other
young people who believe the same
as we do, and we won’t forget it.”

Sheehan shared some examples
of how young people are bringing
the pro-life message to their own
neighborhoods. Some have started
trains, some have volunteered for
crisis pregnancy centers, participated in 40 Days for Life vigils, or sim-
ply changed the centers, participated in 40 Days for Life vigils, or sim-
ply changed the centers

Students from St. John Paul II Academy in Boca Raton participate in
January’s March for Life in Washington, D.C. (COURTESY PHOTO)

William E. Boyes
John Farina
Peter Matwichy

- Wills, trusts and guardianship litigation
- Estate and trust planning and administration

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**DIOCESAN EVENTS**

**TV MASS**

Sunday televised Mass airs 9 a.m. on CW34 WXVT. Produced by the diocesan Office of Communications. Questions: www.diocesepb.org/tv-Mass or 561-775-9529. To support the televised Mass or to request a Free Mass missal: 561-775-9529 or Office of Communications, 9955 N. Military Trail, P.O. Box 109650, Palm Beach Gardens, Fl 33410.

**FVIY**

To find more information, visit www.diocesepb.org or www.catholiccharitiespb.org/events.

**Capitol**


**Interfaith Health and Wellness annual luncheon and auction:** April 20, 11:30 a.m., National Croquet Center, 700 Florida Mango Road, West Palm Beach. Fundraiser supporting ministry nurses serving people of churches, temples and communities and outreach to homeless. Open to the public. Tickets: $100 per person. Sponsorship opportunities available. 561-345-2006.

**COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**35th annual fashion show and luncheon:** Feb. 24, 11 a.m., Polo Club of Boca Raton, 5400 Champion Way, Palm Beach Gardens. Hosted by St. Lucy Council of Catholic Women. Cost: $65 person. Proceeds benefit charities serving the less fortunate. 561-400-7789.

**Lecture on St. Elizabeth Ann Seton:** March 10, 12-12, St. John Vianney College Seminary, Miami. For young men 11th grade or older interested in learning more about the priesthood. Transportation provided. Contact a parish priest or register at the diocesan Office of Vocations. 561-775-9522, vocations@diocese pb.org.

**Permanen deacon applications available:** Men interested in applying to become a permanent deacon of the Diocese of Palm Beach are asked to speak to their pastors for permission to apply and download the application from the diocesan website, www.diocesepb.org/deacon-formation. Deadline: Jan. 31, 561-775-9540, lpowell@diocesepb.org.

**Catholic Charities events:**

- Catholic Days at the Cathedral of St. Mary, 7525 N.W. Second Ave., Miami.
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach.
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach.
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach.
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach.
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach.
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach.

from around the region come together in song. Main celebrant: Archbishop Thomas Wenski. Catholic school and parish youth choirs with children in grades four-12 welcome. 714-633-7554 or info@pschoirs.com.

**Annual "Joe-Paddy Festival"**

March 16, 5:30 p.m., St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 10701 S. Military Trail, Boynton Beach. Tickets: $50 per person, $100 per table of 10. Price includes: food, drink and live entertainment. 561-732-4424.

**Catholic Men for Jesus rally:** March 18, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Luke Parish, 2892 S. Congress Ave, Palm Springs. Guest speaker: Jim St. built, husband, father of seven and director of apologetics and evangelization initiatives at Catholic Answers. Talks, music, personal testimony, prayer and afternoon Mass with Bishop Ricken M. Barberio, main celebrant. Cost: $20, includes breakfast. Discounted price for students: $722-331-8886.

**Theology of the Body young adult retreat:** March 25, 8 a.m.-6 a.m., Sườs of Christ Parish, 370 W. Third St., Boca Raton. For those ages 18 and older. Cost: $20 at the door, includes breakfast, lunch and T-shirt. 561-392-0071, 561-376-9455, thelighetministry@stan.org.

**Pregnancy Care Center program:** March 25, 6 p.m., St. Martin de Porres Parish, 2555 N.E. Savannah Road, Jensen Beach. "Just Desserts" features Father Frank Pazzini, pro-life advocate and director of Priests for Life. Silent auction followed by 7 p.m. seating. Adults only. Benefits Pregnancy Care Center, dedicated to the unborn and respect for life. Fee: $20. For reservations required. pcevent2017@gmail.com.

**RETRIEVES/DAYS OF PRAYER**

**Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center:** Retreats and programs available for men, women, small and medium groups, religious, men, women, married couples, singles and people in recovery programs. Location: 1000 U.S. Highway 1, North Palm Beach. 561-626-1300 or www.ourladyofflorida.org. Schedule:

- Weekly Wednesday, 4:55 p.m., main chapel.
- Ash Wednesday reflection: March 1, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., and evening reflection 6:30-9:30 p.m., Diocese of St. Lucie. Host: Roberta Popara. Theme: "We Rise Again from Ashes." Cost: $30. Reservations required.
- Day of reflection: April 5, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. "Sanctifying Everyday Life." Presenter: Passionist Brother Edward Hall. Reservations required.
- Holy Week retreat: April 12-16, led by center retreat team. Theme: "Reflecting Christ." Cost varies for religious, singles and couples. Deposit and registration required.
Faith-filled athletes combine lacrosse, prayer and Mass

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

BOCA RATON | Before a sport- ing event held on Super Bowl weekend, young athletes and other game participants attended Mass, sharing faith and brotherly spirit and definitely witnessing great hope for the future and the Church.

“What a way to end Catholic Schools Week,” said Edward Ber- not, principal of St. John Paul II Academy in Boca Raton about the fifth annual Pope Cup Tournament and Mass Feb. 3-4. The pre-season event is coordinated by St. John Paul II and held at neighboring Lynn University. “The tournament brings Catholic schools together. I just think it is a wonderful event.”

The weekend tournament brought four top lacrosse teams from four different Catholic schools together in friendly competition. Locally, teams from Cardinal Newman High School in West Palm Beach and St. John Paul II Academy in Boca Raton played. Cardinal Gibbons High School in Fort Lauderdale was represented at the match, and students from Bishop Verot High School in West Palm Beach and St. John Paul II Academy in Boca Raton about the tournament and Mass celebrated on the field.

Anthony Pecoraro, a junior at St. John Paul II Academy, has been playing lacrosse for five years now. He was excited to be in the match and hopeful that his team would come out on top. We asked him to share his thoughts about the tournament and the Mass.

“The tournament brings all the Catholic high schools together,” he said. “I think the Mass is cool.”

When asked about how lacrosse and being on the team has made a difference in his life, he was happy to respond. “I have learned discipline through the sport,” he said. “I have learned how to control my anger. Playing on the team has taught me life lessons and being part of the team is cool.”

During the Mass, the players sat on the field near the altar set up in the center of the field and facing the stands filled with spectators and family members. During his homily, Father Nguyen Do offered inspiration to the young people, telling them never to give up.

“Sometimes we get lost in life,” he said. “God is the only perfect one. If we get lost, we need to pick up and try again. We need support. We can’t do it alone.”

He shared that he became lost on his way to Lynn University for the tournament, not knowing the area.

He confessed that he knew nothing about lacrosse, but found it interesting, and was amazed how many parents were there in numbers and in full support.

Father Nguyen Do is a native of Vietnam, who came to the United States six years ago and ministered in New York and New Jersey. He came to the Diocese of Palm Beach at the end of January, and knows very few people except the Carmelites who live and serve at St. Jude Parish.

“This morning I was not supposed to be here,” he said. “We have busy schedules. When I heard the priests ask if anyone was available, I thought to myself, I am new here, but why not. I don’t know anyone, I will do it. I will meet you and make friends.

“I have never seen anything like this,” he continued. “I grew up in Vietnam. It is communist. There are no Masses in sports. I have never seen it before in my life. You are so blessed. This is good. I want to come back. Thank God for the day and the sport and all that is going on here today. Thank God for the event, your parents and the game.”

The final match was between Belen Jesuit and St. John Paul II Academy. The final score was 8 to 6, with Belen Jesuit winning the game and the Pope Cup trophy.

According to one mom, everyone was a winner that day, witnessing to sportsmanship, team playing, camaraderie, friendly competition, and fellowship and faith. “The overall experience was wonderful,” said Suzanne DeLeon, who was there supporting Bishop Verot’s team and her son. “I am a very proud mom.”

Carmelite Father Joseph Nguyen Do distributes the Eucharist during Mass celebrated on the field before the Pope Cup Tournament championship game Feb. 4 at Lynn University in Boca Raton. (PHOTOS BY LINDA REEVES | FC)
Conference inspires, time for renewal

NADIA SMITH
Special to the Florida Catholic

FORT MYERS | With more than 600 women from around the Diocese of Venice and four outstanding speakers, the annual Diocesan Women’s Conference offered the perfect prescription for renewal: laughter, encouragement, wisdom and spirituality.

“I think it’s important to step back every once and awhile and let the Lord speak to you, and I think this conference allows for that,” said Cristin O’Conner of Epiphany Cathedral in Venice. “All four of the speakers were fantastic. You could tell they were all on fire for their faith and it was truly inspiring. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to go to confession, adoration, and to end the day with Mass. I left feeling renewed.”

The Conference, held Feb. 11 at Bishop Verot High School in Fort Myers, featured nationally known speakers: Lisa Cotter, founder of Made to Magnify Ministry; Edward Sri, theologian, author and well-known Catholic speaker; Susan Conroy, former volunteer who worked with St. Teresa of Kolkata for 11 years and wrote about her experience with the saint’s permission; and Rachel Balducci, newspaper columnist, author and co-host of “The Gist” on CatholicTV.

The day opened with Eucharistic Adoration, and throughout the Conference priests were available for those seeking the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Bishop Frank J. Dewane welcomed the women to the conference and visited with them throughout. He also celebrated the closing Mass. In his welcome address, he took the opportunity to thank the women for all they do.

“It’s the feminine genius that makes many things happen in the Parishes and throughout the Diocese. It’s all of you with your presence, your prayers, your encouragement and we are most grateful for that,” he said. “In the end, it allows others to be ‘the more’ they are called to be. I stand here humbly before you today to thank you.”

Cotter kicked off the conference with a look at femininity from a cultural perspective that spanned the 50s, 60s and 70s, to the “be like a man” of the 80s and 90s, to the “liberated feminist” in the 60s and 70s, to the “domestic queen” in the 50s and 90s. “If we follow the advice of our culture about femininity, we’d have to change who we are about every 10 to 15 years. It’s exhausting,” she said.

Instead, Cotter suggested a different perspective, one that reflects the truth that “the essence of what makes a woman doesn’t change. Her purpose, which was given to her by God, doesn’t change.”

To that end she used the creation account in Genesis and St. John Paul II’s explanation of it to show how God chose two unique genders to complement each other so that through their interdependence, the person fully realizes his or her humanity.

“These differences are a good thing and your uniqueness as a female is so good that St. John Paul II calls it the ‘feminine genius,’” she said. “Our world needs our genius and he encouraged us to allow it to come into its fullness.”

The essence of woman — the feminine genius — are those qualities that make a woman uniquely female such as emotional strength, inner beauty, intuition, generosity, fidelity, receptivity and empathy. As Cotter noted, the purpose of woman is to help make the world more human by using her feminine genius to glorify God.

Sri spoke about the “weeds” in the culture choking out faith. He pointed to the culture’s superficial definition of love as one example. “In this case love is how the person makes you feel. It’s what you do for me. This view of love will not last because as soon as you lose that loving feeling, the marriage is over,” he said. “Real love is to will the good of the other — it’s other-centered. Real love is standing shoulder to shoulder with your spouse to serve something bigger.”

Speaking from the heart, Conroy spoke about her decade-long friendship with St. Teresa, the lessons she taught Conroy, and her work as a volunteer in Kolkata serving the poorest of the poor. “Kolkata, for the most part, was like a living nightmare. Yet in this dark city, I would soon see ‘a great light,’ and her name was Mother Teresa,” Conroy said. “She changed an earthly hell into a bit of heaven for everybody, especially for those who were most in need of mercy. Living in Kolkata’s rock-bottom condition gave me a profound attitude of gratitude that will last a lifetime.”

Balducci rounded out the day-long conference with practical tips to “be yourself, love your life and do it all with courage.” Oftentimes women in their roles as wives and mothers can be filled with doubt and insecurities, which she said only keep a woman from truly experiencing God’s grace and gift of joy.

Fighting the temptation to compare one’s life to others and fostering a heart of gratitude along with acknowledging that one’s perceived flaws are not mistakes made by God, instead redeemable qualities for God’s glory are all ways to see the good in one’s state of life, Balducci said. Ultimately, she advised, it is doing the small things to the best of our abilities and loving those right in front of us that lead us to holiness.

For Margaret Adams, a parishioner of San Pedro in North Port, the conference exceeded her expectations and having Bishop Dewane’s presence made an impact.

“To have the Bishop there all day was a treat and a testament to how much he values the women of this Diocese,” she said. “The conference was well done. I have told all of my girlfriends that they must come next year.”
Couples celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

VENICE | More than 325 couples celebrating 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 or more years of marriage joined Bishop Frank J. Dewane Feb. 18 at a Mass in honor of significant milestone anniversaries at Epiphany Cathedral in Venice.

The combined years married of the couples totaled more than 16,000 years of wedded bliss. Two couples present were celebrating their anniversary on the day of the Mass, and another 61 couples were celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2017. In addition, four couples who have been married for 70 years or longer, have been married a combined 297 years. They were individually recognized by Bishop Dewane by name and given ovations for their longevity. The couple married the longest, Albert and Angela Cassettari of Epiphany Cathedral Parish, have been married for 78 years.

Bishop Dewane thanked the couples for their years of marriage and for taking the gifts God has granted them and becoming the husband and wife they are today. "You are an example for others to follow. You have been blessed with patience, kindness and humility. "The Mass honoring wedding anniversaries is one of the most personally uplifting experiences throughout the year," Bishop Dewane noted. "We celebrate the sacred bond of marriage, but we also rejoice in the beauty of the family. Pope Francis reminds us the family is our 'initiation into the alliance of man and woman' and it all begins with marriage."

Thomas and Delores Martorana of Epiphany Cathedral have been married 66 years, and said the success of their marriage can be attributed to their faith. Delores added that "if we ever have a problem, whatever God sends, we accept." This includes two children, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Teresa and Ben Maltese of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Port Charlotte were set up on a blind date by mutual friends, and 45 years later they find comfort in sharing their life together guided by God. "What a treasured event for us," Teresa said of the Mass.

A reception was held in the Parish hall following the Mass where couples waited to have a formal picture taken with Bishop Dewane.

A second Mass for milestone anniversaries will be celebrated March 11, 10 a.m., at St. Leo the Great Parish in Bonita Springs. Couples are asked to register with their home Parish.

Traveling Fatima statue awes faithful in diocese

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

VENICE | For one week in February the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima spent time in the Diocese of Venice as part of an 18-month tour of the United States commemorating the 100th anniversary of the original Marian apparitions in Portugal.

The Fatima Centennial U.S. Tour for Peace stopped at Epiphany Cathedral Feb. 17. The pilgrim statue was brought forward by the Knights of Columbus and displayed during a morning Mass attended by more than 800 people. The Mass intentions were for the students of Epiphany Cathedral Catholic School, peace in the world and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Caroline Anderson came from St. Patrick Parish in Sarasota to be able to pray before the statue. "She is so beautiful," Anderson said. "I have always wanted to go to Fatima, but this is the closest I will get. We need Our Mother now more than ever. She is the bringer of peace, peace for our souls and peace for the world."

The statue also made visits to St. Paul Parish in Arcadia Feb. 18, St. Margaret Parish in Clewiston Feb. 19, St. Francis Xavier Parish in Fort Myers Feb. 22, and St. Raphael Parish in Lehigh Acres Feb. 23. The statue previously stopped at Ave Maria Parish in Ave Maria Jan. 27.

Charity Rossi of Epiphany Cathedral was grateful the pilgrim statue was available for viewing locally. She also appreciated the history and story as presented by Patrick Sabat, the statue’s custodian. "What a blessing this opportunity is. My mother will not be able to see it at her home Diocese up north. I said a prayer for her and for others who are not as fortunate as I was."

Sabet shared the story of the apparitions that first took place between May 13 and Oct. 13, 1917. "Our Lady was seen by three small children tending sheep along the meadows of Fatima, Portugal, when a great light appeared followed by a message of peace from what was an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

While many did not believe the young children, Sabat told the students of Epiphany Cathedral School that they need to keep hold of their belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, and how they came to us to bring peace to the world.

It was in 1947 when the world-famous International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima was sculpted by José Thedim. Two sculptures were created to reflect the precise instructions of Sister Lucia, one of the children of Fatima. The second statue is on permanent display at the Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal. Pope Pius XII crowned Our Lady of Fatima as Queen of the World, and the pilgrim statue has travelled to hundreds of countries and has been seen by millions.

Interwoven into each visit was Mass, silent prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, praying the rosary and more. A steady stream of people visited each location while the statue was in the Diocese. Some knelt as close to the statue as possible, while others prayed in the pews. For each person the experience was different, yet no less profound.
Walking in the footsteps of Christ: Lent as a pilgrimage

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Pilgrims in Christ.

Lent possesses certain rich spiritual themes that speak powerfully to us today. One important theme is Lent as a journey toward God. In many respects this spiritual journey of 40 days toward Easter resembles the ancient tradition of going on pilgrimage.

The role of pilgrimage remains an important spiritual tool for Christians, as is seen in the thousand-year-old tradition of walking through the Holy Land, or a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, or the Route of Saints to Wawel Castle in Krakow, Poland. In our own locale, many in Florida recently in the Year of Mercy traveled to walk through the Holy Door of Mercy as a symbolic gesture to open their hearts and lives to the grace of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be a pilgrim? How does it help us grow in faith and move closer to God? Becoming a pilgrim involves leaving our regular routines behind, packing only that which is essential, and setting out on a journey to some holy destination with the hope of interior transformation and deeper union with God. Each of these aspects are worth reflecting upon.

First, we leave behind our regular routine. In today’s society, we often look to a summer vacation or holiday “to get away from it all.”

But often how have we returned from a break needing a vacation after our vacation? A pilgrimage is similar to a vacation in that it gives us a break from the ordinary, but different in that it is a quiet time of purification, a time to examine our lives and our priorities to see if they are attuned with what God wants of us, and a time to grow in union with God. Each of these aspects is worth reflecting upon.

In lent, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which both heals and strengthens the soul. Simple meals, silence, the Liturgy of the Hours or other forms of prayer may also be helpful. “Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me” (John 15:4-5).

Second, we pack only that which is essential. Just as a backpacker, carries only the bare minimum to reach the summit of a mountain, so too in setting out on a pilgrimage, we adopt the spiritual practice of detachment so as to reach our new spiritual heights. Not that God wants us to shun the world. On the contrary, we are meant to be “leave” and transform it. But too often our focus shifts from Our Creator to ourselves without reserve.

In its totality, Lent emphasizes that we are a pilgrim people following Christ our Savior’s footsteps, with heaven, our eternal home, as our ultimate destination. The season invites us to dispel the darkness in our lives and walk toward the Light — the Resurrected Christ — who breathes new life into our lives and makes possible to finally live forever as one family.

May God bless us all as we journey with Holy Mother Church and each other through this Lenten Season toward the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice in Florida

Students hear music from ‘Violins of Hope’

By the family of Amnon Weinstein, who travels the country to honor the victims of the Holocaust, and to share their history and stories of hope through the beauty of music. Students learned about the origins of each piece and the musician’s personal story. Each story emphasized how the music restored hope and strengthened their faith.

Three local Perlman Music School graduates played violin solos and Jewish folk songs for the students, aged fifth grade and older. They shared how playing these special instruments allowed them to bring each musician’s story to life.

STAFF REPORT

SARASOTA | Students from Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School, St. Martha Catholic School and St. Mary Academy participated in a Holocaust education school outreach program called the “Violins of Hope Project.”

The event on Feb. 13 in Sarasota was sponsored by Perlman Music Program/Suncoast and the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee. Through the “Violins of Hope Project,” restored violins belonging to Jewish musicians who were victims of the Holocaust were played in a special concert. The instruments were painstakingly restored by Amnon Weinstein.

At left, a violinist plays upon one of several violins that were on display during a “Violins of Hope” presentation Feb. 13. (COURTESY)
Wauchula teen selected for evangelization team

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

WAUCHULA | Eucharistic Adoration during a Lenten retreat at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Center changed the life of Grace Coronado in many ways, but most importantly in a spiritual way.

The retreat was led by a traveling National Evangelization Team (NET), which was invited to the Diocese to challenge the youth to love Christ and embrace the life of the Church. Grace did this in a profound way. She was so moved by the powerful experience of the retreat that she applied for and was eventually accepted as a traveling NET member for 2017.

"The retreat was great," Grace said after admitting she didn’t want to go with the group of teens from St. Michael Parish in Wauchula. "I had no idea what to expect, but I felt something unexpected. I found my calling — to share my faith with others." Grace’s mother, Olivia Coronado, said she always knew her daughter was faith-filled and tried to encourage Grace and her siblings to grow closer to the Lord. "I told her, ‘You have to do what the soul needs.’"

That is difficult for teens to understand and follow, but Grace stuck with it and here she is getting ready to share her faith with others like her.

A senior at Hardee County High School, Grace was one of many from across the country who applied for the 175 positions as a traveling NET member. She was then selected for an in-person interview at the NET home offices in Minnesota in December. Through the positive experiences of the visit, Grace knew it was where she had to be at this point in her life and received the good news not long after.

"I feel blessed to be able to experience this journey," Grace explained. "The support of my family and the inspiration of the Sisters at the Parish (Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matera) have really made a difference in my life."

Sister Gema Maria de Jesus Ruiz, director of Religious Education at St. Michael Parish, said, "We are very happy for her decision which I think is going to make her grow even more. We are proud to serve on the forefront of their lives, especially in a world where it is easy to be distracted and pulled farther away."

This summer, she will join 175 young Catholics aged 18-28 who will leave behind their jobs, school, family and friends to devote nine months to serving with the National Evangelization Teams. Divided into 16 teams, they travel across the U.S. for nine months to share the Gospel with young people and their families. Since 1981, NET teams have led over 30,000 retreats and ministered to more than 1.8 million young Catholics. Grace will be joining Alexandra Bazcaya of San Pedro Parish, who is returning to serve a second year with NET after taking a year off.

NET Ministries fulfills its mission through: proclaiming the Gospel of Christ through a personal witness of faith; inviting young people to live for Christ, forming young people in Christian character through the study and practice of their faith; and equipping youth workers and young adults with the ministry skills needed for evangelization.

During a NET retreat, which take place regularly within the Diocese of Venice, there are large- and small-group sessions and they are later divided into even smaller male and female teams. These small groups allow for a more personal connection and guidance from NET team members, and offer the youth the opportunity to be more comfortable about sharing their faith. Large-group sessions include the performance of dramas, which are re-enactments of real-life scenarios that challenge one’s faith. There is also fun and games. The core sessions also include talks.

To prepare for her journey, Grace, who is a good singer, has been taking guitar lessons thanks to the assistance of a parishioner at Our Lady of the Angels Parish in Lake-wood Ranch. While nervous to be going away from home for such a long period of time, she knows she is prepared to handle it and is getting excited to go.

As part of her acceptance into the program, she had to commit to raising $8,000. Early efforts included holding a car wash, and her mother helped create and distribute taco salads to businesses in the area. Grace must continue raising additional monies, so a fund has been established and donations are being handled through the Sisters at the Parish.

To help Grace reach her dream of being a NET member, send checks to the Sister Servants of the Lord, c/o Grace Coronado NET Fund, 409 Alice St., Wauchula, FL 33873.

University students welcome Bishop Dewane

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

ESTERO | The Catholic students at Florida Gulf Coast University in Estero welcomed Bishop Frank J. Dewane with open arms Feb. 12, as he celebrated Mass and offered prayers and encouragement.

The Mass, celebrated at 9 p.m. in Room 214 of Cohen Hall (the Student Union) to accommodate the students who are in earlier club meetings, was organized by the FGCU Catholic Student Organization (CSO) and Father Casey Jones, Chaplain.

The Bishop offered words of encouragement to the students, praising them for keeping a connection to the faith while in college, a time when distractions can make it easy to come up with excuses to stray. He also urged them to invite a Catholic friend to Mass.

"Make the effort to offer that invitation," Bishop Dewane continued. "Be an example to others and live your life the way Christ calls all of us to. That example will encourage others to follow."

Maintaining a personal relationship with Christ is crucial while at college, the Bishop said, particularly when others may ridicule their faith, or try to lead them farther away from the Lord.

"Take your headphones off sometime and take the time to listen to hear what Christ has to say," Bishop Dewane concluded. "You have to listen to be able to respond to His call; a call that will help you become the woman or man of God you are meant to be."

The mission of the CSO at the university is to build community of students who cherish morals and values, promote giving and selflessness and giving back to the community by developing the spiritual wellness of FGCU.

CSO President Ely Perez, a junior from Clearwater who is studying biomedical engineering, said it was an honor to have Bishop Dewane celebrate Mass for the students and hear his kind words of encouragement.

"The celebration of the Mass is prepared to handle it and is getting excited to go."

The CSO realizes that college is a time when students may decide to take a "break" from their faith, but know how crucial it is to sustain the club by having events that encourage fellowship between the students.

"The celebration of the Mass with our Bishop is very important to us," Perez said. "Being on campus can seem very isolating for us as we are not part of a Parish. The Bishop’s words really hit home, telling us that we are doing good and he is praying for us. That means so much."

"Devotional Dinners" are held every Thursday at 7 p.m. in Merwin Hall. This semester the theme is "Why do Catholics...?" which offers a forum where the students learn about unanswered questions they have about Catholicism.

In addition, once a month Father Jones leads a praise and worship gathering, often with Adoration, in Veterans Pavilion in the center of campus. On Ash Wednesday, March 1, Father Jones will distribute ashes beginning at 1 p.m. with an evening Mass to follow in a nearby classroom.

Confessions are available every Sunday 8:15-8:55 p.m. and by appointment, or by approaching Father Jones at any Thursday evening events. Father Jones can also be reached at 9-10-GO-EAGLE or by email at caseyjones.bvhs.org.

For more information about the FGCU Catholic Student Organization, "like" them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/fgcuco or visit https://fgcu.co/organisation/fgcuco.
Program celebrates new partnership

BOB REDDY of the Florida Catholic staff

ENGLEWOOD | Catholic Charities of Venice has announced a new partnership with the New Paradigm Foundation to provide affordable transitional housing to area families who are at risk of becoming homeless.

With this partnership, the program will continue to grow, provide services more efficiently and effectively, and reach even more families in need in the community, said Peter Routsis-Arroyo, Catholic Charities CEO, during the Gala Feb. 11. Held at the Gulf View Grill in Englewood, the event was to benefit the program and announce the partnership.<n
Kathy Nelson, co-founder and director of the New Paradigm Foundation, said she was excited that Catholic Charities, which has such a stellar reputation, is now taking over the program. “Bishop (Frank J.) Dewane said that what we do with the foundation is a good fit and will build upon what is already being provided,” Nelson said. “This foundation was created to help people who don’t have a place to live or an opportunity to succeed. We have made a difference since the founding in 2001, and now it is time to have Catholic Charities take this opportunity to continue to grow and serve those in need.”

Bishop Dewane said the new partnership will continue to serve the neediest of families in Charlotte County. “This is a merger of two wonderful ideas, that of Catholic Charities and New Paradigm,” the Bishop said. “Catholic Charities works to help the neediest people improve their situation; New Paradigm does this in a very particular way by providing housing and real support that ensures success.”

New Paradigm of Catholic Charities has nine properties, with 14 units designated for transitional housing. In addition to the housing, the two-year program is designed to help families develop the skills necessary to live an independent life through financial training, credit repair services, counseling and parenting classes.

New Paradigm was founded in 2001 by Kathy and David Nelson using a percentage of their commission from real estate. In 2010, the program underwent a major expansion when grants were received to purchase nine homes. Serving people in the community regardless of race, color or creed, New Paradigm was at a crossroads in its ability to continue to serve the community at such a high level, explained Bill Flemming, advisory board member. “Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Venice came in at the right time. This is a perfect marriage that will allow New Paradigm to grow and serve the neediest of Charlotte County for years to come.”

Inspired by Gospel values, the concept is at the heart of what New Paradigm was founded upon: not giving a hand out, but a hand up.

The Gala was themed “Teach a Man to Fish.” This comes from the saying: “Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” This concept is at the heart of what New Paradigm was founded upon: not giving a hand out, but a hand up. The evening included a cocktail hour, dinner and a live auction. For more information contact Belliard at 239-793-0059 or allegra@catholiccharitiesccw.org.

Program helps at-risk children get food they need

BOB REDDY of the Florida Catholic staff

NAPLES | Chronically hungry elementary school children in the Naples area who are homeless or at-risk are in need, and the Catholic Charities of Collier County Weekend Power Pack Feeding Program comes to the rescue each week.

The program, administered through the Judy Sullivan Family Resource Center of Catholic Charities, provides 250 children with a backpack filled with nutritious food so that they will have food throughout the weekend. Weekends are times when it is easy for kids to go hungry and this program provides them with continued nourishment while they are not afforded the access to free lunches at school.

Allegra Belliard, Resource Center program director, said the program helps students at Parkside Elementary School and Gulf Coast Charter School. The program relies on donations to cover the costs required to ensure each backpack is full of the needed food.

Catholic schools in Collier County regularly hold collection drives for items. St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic School had its food drive for the program before Christmas break, while at the same time St. John Neumann Catholic High School had “dress-down days” for $1 per student to collect funds for the program. During National Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 29-Feb. 4), St. Ann Catholic School, Royal Palm Academy, both in Naples, and the Donalogue Academy in Ave Maria participated in their own food drives.

Belliard said donations are always needed for the following: individual-sized cereal bars; granola bars; chili; mac-n-cheese; ravioli; crackers and fruit cups. No candy or junk food is accepted. In addition to food, monetary donations may be made via cash or check made payable to Catholic Charities (in the memo line indicate “Power Pack Program”) at Catholic Charities of Collier County, Judy Sullivan Family Resource Center, 3174 Tamiami Trail E., Naples, FL 34112. For more information, contact Belliard at 239-793-0059 or allegra@catholiccharitiesccw.org.

Advocates walk for the needy

STAFF REPORT

PUNTA GORDA | The eighth annual St. Vincent de Paul Walk for the Poor, a vital fundraiser to help the needy throughout Charlotte County, was a huge success.

An estimated 125 people walked throughout Charlotte County Feb. 11 in support of the walk organized by the St. Vincent de Paul District Council of Charlotte County Florida Inc. Participants began walking at Laishley Park Pavillon in Punta Gorda and proceeded north across the U.S. 41 bridge walkway into Port Charlotte.

The walk benefits the efforts of the four St. Vincent de Paul centers in the county to provide food, clothing and other basics to the needy to help them rise out of poverty.

“Our ultimate goal at SVP is to identify people who are sincerely interested in breaking the cycle of poverty and maintaining a better life for themselves and their families,” said Cathy McKenna, president of the District Council. “St. Vincent de Paul volunteers serve as mentors to guide those in need onto a path of self-sufficiency.”

Inspired by Gospel values, the Charlotte County District Council of the Society includes the Conferences at Sacred Heart, San Antonio, St. Charles Borromeo and St. Maximilian Kolbe parishes.

To learn more about the St. Vincent de Paul District Council of Charlotte County Florida, visit www.svdpcharlottefl.org.
Parish breaks ground on new Church

Bob Reddy
of the Florida Catholic staff

LAKWOOD RANCH | The commitment and dedication of many people made Feb. 19 a day to remember for the faithful of Our Lady of the Angels Parish in Lakewood Ranch, for it was the day ground was broken for the new Parish Church.

Bishop Frank J. Dewane, who celebrated a Mass and led the groundbreaking blessing and ceremony, called the new Church the start of a new foundation for the Parish community. However, the Bishop said the faithful are the true foundation of Holy Mother Church and that the new building will be a place for praise and worship of Our Lord.

“Thank you for what you have done to make this day a reality,” the Bishop said to the gathered faithful.

“It has happened in many steps over many years, but it has happened because of you and people like you who came before us — men and women of faith who knew that Our Lady of the Angels was growing and needed a new Church.”

The day would not have been made possible without the assistance of so many people, explained Our Lady of the Angels Parochial Vicar Father John Hoang. But Father Hoang specifically noted the vision and energy of Father Dan Smith, the Pastor of the Parish from 2011 until his sudden passing in June 2016, who led the capital campaign to get the funding so that construction could begin.

Newly appointed Administrator Father Michael Scheip said, “What a beautiful blessing it is today to have Bishop Dewane with us, to bless the site for our new Church building. Many years of praying, planning and raising funds have providentially brought us to this historic day.”

When the dirt was thrown, a cheer went up, marking the beginning of this next exciting phase in the life of Our Lady of the Angels Parish that was beginning.

Construction on the new 20,000-square-foot Church will double the capacity of the existing temporary Church to 1,074. The new Church features a cruciform design pre-engineered building with block and framed infill, and a metal roof. The building will include a Chapel that will seat 136 and a separate Adoration Chapel.

Because of an existing active bald eagle nest, the Church will be built outside of a 330-foot radius, as required under state and federal guidelines. There is also a permanent 100-foot protection zone around the nest, which will be in place during and after construction of the new Church. Construction activity will also be limited during active nesting season from November through April. Even so, the construction should take approximately 12 months to complete.

Currently Our Lady of the Angels serves more than 5,400 individuals and 1,650 families in the rapidly growing Lakewood Ranch area.

An architect’s rendering of the new Parish church.

From left, Msgr. Joseph Stearns, Father Michael Scheip, Parish Administrator, Bishop Frank J. Dewane and Father John Hoang, Parochial Vicar, break ground for the new Church at Our Lady of the Angels Parish in Lakewood Ranch. (PHOTOS BY BOB REDDY | FC)
DIOCESAN EVENTS

“Witnessing Faith with Bishop Dewane,” last Fridays beginning Feb 24, 10:30 a.m., on 1660 AM in Naples and 1410 AM and 106.7 FM in Fort Myers. Listen anytime online at RelevantRadio.com. Join Bishop Frank J. Dewane for his debut on Relevant Radio.

Naples Prayer Walk for Life, Ash Wednesday, March 1, after 8 a.m. Mass, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Naples. For a peaceful prayer walk at Planned Parenthood, 239-372-5129.

Fort Myers 40 Days for Life, March 1-1 April 9, outside Planned Parenthood, College Parkway and Winkler Road, Fort Myers. Mike, Mike40DaysLifeFM@gmail.com, 239-400-0090; www.40daysforlife.com/Fortmyers.

Naples 40 Days for Life, March 1-1 April 9, Planned Parenthood, Creech and Goodlette-Frank Roads. Jeanne Berdeaux @ dioceseofvenice.org; 239-873-7091. For English part: Fran Frederick, 941-921-6631.

“Little Mermaid” school concert, March 3, 7 p.m.; April 1, 7 p.m.; April 2, 3 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi School, 2055 Heitman St., Fort Myers. Tickets: $10. 239-334-7707, ext. 222.

Golf outing, April 8, St. Andrews South Golf Club, 1901 Deb Orleans Blvd., Naples. 239-455-2655; banderson@dioceseofvenice.org, $75 per person. Benefits Society of St. Vincent de Paul Sacred Heart Conference. Registration deadline: April 3. Gary and Lynn Reaves, 941-202-2161, golf4vdp@gmail.com. For sponsorships: Donna Roderick, 941-575-8768, dvo@dioceseofvenice.org.

Crumplets and tea fashion show, April 11, 11:30 a.m. St. Martha’s Church, 200 N. Orange Ave., Sarasota. Fashions by Island Fresh, Kathleen Collins, O’Blanc and Ruffino. Tickets: $35. 239-344-2419; sabrina.904@ hotmail.com. 239-344-4664. For English part: Iris Gomez, 863-773-0901.


Catholic Charities Migrant care grants. Donations of old and broken rosaries are also accepted which will be repaired and sent worldwide with your prayers. 941-575-8768, dvo@dioceseofvenice.org. For sponsorships: Donna Roderick, 941-575-8768, dvo@dioceseofvenice.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

ACFAM, a program of Catholic Charities, 3681 Michigan Ave., Fort Myers, needs volunteers for reception desk. Require: Current computer, bilingual (Spanish/English) skills, excellent phone skills, can lift 25 lbs. Strong preference for bilingual (Spanish/English) candidates. 30 hours: Monday- Wednesday 4 p.m.-7 p.m.; Thursday 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Friday 9 a.m.-noon. 239 463-3993, holdenbnd@comcast.net.

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Mooney starts beach volleyball team

Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School in Sarasota has started a Lady Cougar beach volleyball team, with the first practices taking place in early February. (COURTESY)

St. Patrick’s Day dispensation

With St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, falling on a Friday during the Lenten Season, Bishop Frank J. Dewane is granting a one-day dispensation of abstaining from meat on that Friday alone. The faithful are encouraged to choose another day in the same week to abstain from meat and to perform some other penance or work of charity on March 17 to assist in their spiritual Lenten journey. Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics who are 14 years of age and older. Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence. Fasting, almsgiving and prayer are the three traditional disciplines of Lent.

Presenting ‘Perils of Health’

Dale Alquist, a foremost authority on the works and teachings of G.K. Chesterton, was the featured speaker at a dinner and lecture event presented by the Southwest Florida Guild of the Catholic Medical Association. The event took place Feb. 15, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Fort Myers and focused on Chesterton’s work “Perils of Health.” While mostly tailored for physicians, the audience included a number of clergy, interested faithful and Chesterton fans.

Students positively impact the world

One of the missions of St. John Neumann Catholic High School is to prepare students to positively impact the world through lives lived with faith, integrity, intelligence, personal responsibility, joy and selfless service. To do this, on Feb. 14, Valentine’s Day, every locker had a positive-message Post-It note on it for students to read throughout the day to remind them of their great qualities and their worth. This is an ongoing effort throughout the year.
Annual campaign shines light on farmworker issues

STAFF REPORT

ORLANDO | As Catholics embark on the season of fasting and abstinence, it might be the best time to think about the question: “Who provided the food on my table?”

Farmworkers toil in the fields and serve a critical function for all Americans, yet they are hidden in the shadows of American society. That is why for the past 12 years the Florida Catholic holds its annual Long-Sleeve Relief campaign — to create awareness about the needs of farmworkers and the important role they play in all of our lives.

Beginning in 2005, the goal of the campaign was to provide clean long-sleeved shirts to protect farmworkers from exposure to the sun’s burning rays and pesticides they might encounter in the fields. Chemicals that saturate the shirts make them unusable after several wearings, and minds. As pesticide safety and environmental health project coordinator at the association, she advocates for farmworker rights and safety every day. Farmworkers are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, which was passed in 1935 and forbids employers from firing a worker for joining, organizing or supporting a labor union. It also establishes a structure for unions and employers to engage in collective bargaining. But not for farmworkers.

Economos also knows that many Americans don’t even think of farmworkers, or understand the struggles of those documented and undocumented. And make no mistake, they are undocumented; not illegal.

“No person is illegal,” Economos said. “So saying someone is an illegal immigrant is saying the person is illegal. They might have come here without proper authorization, but that doesn’t make them illegal.”

It might seem like a politically correct ploy to gain sympathy for people who improperly entered the country, but Economos said the use of the word “illegal” is a flawed generalization that creates a “stigma and anti-immigrant sentiment.” She explained not having proper documentation is a civil offense, not a criminal offense, and garnering proper documentation is a complicated process which, for some people, takes decades to come to fruition. With immigration entrenched in economics and politics, it can be difficult to navigate the system, including the H-2A guestworker program.

“It might be easy to say, ‘Well, they should return to their home countries,’ but that generalization lacks understanding and compassion,” she explained. “So instead of recognizing the way to understand how generalizations hurt is to hear the compelling stories farmworkers can tell.

“If you generalize and lump people into certain categories, it is easy to dismiss them. But if you personalize the stories and get to know the people face to face, it turns things around,” she said. “Ask the questions: Who is harvesting your food? Who is cutting your lawn? Who is doing your roof? Who is doing your laundry in the home? Look around your community and see them as real people and real families.”
Ruling allows death penalty cases to move forward

DARA KAM | The News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE | In a pair of October rulings, the state court ruled that a new law — passed in response to a U.S. Supreme Court decision in a case known as Hurst v. Florida — was unconstitutional because it only required 10 jurors to recommend death, even with an unconstitutional law in place.

The majority in the 5-2 decision described the new law as being constitutional — if 12 jurors unanimously determine that a defendant should be sentenced to death. But in her dissent, Justice Barbara Pariente argued that what could be a "temporary" fix, until lawmakers address the issue, could lead to more litigation.

The October majority opinion in the case of Larry Darnell Perry also found that the new law "cannot be applied to pending prosecutions — and is constitutional — if 12 jurors unanimously determine that a defendant should be sentenced to death." But in her dissent, Justice Barbara Pariente argued that what could be a "temporary" fix, until lawmakers address the issue, could lead to more litigation.

"Such concerns are precisely why it is for the Legislature, not this [Supreme] Court, to enact legislation curing the act's fatal 10-2 provisions, assuming the Legislature intends for the death penalty to continue to be imposed in Florida," Pariente wrote in a dissent joined by Justice Peggy Quince.

Defense lawyers took a harsh view on the ruling.

"As a society, we rely upon court precedent to determine how to interpret and apply the laws. The [Supreme Court's] about-face within these opinions is confounding," 10th Judicial Circuit Assistant Public Defender Pete Mills.

Mills was referring to a 2005 opinion in State vs. Steele in which the court urged the Legislature to require a unanimous jury vote, rather than the previous simple majority vote, in capital-case proceedings.

House Speaker Richard Corcoran, R-Land O' Lakes, and Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, told The News Service — before the court's decision Monday — that they wanted to send a death penalty measure requiring unanimous jury recommendations to Gov. Rick Scott by the end of the session's first week. More than 200 death penalty cases — half of those on Death Row — "in abeyance," meaning they are eligible for new sentencing hearings under a separate state court ruling addressing retroactivity of the Hurst decision, which was predicated on a 2002 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a case known as Ring v. Arizona.

The legislation being considered by the House and Senate would not move any impact on retroactivity and would likely only affect future capital cases or those already underw

party coordinator or coordinators is based on a 120-day timetable. Four states, including Texas, are currently undertaking such transitions, the archbishop wrote. "Keeping the refugee resettlement program while publicly supporting it, implementing reforms or improving upon it will frame Florida as a model of a welcoming state for some of the most vulnerable people on our planet. My brother bishops and I are proud of the role Catholic agencies have in assisting in resettlement in Florida."

On Feb. 17, the Florida House Subcommittee on Children, Families and Seniors held a hearing to discuss the future of the state's refugee resettlement program. Members voted 9 to 5 in favor of withdrawing from the program. While the issue will go to Florida's Senate, the FCCB hopes the outcome will be more favorable in keeping the program.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
Issues of concern to Catholic community hit roadblocks

TALLAHASSEE | The issues of refugee resettlement and abortion became the basis of a decision by the Florida's Legislature and a ruling of the Florida Supreme Court, respectively, in mid-February.

On Feb. 16, the Florida Supreme Court blocked a 2015 law that would have provided women 24 hours to reflect before having an abortion. In a 4-2 decision, justices overturned an unconstitutional law and agreed with a Leon County circuit judge who issued a temporary injunction against the law.

In the death penalty case, the majority on the court de

ised the new law can be applied to pending prosecutions — and is constitutional — if 12 jurors unanimously determine that a defendant should be sentenced to death. But in her dissent, Justice Barbara Pariente argued that what could be a "temporary" fix, until lawmakers address the issue, could lead to more litigation.

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Balance due by June 3, 2017. We will have a spiritual director and daily Mass. For more details see our website www.polandmje.com or call Scott Scarpa at 860-289-2606 or 860-841-1192
**NATION**

**Rallies call on Congress to defund Planned Parenthood**

**CHICAGO** | The organizers of rallies held across the country Feb. 11 to call for defunding Planned Parenthood said their message to Congress is to redirect taxpayers’ money to facilities that “do a better job meeting the real health care needs of women and families without specializing in abortion.”

More than 15,000 people attended 229 rallies held in 45 states. Average attendance was around 75, but in some cities, crowds numbered as high as 600, according to a news release issued after the rallies.

Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago, was the national organizer of the rallies, or #ProtestPP. Other groups coordinating the events included Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, Created Equal, 40 Days for Life and the Susan B. Anthony List. “This is a nationwide event, and at the same time, it is a local community concern,” Scheidler said in a statement. In rallying to tell “Congress to quit sending money to an organization that specializes in killing children,” participants also declared “that they do not want Planned Parenthood to continue operating in their neighborhoods.” According to its 2014-15 annual report, Planned Parenthood receives $553.7 million annually in government health service grants and reimbursements, which is 43 percent of its overall revenue. Federal money is allocated to the organization through Medicaid and public family planning services. Planned Parenthood performs 34 percent of U.S. abortions.

**Program’s suspension sparks layoffs**

**WASHINGTON** | Local Catholic Charities agencies are scrambling to save staff jobs as they respond to President Donald Trump’s executive order temporarily suspending the country’s refugee resettlement program.

Although the order remains on hold after a three-judge federal appeals court panel Feb. 8 denied a government request to overturn a temporary restraining order against Trump’s action, agencies across the country are shifting staffers into other programs should the courts reinstate the resettlement ban or the administration issues a new order. Dominican Sister Donna Markham, CEO and president of Catholic Charities USA, said up to 700 workers are affected in some way by the order, with many of them losing their jobs. Sister Markham and her national staff at Catholic Charities USA’s Alexandria, Va., headquarters are so concerned for the workers and the refugees they serve that the agency launched a campaign Feb. 2 to raise $8 million to save jobs in 80 dioceses nationwide. “It’s a mess. It’s just a mess. If we’re talking about American jobs, this is laying off people in these public-private partnerships,” Sister Markham told Catholic News Service.

“She’d like to see if we can raise $8 million to make a dent in (the impact on) some of these jobs but we can so retain some of those positions to continue the programming for those already there.”

**Congress urged to pass conscience protections**

**WASHINGTON** | Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Archbishop Charles E. Lori of Baltimore have urged the House and Senate to pass the Conscience Protection Act of 2017. They called it “essential legislation protecting the fundamental rights of health care providers … to ensure that those providing much-needed health care and health coverage can continue to do so without being forced by government to help destroy innocent unborn children.” The two prelates made the plea in a joint letter dated Feb. 8 addressed to President Donald Trump and the USCCB. Cardinal Dolan is chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Archbishop Lori is chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty. In the Senate, the Conscience Protection Act of 2017 is known as S. 301, and in the other chamber it is H.R. 644. The companion bills would provide legal protection to doctors, nurses, hospitals and all health care providers who choose not to provide abortion or euthanization as part of their health care practice. In the House, Republican Reps. Diane Black of Tennessee and Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska introduced the measure Jan. 24. Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma sponsored it in the Senate Feb. 3 and it now has at least 16 co-sponsors.

**Bishop urges administration to pursue deeper nuclear arms cuts**

**WASHINGTON** | The chairman of a U.S. bishops’ committee urged Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to pursue additional reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia. “We urge bold and concrete commitments to accelerate verifiable nuclear disarmament,” Bishop Oscar Cantú of Las Cruces, N.M., chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on International Justice and Peace, said in a letter to Tillerson Feb. 15 that calls for reducing their strategic arsenals — weapons deployed on intercontinental ballistic missiles, bombers and submarines — to 1,550 each by 2018. Bishop Cantú’s letter comes as Tillerson begins his role as the chief foreign affairs advisor to President Donald Trump. It also follows days after Reuters reported that Trump denounced New START in a teleconference with Russian leader Vladimir Putin. The status of the treaty was broached by Putin, who asked Trump if the pact should be extended beyond 2018. Reuters reported Feb. 9, citing as sources two unnamed U.S. officials and one unnamed former U.S. official with knowledge of the call.

**Colombian nun kidnapped in southern Mali**

**VATICAN CITY** | Mali security forces arrested two suspects who they believe were involved in the kidnapping of a Colombian nun Feb. 7 in southern Mali. Sister Gloria Cecilia Narvaez Argoti, 56, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate, was taken by armed men in Karangasso village near the Burkina Faso border, according to Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Around 9 p.m., a group of armed men broke into the parish, grabbed Sister Narvaez, and took off in an ambulance that belonged to the parish.菌株被染上了疾病。The news agency Agence France-Presse released Feb. 8 that a security source said the two suspects were stopped while heading toward Burkina Faso in the ambulance.

“The abductors initially threw her into the ambulance of the church, which led to their arrest,” the source stated. A church worker told the office that Sister Narvaez was one of four nuns living in Karangasso. The worker also stated that she was the only one abducted.
Pope greets U.S. grass-roots groups, saying they help ‘communities thrive’

DENNIS SADOWSKI
Catholic News Service

MODESTO, Calif. | Pope Francis congratulated more than 600 representatives of grass-roots organizations for responding with mercy to society’s hurting people during the opening of the four-day U.S. regional World Meeting of Popular Movements. In a letter to the assembly Feb. 16 read alternately in English and in Spanish, the pope said the work of the organizations and the people involved “make your communities thrive.”

Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, read the pope’s message in English. The letter encouraged wide-scale community organizing because it accomplishes justice.

The pope expressed hope “such constructive energy would spread to all dioceses because it builds bridges between peoples and individuals. These are bridges that can overcome the walls of exclusion, indifference, racism and intolerance.”

The message earned applause, especially when the pope reiterated that “no people is criminal and no religion is terrorist,” and as he encouraged people to “defend creation” in the face of “disturbing warming of the climatic system.”

“Christian terrorism does not exist, Jewish terrorism does not exist, they do not exist. No people is criminal or drug-trafficking or violent,” he said. He encouraged people to confront terror with love in the interest of peace.

Pope Francis’ interest in promoting the work of grass-roots organizations can be traced to his time as cardinal in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when he often visited priest friends, struggling families and low-paid workers in poor neighborhoods spread across the city. Since 2014, three interna-
tional Council of Cardinals began their February meeting expressing their “full support” for his work.

Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodri-
guez Maradiaga, coordinator of the council, began the meeting Feb. 13 assuring the pope of the cardinals’ “full support for his person and his magisterium,” according to a statement published by the Vatican press office.

The statement said the cardinals’ support was offered “in relation to recent events.”

No specific events were men-
tioned, but the statement came just a few days after a fake version of the Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, was emailed to Vatican officials and a week after posters were put up around Rome questioning Pope Francis’ authority to hold meetings with the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and other groups over which the pope had placed special diocesan jurisdiction after U.S. Cardinal Raymond L. Burke and three retired cardinals publicly questioned Pope Francis on the teaching in his document on the family, “Amoris Laetitia.”

Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga, speaking on behalf of the Council of Cardinals, also thanked Pope Francis for the way he explained the council’s work on the reform of the Roman Curia to Vatican officials.

Meeting with members of the Curia just before Christmas, Pope Francis said the reform was motivated by a desire to ensure the central offices of the Church are focused “on the problems of people and what they need, in order to meet people’s needs and assist the pope in his ministry of service to the Church and the world.”

“We cannot be content simply with changing personnel; we need to encourage spiritual, human and professional renewal among the members of the Curia,” the pope had said. “The reform of the Curia is in no way implemented with a change of personnel — something that certainly is happening and will continue to happen — but with a conversion in persons. Continuing formation is not enough; what we need also and above all is continuing conversion and purification. Without a change of mentality, efforts at practical improvement will be in vain.”

In addition to Cardinal Rodri-
guez Maradiaga, the council mem-
bers are: Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state; Sean P. O’Malley of Boston; Francisco Javier Errazuriz Ossa, retired archbishop of Santiago, Chile; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany; Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya of Kinshasa, Congo; George Pell, head of the Secretariat for the Economy; and Giuseppe Bertello, president of the commission governing Vatican City State.

Council of Cardinals publicly expresses support of pope
Bishop Vasquez welcomes federal appeals court ruling on refugee ban

WASHINGTON | The chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration welcomed a federal appeals court ruling that upheld a temporary restraining order against President Donald Trump’s travel ban on refugees from seven predominantly Muslim countries that also temporarily suspended the country’s refugee resettlement program.

“We respect the rule of law and the American judicial process. We remain steadfast in our commitment to resettling refugees and all those fleeing persecution,” Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, said in a statement Feb. 10.

“Consideration for affected refugee and immigrant families are not separated and that they continue to be welcomed in our country,” the statement said.

The bishop pledged that Church agencies would continue to welcome people “as it is a vital part of our Catholic faith and an enduring element of our American values and traditions.”

In a decision issued late Feb. 9, a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously rejected the government’s argument to lift the freeze on the president’s order and maintained that the court had jurisdiction in the case as a check on executive power.

Trump had argued that his order was a matter of national security and that the courts had no claim to decide the issue.

The panel ruled otherwise saying that such an argument “runs contrary to the fundamental structure of our constitutional democracy.”

Further, the judges said, “although courts owe considerable deference to the president’s policy determinations with respect to immigration and national security, it is beyond question that the federal judiciary retains the authority to adjudicate constitutional challenges to executive action.”

The administration is expected to file an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump said in a posting on Twitter minutes after the ruling was released: "SEE YOU IN COURT, THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE!"

He later told reporters that the judges had made “a political decision.”

The case was filed by the state of Washington, which argued that Trump’s order was unconstitutional because it discriminated against Muslims and that state agencies were harmed because students and employees were barred from re-entering the country. The state of Minnesota subsequently joined the lawsuit.

U.S. District Court Judge James Robart of Seattle halted Trump’s travel ban Feb. 3 by granting a temporary restraining order.

Several lawsuits have been filed challenging Trump’s Jan. 27 executive order that suspended the entire U.S. refugee resettlement program for 120 days and banned entry of all citizens from seven majority-Muslim countries — Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia — for 90 days.

Another clause in the order established religious criteria for refugees, proposing to give priority to religious minorities over others who may have equally compelling refugee claims.

In its 29-page ruling, the appeals court said the administration’s lawyers had provided no evidence that refugees from the seven countries named in the ban posed a national security threat through terrorism.

The judges also wrote that the government had not shown Trump’s order provides any avenue for those restricted from traveling to the U.S. to appeal the decision or seek a hearing to present their reasons for entering the country. The decision said that earlier court cases had determined that the protections established under the due process clause in the Constitution’s Fifth Amendment “apply to all ‘persons’ within the U.S. including aliens whose presence is lawful, unlawful, temporary or permanent” as well as to people attempting to re-enter the U.S. after traveling.

The court also considered the public’s interest in the case and determined that the public “has an interest in the free flow of travel, in avoiding separation of families and in freedom from discrimination.”

Syrian refugee Baraa Haj Khalaf and her daughter, 1-year-old Shams, wave after arriving Feb. 7 at O’Hare International Airport in Chicago.

(KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI, REUTERS | CNS)
Stalled action on proposed religious freedom order raises concerns

CAROL ZIMMERMANN
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON | Talk of President Donald Trump possibly signing an executive order on religious freedom — which drew both criticism and praise — has been replaced with discussion about what happened to it and what a final version, if there is one, will look like.

A draft version of the executive order, called “Establishing a Government-Wide Initiative to Respect Religious Freedom,” had been widely criticized in late January by bishops who said it would legalize discrimination and was too far-reaching. It then failed to appear on the president’s desk while rumors circulated that a scaled-down version might appear eventually.

“We hope that President Trump and his administration will take action soon, especially to provide relief from the onerous HHS mandate,” said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, referring to the mandate issued by the federal Department of Health and Human Services requiring most religious employers to provide coverage of artificial birth control for their employees even if they are morally opposed to it.

“Now that some of the Cabinet posts are being confirmed, we hope that concrete and immediate action is taken to protect religious freedom,” he said in a Feb. 10 email to Catholic News Service.

The letter from Callahan and Bishops Dewane and Cantu said: “Adaptation policy is fundamental to protecting the environment. The Paris accord serves as a call for conversion in our personal and collective lives.”

“Now that some of the Cabinet posts are being confirmed, we hope that concrete and immediate action is taken to protect religious freedom,” he said in a Feb. 10 email to Catholic News Service.

The archbishop pointed out that Catholic leaders have been “asking the executive branch for an end to the coercive HHS mandate that requires the Little Sisters of the Poor and so many other religious organizations that partner with us to either violate their faith or pay millions of dollars in fines to the federal government.”

He said he hoped the president would end the coercion of religious employers and also would “allow people of faith to have the freedom to serve others in all our ministries, including our soup kitchens, schools, adoption services, homeless shelters and refugee services.”

After a draft version of the executive order was leaked to the public, the U.S. bishops posted an online letter for Catholics to send to the president urging him to sign such an order.

The four-page draft said that “Americans and their religious organizations must be free to care for creation both domestically and globally.”

“Rigid thinking isn’t divine, pope tells Jesuit magazine

JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY | Discernment is needed to understand life’s ambiguities, not rigid thinking that tends to silence the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis said. True discernment can only be achieved by interpreting the signs of the times and listening to the sufferings of others, especially the poor, he said in an interview with the editors and staff of La Civilta Cattolica, a Jesuit-run magazine founded by Pope Pius IX in 1850. The Rome-based bimonthly continues to be reviewed by the Vatican Secretariat of State before publication.

Commenting on the journal’s 4,000th issue, the pope said it was “a truly unique milestone.” He also encouraged the editors and staff to continue their journey “to remain in the open sea.”
Vatican, Al-Azhar team up to counter religious justification for violence

EUZE HARRIS
CNA/EWTN News

VATICAN CITY | The Vatican and one of Islam’s most renowned schools of Sunni theology are teaming forces to discuss how they can work together in combating religious extremism that uses God’s name and religion as a cover for violence. On Feb. 21 the Vatican announced that Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, will travel to Cairo for an Oct. 23 meeting to participate in a special seminar at the Al-Azhar University.

He will be joined by the council’s secretary, Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, and the head of the Holy See’s Office for Interreligious Dialogue, Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, and the head of the Holy See’s Office for Interreligious Dialogue, Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, who will attend as an observer, and the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, who will attend as an observer.

"The role of al-Azhar al-Sharif and of the Vatican in countering the phenomena of fanaticism, extremism and violence in the name of religion," the meeting will take place "on the vigil" of Feb. 24 in honor of Pope Saint John Paul II’s visit to the university on that day in 2000. It will also be attended by the Holy See’s ambassador to Egypt, Archbishno Bruno Musaró, as well as various representatives from Al-Azhar.

Currently Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, the Imam of al-Azhar is considered by some Muslims to be the highest authority the 1.5-billion strong Sunni Muslim world and oversees Egypt’s al-Azhar Mosque and the prestigious al-Azhar University attached to it.

Founded in the Fatimid dynasty in the 10th century together with the adjoining mosque, the university is one of the most renowned study centers for the legal principles and Islamic sciences. "This meeting will be a landmark step in advancing cooperation between the al-Azhar institution and the Holy See," which were strained in 2011 with claims that Pope Benedict XVI interfered in Egypt's internal affairs by condemning a bomb attack on a church in Alexandria during the time of Coptic Christmas.

Since then relations have continued to move forward at a surprisingly fast pace, leading to the Oct. 21 announcement from the Vatican that sometime this spring the Holy See and the al-Azhar Mosque and adjunct University will officially resume dialogue.

After the announcement, the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, was elected to Cairo for an Oct. 23 meeting with a delegation from al-Azhar to discuss the details.

Bishop Ayuso made a similar visit to al-Azhar in July 2016, where he met with Sunni academic and politician Mahmoud Hamdi Za'zokzok that to discuss the formal reappointment of dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and al-Azhar University, which culminated in the Oct. 23 encounter.

The current seminar, which is the work of several ‘‘preliminary missionary’’ initiatives, will be followed by the next step in officially restoring ties.

In an interview with Vatican Radio published May 24, the day after his historic visit to the Vatican, Al-Tayyeb spoke out harshly against terrorism carried out by extremist Islamic groups such as ISIS, saying that: “Those who kill Muslims, and who also kill Christians, have misunderstood the texts of Islam either intentionally or by negligence...

"We must not blame religions because of the deviations of some of their followers," he said, and issued a global appeal asking that the entire world to "close ranks to confront and put an end to terrorism."

If the growing problem of terrorism is neglected, it’s not just the east that will pay the price, but "both east and west could suffer to a greater extent." In their Feb. 21 communiqué, the Vatican also announced that from Feb. 21-25 the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel will take place in Dakar, Senegal.

Founded by St. John Paul II in 1984, the foundation was established by the late pontiff after his visit first to Africa, during which he came face-to-face with the daily suffering of the people enduring due years of draught and desertification.

While the foundation was previously under the care of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the dicastery has since merged with several others to form a new, mega-dicastery for Integral Human Development, which is now responsible for the Sahel foundation.

The 5-day meeting will be attended by various representatives from the Holy See, including the new dicastery’s secretary, Msgr. Gianpietro Dal Toso, who will participate as an observer, and the Vatican ambassador to Senegal, Archbishop Michael Wallace Bancha.

According to the communiqué, discussion will focus largely on projects awaiting funding. In 2016 alone 43 projects in 6 countries were financed for a grand total of $350,000. Since the foundation’s beginning until 2015, they have financed roughly 3,200 projects in the Sahel region, for a total of more than $37,000,000.

With particular help received from both the Italian and German bishops conferences, specific projects focus on eliminating desertification and managing and developing agricultural units, as well as other projects aimed at providing water pumping systems and improving drinking water and renewables.

The foundation also seeks to bring skilled technicians into the region. Recent data from the Human Development Index, which measures the level of development in each country worldwide, shows that 19 of the 20 least developed countries on the list come from Africa, the communiqué said. Of these 19 countries, 7 are from the Sahel region.

In addition to desertification, the index lists several other factors that compound the situation, including frequent food crisis, the exhaustion of natural resources, particularly water, and violence carried out by extremist groups.

Members of the Board of Directors attending the meeting are: Bishop Sanou Lucas Kafala of Banfora, Burkina Faso, who is the president; Archbishop Mambo Paul Abel of Ziguinchor, Senegal, who is the vice-president; Bishop Happe Martin Albert of Nouackchott, Mauritania, who is the treasurer; Bishop Ouedraogo Ambroise of Maradi, Niger; Bishop Ildo Fortes of Minhel, Cape Verde; Archbishop Djangar Edmond of N’Djamena, Chad; Bishop Ellison Robert Patrick of Banjul, Gambia; Bishop Pedro Carlos Zilli of Bataba, Guinea-Bissau and Bishop Traoré Augustin of Segou, Mali.
God’s love for us is strong

Sunday, Feb. 26
Is 49:14-15; Ps 62:2-3, 6-9; 1 Cor 4:1-5; Mt 6:23-34

In the Homily on the Hill, Jesus teaches us not to retaliate, hate, curse, take oaths, brag, preen, worry or backbite. In other words, let our Little-Brite shine. “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14).

How else are you to let your light shine? Six times in 10 verses, Jesus says, “Do not worry!” God your heavenly Father takes care of the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. Won’t he take even better care of you? Don’t worry, be holy.

Easier said than done. We might worry that we do not have enough time (if only the week had an eighth day), enough money (if only I could retire), enough friends (am I doomed to a lonely life?). Wouldn’t it be great to be free from so many worries?

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Mt 6:33). Jesus teaches that for an attitude adjustment, pray for a relationship adjustment. What lowers the anxiety level is not better organizational skills. The peace that the world seeks is a living relationship with our loving God.

When the people felt forsaken and abandoned by God, they turned to God. “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even so should she forget,” the Lord adds, “I will never forget you!” (Is 49:15).

God’s love for us is strong, stronger than even the love between mother and child. Such an intimate love frees us from worry and frees us for trust.

Our culture is enslaved to the body. Clothing clogs its closets. It fusses about eating organic and frets about stretching. Consumerism feeds the fear.

Father Brendan Byrne, in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew “Lifting the Burden,” notes that the conventional way to earn enough food, clothing, shelter and comfort is to amass wealth. Yet the worry grows.

In this anxious darkness, we who know God as the heavenly Father let a bright light shine. While we have to take reasonable care of our bodies, we need to be responsible, our fears dim before God’s daily gifts. In gratitude, we know Jesus Christ and his peace.

Fred Craddock, a Protestant preacher, related the story of a classmate some years ago under house arrest in China. Soldiers came one day and said, “You can return to America. You can take 200 pounds with you.”

The celebration quickly turned to serious discussion. The family of four had accumulated years of things. They found the bathroom scale. This vase? That typewriter? Which books?

They weighed and took off and weighed and took off and finally, right on the nose, 200 pounds. The soldier asked, “Ready to go?”

“Yes.”

“Did you weigh everything?”

“Yes.

“You weighed the kids?”

In a moment, the vase and typewriter and books became trash.

To take to prayer: What are you worrying about? Ask the Lord for a relationship adjustment with him. ■

Father Scotchie is the pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish in Pensacola and his latest book is “Can I Say a Prayer With You: A Beginner’s Guide to Praying With Someone.” He can be reached at fjsdavidscottie@gmail.com.

Lent is the time to change our lives

Sunday, March 5
First Sunday of Lent
Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Ps 51:3-6; 12-13, 17; Rom 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19; Mt 4:1-11

Lent has begun. As we received ashes on Ash Wednesday, we may have heard one of two phrases: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (cf., Gn 3:19) or “Repent and believe in the Gospel” (cf., Mk 1:15). These two sentences recall the punishment of Adam and Eve, which we read about in this Sunday’s first reading, as a result of their disobedience to God. It makes us think about the brevity of life. Ashes imposed on our foreheads remind us that we have limited time to change our lives, but we should not despair. Although these words may seem somewhat depressing, they should not be so if we remember that our Lenten journey will end in the events that forever transformed the human reality of sins and death.

Lent will end with our transformation, thanks to the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Once again, try this and let God transform us into the people who he wants us to be.

The second expression reveals more specifically the purpose of Lent and, indeed, of the Christian life. Jesus preached conversion and the coming of the kingdom of God from the beginning of his public ministry: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

Lent is the privileged time to change our lives and live more our second expression to us means to be able to follow Jesus as he went in search of the desert. As he went, the Lord gently asked, “Who do people say I am?” He then answered, “Who do you say I am?” (Mt 16:15).

In the end, it is Jesus himself, when the Tempter meets him again in the desert, who defines his identity in the words of Jesus Christ: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life!” (Jn 14:6).

Father Alfredo Hernández

Father Alfredo Hernández is religious dean and Director of Liturgy at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach.
Thank you for your confidence in the Florida Catholic and UET Travel. We appreciate your support and look forward to continuing our partnership.

Prayer for Application to the Holy Spirit

You who solve all problems, who light all roads so that I can attain my goals. You who give the divine gift to forgive and forget all the evil against me. And that in all instances of my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things and to confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you ever and in spite of all material illusion I wish to be with you in eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. - SK

Prayer for Application to the Holy Spirit

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This prayer must be said for three consecutive days. After three days, the favor requested will be granted. Even if it appears difficult, this prayer must be published immediately without mentioning of the favor. Only your initials should appear at the bottom.

Celebrations

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MOM and HAPPY 1ST ANNIVERSARY in HEAVEN, DAD

Dorothy C. Marfice

Dexter J. Marfice

We are sending a dove to heaven with a parcel on its wings. Be careful when you open it. It's full of beautiful things inside are a million kisses wrapped up in a million hugs. To say how much we miss you. And to send you all our love. We hold you close within our heart. And there you both will remain. To walk with us throughout our life. Until we meet again.

All our love, CarolAnn, Joe, Charlene, John, Dominic, Sherry, Michael and Janis. Grandkids and Great-Grandkids

Love you always,

CaroleAnn, Joe, Charlene, John, Dominic, Sherry, Michael and Janis.

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Ash Wednesday: Rituals and symbols

PAUL SENZ  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON | Our society is not one that readily embraces the idea of sacrifice. There is little recognition of the profound benefits of self-denial and of giving completely of oneself to others — and to God.

All the more reason, then, for us as Catholics to actively live out the ideals of the penitential season of Lent. One way to prepare ourselves is to better understand the roots and symbolism of the season and the day that starts it all: Ash Wednesday.

The name of Lent comes for the Old English word for spring. In most other languages, the name of this season is derived from the Latin term “quadragesima,” or 40 days.

The length of the season is one of its most symbolically important aspects, putting us in continuity with figures throughout salvation history who experienced penitential periods of 40 days. Biblically, the number 40 is associated with discipline, preparation and asceticism.

During the great flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Gen 7:12) and after the waters had been receding for some time, “at the end of 40 days” Noah sent a raven out to test the waters (Gen 8:7).

Moses was on the mountain with God for 40 days (Ex 24:18, 34:28). Elijah traveled for 40 days before reaching the cave where he had his vision (1 Kgs 19). Nineveh was given 40 days to repent (Jon 3:4).

And, most directly related to our liturgical celebration of Lent, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying before beginning his public ministry (Mt 4:2).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church sums up the season of Lent: “By the solemn 40 days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert (No. 546).”

This union comes not simply from the length of the season; it is from the three pillars of Lent — fasting, prayer and almsgiving — by which we live out the example set by Jesus and prepare ourselves to celebrate the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection.

Ash Wednesday is one day in particular in which we unite ourselves to the ascetic fasting of Jesus Christ. Appropriately, as it is the beginning of the season, Ash Wednesday is a sort of Lent-in-microcosm.

What significance do the ashes themselves hold? Why do we engage in this ritual each year, and what does it have to do with Lent?

There are two primary symbols with which we often associate the ashes. First, in the Bible a mark on the forehead of a sinner is a sign of mourning and penance, as well as death. There are countless scriptural examples wherein someone will express their penitence and seek forgiveness by covering themselves in sackcloth and ashes.

Buehues of Castaüea (circa 260-339), in his “Ecclesiastical History,” tells of an apostate named Nataïus who came to Pope Zephyrinus seeking the pope’s forgiveness for the ontological sin of taking ashes. Ashes were also sprinkled on the forehead of one who was to do public penance, as they left confession. This outward sign of an inward re- ality increased in prominence as time went on.

Reflect on a moment on the words used by the minister when the ashes are administered: “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

As Father William Saunders, former professor at Notre Dame Graduate School in Alexandria, Va., states, this ritual is one that dates back at least to the eighth century, in the earliest extant editions of the Gregorian Sacramentary, a collection of prayers and other liturgical texts.

Later, Father Saunders notes, around the year 1000, an Anglo-Saxon priest wrote of repentance being displayed by sackcloth and ashes, and the priest would say, “Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast.”

On Ash Wednesday, we as disciples of Jesus Christ, and strive to live the following 40 days so that the world knows we are San Pedro Center retreats.

(NANCY WIEHEC | CNS)

LENTEN EVENTS

ORLANDO


“Come to the Water” Lenten retreat, Friday, March 3, 5:30 p.m.-Sunday, March 5, 11 a.m. Designed to allow for communal and private prayer, meditation and quiet. Spiritual direction will be available, as well as a penance service with individual confession. Concludes Sunday with Mass.

• Senior day, “The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” Thursday, March 9, 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Presented by Stephen Deighan. Cost: $15, includes lunch and Mass.

• “The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” Saturday, March 25, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Presented by Stephen Deighan. Day will include four talks. Cost: $35, includes lunch and Mass.

• “From Ancient Rite of Passage to New Covenant: Two Great Meals of Liberation,” Monday, April 10, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Led by Father Ben Berenti and Betty Shaw. Both a “Seder demonstration” and Holy Week Eucharist will be celebrated. Cost: $35.

• Stations of the Cross, Friday, April 14, 3 p.m. Meet under the crucifix on campus. Free.

Tenebrae with the Basilica Choir: Friday, April 7, 7:30 p.m. Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe, 8500 Vineyard Ave., Orlando. Dramatic service highlighting the gradual extinguishing of candles, accompanied by series of readings and sung choral repertoire. Free. 407-239-6300, maryqueenoftheuniverse.org.

PALM BEACH


Lenten program: Feb. 27-March 2, Holy Family Parish, 2164 S.E. Marion Ave., Fort St. Lucie. Pilgrimage to Eternal Word Television Network (EWTV) in Irondale, Ala., healing service, spiritual talk and live show. Trip led by Father Tri Pham, parish priest. Cost: $350 includes three-night accommodations with double occupancy and bus transportation. Norman Etienne, 772-897-1215; Wilhelmina Toussaint, 772-342-7407.

Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center: Retreats and programs available for clergy, religious, men, women, married couples, singles and people in recovery programs. Season theme: “Reflecting on Christ.” Reservations required except when stated. Location: 1300 U.S. Highway 1, North Palm Beach, 626-1300 or www.ourladyofflorida.org.

• Ash Wednesday reflection: “The Lenten frost,” Friday, March 1, evening reflection 6:30-9:30 p.m., led by Dominican Sister Roberta Popano. Theme: “We Rise Again from Ashes.” Cost: $30. Reservations required.

• Holy Week: April retreat 12-16, led by center retreat team. Theme: “Reflecting Christ.” Cost varies for singles and couples. Deposit and registration required.

VENICE

Lenten Fish fry: Fridays, March 3-April 7, 5-7 p.m., Epiphany Cathedral Parish, Center, 224 Harbor Drive North, Venice. Sponsored by Knights of Columbus. Fish fry provided by Sharky’s on the Pier. Fish and chips: $10; baked salmon: $12; half price for children 6 and under. Each meal includes cole slaw, fries and warm rolls. Takeout available. Proceeds benefit Epiphany Cathedral School. Tickets online at www.EpiphanyCathedral.org or at the door. Helen Flynn, Flynn@EpiphanyCathedral.org, 941-416-2244.

Lenten mission: Monday, March 6, 9 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., St. Patrick Parish, 7900 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota. Features Father Cedric Pisegna, Pastors of Holy Cross Province, on “Live with Passion.” Free and all are welcome to attend. www.churchofstpatrick.org.

Lenten simple supper: Wednesday, March 8, 5 p.m., St. Raphael Parish center, 770 Kilbourne Enwood. Hosted by parish Council of Catholic Women. Ticket donation: $5. Includes dinner, bread, coffee, tea or water. Tickets available in Parish office until March 7. Mary EllickStein, 941-475-8382 or 630-319-9437, sarasotaLenten@gmail.com.

LDCCW Lenten retreat: Saturday, March 25, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Center, 3989 S. Moon Drive, Venice. Registration: 8:30 a.m.; Mass: 10 a.m. Free and all are welcome to attend. www.churchofstpatrick.org.

San Pedro Center retreats: Various dates, 2400 Dike Road, Winter Park. For more information or to register: www.sanpedrocenter.org/retreats-programs, 407-671-6322.

Palm Beach LENTEN SPECIAL SECTION

Lenten events

Florida Catholic  Feb. 24-March 9, 2017

On Ash Wednesday, we as disciples of Jesus Christ, and strive to live the following 40 days so that the world knows we are San Pedro Center retreats.

(NANCY WIEHEC | CNS)
Lenten season begins

Important dates, fasting guidelines

Catholics around the world will observe Ash Wednesday March 1, the beginning of the Lenten season. Easter Sunday falls on April 16 this year. During Masses on Ash Wednesday, blessed ashes are placed on participants’ foreheads in the sign of a cross, an ancient penitential practice. The ashes are a reminder of mortality and of man’s dependence upon God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Palm Sunday — April 9 — marks the day Jesus entered Jerusalem before his crucifixion. It leads up to the Easter triduum, which concludes Lent and introduces the Easter season. The triduum starts with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday (April 13), continues through Good Friday (April 14) and Holy Saturday (April 15), and concludes with vespers on Easter Sunday.

Lent is also a time of change and renewed commitment to God and the Church, when faithful commit to prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting, as explained by the U.S. bishops, means partaking of only one full meal. Some food (not equaling another full meal) is permitted at breakfast and around midday or in the evening, depending on when a person chooses to eat the main or full meal.

In addition, all Catholics 14 years and older must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all the Fridays of Lent. Abstinence forbids the use of meat, but this does not include eggs, milk products or condiments made of animal fat.

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PAPAL LENTEN MESSAGE

Pope: Money, pride make people ignore God’s word, neglect others

CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY | Without making room for God’s word in their heart, people will never be able to welcome and love all human life, Pope Francis said.

“Each life that we encounter is a gift deserving acceptance, respect and love,” the pope said in his message for Lent, which begins March 1 for Latin-rite Catholics.

“The word of God helps us to open our eyes to welcome and love life, especially when it is weak and vulnerable,” he wrote.


The parable calls for sincere conversion, the pope said, and it “provides a key to understanding what we need to do in order to attain true happiness and eternal life.”

In the Gospel account, Lazarus and his suffering are described in great detail. While he is “practically invisible to the rich man,” the Gospel gives him a name and a face, upholding him as worthy, as “a gift, priceless treasure, a human being whom God loves and cares for, despite his concrete condition as an outcast,” the pope wrote.

The parable shows that “a right relationship with people consists in gratefully recognizing their value,” he said. “A poor person at the door of the rich is not a nuisance, but a summons to conversion and to change.”

But in order to understand how to open one’s heart and see the other as a gift, a person must see how the word of God operates. One way to do that, he said, is to be aware of the temptations and traps the rich man fell victim to, derailing his search for true happiness.

The nameless “rich man” lives an opulent, ostentatious life, the pope wrote, and his love of money leads to vanity and pride — “the lowest rung of this moral degradation.”

“The rich man dresses like a king and acts like a god, forgetting that he is merely mortal,” he said. “For those corrupted by love of riches, nothing exists beyond their own ego. Those around them do not come into their line of sight. The result of attachment to money is a sort of blindness. The rich man does not see the poor man who is starving, hurting, lying at his door.”

Love of money, St. Paul warned, “is the root of all evils,” and the pope said, it is also “the main cause of corruption and a source of envy, strife and suspicion.”

“Instead of being an instrument of our service for doing good and showing solidarity toward others, money can chain us and the entire world to a selfish logic that leaves no room for love and hinders peace,” he added.

A man examines coins displayed at the World Money Fair in Berlin Feb. 3. Pope Francis wrote in his Feb. 7 Lenten message that money can chain people to a selfish logic that leaves no room for love and hinders peace.

(PHOTO: FELIPE TRUEBA, EPA | CNS)

The rich man’s eyes are finally opened after he and Lazarus are dead; Lazarus finds comfort in heaven and the rich man finds torment in “the netherworld,” because, as Abraham explains, “a kind of fairness is restored” in the afterlife and “life’s evils are balanced by good,” the pope said.

The rich man then asks for an extraordinary sign — Lazarus coming back from the dead — to be given to his family members so they will repent and not make the same mistake as he.

But, Abraham said the people have plenty of teachings with “Mo- ses and the prophets. Let them listen to them,” the pope said.

This explains what the real problem is for the rich man’s and those like him: “At the root of all his ills was the failure to heed God’s word. As a result, he no longer loved God and grew to despise his neighbor,” the pope said.

The pope asked that Lent be a time “for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbor.”

“May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God’s word, be purified of the sin that blinds us and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need,” he said, especially by taking part in the various Lenten campaigns sponsored by local churches.
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“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

These words are from Scripture, in 1 Samuel, Chapter 3. The boy Samuel, the future prophet, awakens the aged Eli because he thinks he has been called by him. But Eli recognizes that it is God calling Samuel. When it happens again, Eli says, tell the Lord you are listening. In a very real sense, these are words we are all called to speak during Lent. During this season when we come close to the suffering Jesus, we desire to let the Lord know we come close to the suffering Jesus.

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

This listening is called prayer.

During Lent, Catholics are challenged to embrace the season’s three “pillars” — prayer, fasting and almsgiving. A pillar supports something, and in this case, the three pillars, taken together, support a thing, and in this case, the three principles of growth. Prayer is almsgiving. A pillar supports something.

Prayer is... laments to embrace the season’s listening. This listening is called prayer.

During Lent, many find the Stations of the Cross a helpful prayer that can lead you into a deep experience of Christ’s passion and a deeper love for him. Or perhaps committing to a time of eucharistic adoration will help you find the intimacy and silence that bring you to prayer.

Others may find that with spring riding the coattails of Lent into April, a daily prayer walk is helpful. Nature can inspire prayer in many, while for others a walk through the neighborhood may be too distracting.

The “examen” is a powerful daily prayer. It allows you to review the preceding 24 hours with gratitude, focusing on what was life-giving and what was not. The “examen” helps you examine when you felt the hand of God and how you responded to God’s will and where you fell short. More detailed directions for the “examen” can be found online.

No matter the prayer method you choose, a prayer journal helps. After you have prayed, write down what you have felt and heard during prayer.

Choose the method that is best for you. The important thing to remember is that God is in control and is infinitely merciful and gracious toward our failings and our efforts.

Caldarola is a freelance writer and a columnist for Catholic News Service.
LENTEN SPECIAL SECTION

EFFIE CALDAROLA
Catholic News Service

When the comedian Stephen Colbert appeared, one Ash Wednesday, on his late-night television show with a dust mark on his forehead, I felt a sense of communion.

He's one of my tribe, I thought. Colbert is a well-known Catholic. He even invited Jesuit Father James Martin to serve as the unofficial "chaplain" to his Comedy Central program.

But you don't have to be a celebrity to evince solidarity on Ash Wednesday. Someone at the desk next to yours, perhaps, or the clerk in the supermarket line, each bearing the telltale sign of camaraderie that announces each as a fellow pilgrim taking those first tentative steps on a journey we share.

Maybe that's why I love Ash Wednesday and I'm not alone. Churches are absolutely packed on Ash Wednesday. It's always been a deep puzzlement to me that churches are actually more crowded on Ash Wednesday than they are for the services of the Easter triduum.

To me, there are no more stirring liturgies than these three, which celebrate the question "Who is this Jesus?" Every Mass offers us the ultimate "get" — the Eucharist. But every Mass offers us — a telltale smudge that proclaims cause they "get" something at Mass.

Catholics like Ash Wednesday because they "get" something at Mass. It's always been a deep puzzlement to me that churches are actually more crowded on Ash Wednesday than they are for the services of the Easter triduum.

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For More Information, call 239.566.8740
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