Catholic convocation: Combination pep rally and retreat inspires leaders

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

ORLANDO, Fla. — From July 1-4 the main floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Orlando was transformed into a huge parish hall with places for worship, prayer, discussion, and even coffee and doughnuts during the “Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America.”

At the convocation 3,500 church leaders — men and women religious, bishops and laypeople — gathered to set a new course for the U.S. Catholic Church.

Following a retreat format, each day started and ended with group prayer. Mass was celebrated each day in the hotel ballroom, and there were plenty of scheduled times for the sacrament of reconciliation and private prayer in a large room turned into an adoration chapel.

Many of the keynote sessions took the form of pep talks encouraging delegates to share their faith boldly with the world at large and within their own families and parishes. The numerous breakout sessions provided the working aspect of the gathering: closely examining what the church is doing and where it can do more.

More than 155 bishops attended the gathering, sitting with their delegations for meals and breakout sessions. Cardinals and bishops who spoke at keynote sessions or in Mass homilies encouraged participants that this was their time, their moment, stressing the urgency to bring God’s message of love to a divided world.

At the final Mass, described as a “Mass of Sending,” Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston said the church is called to achieve great things in the face of the impossible — to unite people together by going to the peripheries of society and sharing the good news of Jesus through action rooted in faith.

“There is an impact that is not possible if we do not share our faith with others,” DiNardo said.

“Sisters and brothers, we are in a very, very significant time in our church in this country,” said Cardinal DiNardo, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and he urged the delegates to receive God’s grace for the work ahead.

None of the homilists or keynote speakers sugarcoated the challenges for the modern church and more than once speakers pointed out that Catholics are leaving the church in greater numbers, particularly young adults, than those joining the church.


Catholic Convocation
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Invited to become Spirit-filled evangelizers

In last month’s West River Catholic, I wrote about “The Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America,” which recently took place in Orlando, Florida. This convocation was in response to Pope Francis’ call for the church to embrace her mission to go out to the peripheries in answering the radical call to missionary discipleship. The Holy Father’s apostolic exhortation “Evangelii Gaudium” (“The Joy of the Gospel”) was used as the guide and platform for the convocation.

The heart of the convocation directed us to examine and reflect upon the current landscape and mission field that is awaiting us; our response that leads us to renew our call as missionary disciples and our commitment to form missionary disciples; where are the peripheries and margins of society that await us and who lives there; and finally, strategies for addressing the issues; and equipping Spirit-filled evangelizers.

The Diocese of Rapid City sent a delegation comprised of myself and fourteen men and women from across the diocese. Throughout the four days, we heard many inspiring talks from various leaders in the Catholic Church and from panelists across the country who led discussions in the daily breakout sessions on a range of diverse topics.

An important point in one of the talks was that the work of evangelization is the means to address poverty in the world — all poverty and all forms of it. As we know, poverty is everywhere, in many different forms. We can see it all around us and it can also easily be hidden. It is in every part of our society, culture and geographical area. And because it can be hidden, none of us are removed from experiencing it in our lives.

This is perhaps why Pope Francis has invited “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflaggingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.” The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms” (EG #3).

Daily asking for this gift of a personal encounter with Jesus should be the beginning point of accepting our call to be missionary disciples, going to the peripheries across our diocese and across America. It begins with conversion in our own hearts which will not happen unless we seek this renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ unfailingly each day. If we are going to accept our baptismal call to radical missionary discipleship, it begins here for all of us. Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight for the Knights Columbus, noted in his address that perhaps we ourselves are the first periphery.

This is at the heart of a life of faith. Many people express a desire for a deeper relationship with the Lord, but often neglect the means to facilitate this desire. Pope Benedict XVI shared these words with the people in St. Peter’s Square, “For every Christian, faith is first and foremost a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus, it is having an experience of his closeness, his friendship and his love. It is in this way that we learn to know him ever better, to love him and to follow him more and more” (Wednesday General Audience, October 21, 2009).

What is needed in our families, our parish communities, this diocese and our world is a new passion for holiness. If we are not seeking this, then we will not accept a radical call to missionary discipleship and a call to holiness. This was clearly one of the challenging messages of the convocation.

As a disciple of Jesus seeks to live out his or her call to holiness, first asking the Lord to accompany him or her, then it will be possible to practice the “art of accompaniment” as expressed by Pope Francis (EV #169). It is the Lord Jesus who will teach us as he accompanies us. This is precisely how Jesus began the early church — “accompaniment” with his disciples. Our response to this encounter with Christ also requires the accompaniment with others, leading us to become Spirit-filled evangelizers.

“To create a culture of encounter and witness, we must live explicit lives of discipleship. We are called not only to believe in the Gospel but to allow it to take deep root in us in a way that leaves us incapable of silence: we cannot help but to announce the Gospel in word and in deed. This missionary outreach is at the heart of discipleship” (USCCB, Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization, p. 14).

In the end, going to the peripheries requires us getting out of our comfort zones, leaving our all too familiar maintenance-mode mindsets, and becoming parish communities which are both creative and mission-driven to share the joy of the Gospel. This has been the encouragement given to us by Pope Francis in “The Joy of the Gospel.”

“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel (EV #20).

This was also the challenge given to the participants who attended The Convocation of Catholic Leaders. This is the challenge I offer all of us in the Diocese of Rapid City.

It is my mission: We, the Diocese of Rapid City, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are called to attract and form intentional disciples who joyfully, boldly and lovingly proclaim and live the mission of Jesus Christ, leading to eternal life.
Bishops approve revisions to guidelines on sacraments for the disabled

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops overwhelmingly approved revisions to the guidelines governing the celebration of sacraments for people with disabilities that take into account medical and technological developments. Approved 180-1 during the bishops’ spring general assembly June 14, the revisions in the “Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities” updates a document that was adopted in 1995. Among the issues the document addresses is physical access to worship to give people with disabilities “full, active and conscious participation, according to their capacity.”

Holy Cross priest presents reflection on immigration issues for bishops

Holy Cross Father Daniel Groody stood before the U.S. bishops June 14 and held up a chalice. The chalice was handcrafted primarily with wood from a refugee boat that landed upon the beaches of Lampedusa, the Mediterranean island from which Pope Francis cast a wreath into the waters to remember the thousands of refugees who lost their lives there, attempting to flee persecution.

Bishop Cantu reports on unrest, religious persecution around globe

Bishop Oscar Cantu’s (of Las Cruces, New Mexico,) travels take him to places of unrest and religious persecution. He is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace. In a June 15 presentation he briefed his brother bishops on the sobering topic of international
But as Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron of Los Angeles pointed out: “The saints always loved a good fight and we should like a good fight too.”

The bishop, who addressed the crowd through a video hookup July 4, told them it was an “exciting time to be an evangelist” but that they also should pick up their game to evangelize effectively.

Throughout the convocation Pope Francis was pointed out as a model for modern Catholics to follow in inviting others, especially those on the peripheries, to Christ. Speakers also were quick to quote his 2013 apostolic exhortation, “Evangelii Gaudium” (“The Joy of the Gospel”), which lays out a vision of the church dedicated to evangelization — or missionary discipleship — in a positive way, with a focus on society’s poorest and most vulnerable, including the aged, unborn and forgotten.

Two homilies during the convocation specifically quoted the pope’s admonition in “Evangelii Gaudium” that Catholics shouldn’t be “sourpusses” but should reflect joy.

Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl acknowledged that Catholics are not always comfortable with the idea of evangelizing, but said they need to be willing to step out of themselves and talk with people about their faith as part of an encounter the pope speaks about.

Part of this simply involves listening to people, caring for them and leading them to Jesus, said speaker Sister Miriam James Heidland, a sister of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity.

Delegates were repeatedly encouraged to reach out to the peripheries especially to immigrants and the poor but also to all members of the church’s diverse family — people of all races, women and young people.

Hosffman Ospino, associate professor of theology and religious education at Boston College, said it is time for the church to start building a “language of communion” rather than dividing the church community into different groups and individually responding to those needs.

“It’s the church serving the church,” he said. “We all are the church.”

At the end of the closing Mass, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, who attended all four days of the convocation, congratulated attendees for the invigorating discussion.

He called it a “kairos,” or opportune moment, in the life of the U.S. church and said he would tell Pope Francis: “the Spirit is alive in the church in the United States.”

“I will tell him of the commitment of many missionary disciples and their love for the church,” he added.

Contributing to this report was Dennis Sadowski in Orlando.

Bishop Robert Gruss (not pictured) and delegates from the Diocese of Rapid City attended the “Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America,” from July 1-4 in Orlando, Fla.” (Pictured left-to-right) Fr. Mark McCormick, Dionne Eastmo, and Susan Safford, all of Rapid City; Carol Brownetter and Ron Brownetter; Bullhead; Sr. Jackie Schroeder, OSF, McLaughlin; Amy Julian, Beulah, Wyo.; Val King and Vince King, Rapid City; Bill White, Porcupine; Fr. Michel Mulloy, Piedmont; Ben Black Bear, Ill and Jenny Black Bear, St. Francis; Whitney Driscoll and Laurie Driscoll, Spearfish. (Courtesy photo)
ORLANDO, Fla. (CNS) — Theirs was a monumental responsibility: shepherding lay leaders, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, religious, deacons, musicians, event staff and a legion of volunteers at the historic “Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America” July 1-4 in Orlando.

“This convocation is a journey, and there will be three of us here to guide you through the next four days,” said Bishop Edward J. Burns of Dallas, one of the event’s emcees. The consistent presence — on stage and off — of Bishop Burns, along with emcee Julianne Stanz, director of new evangelization for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and moderator Gloria Purvis, co-host of “Morning Glory” on EWTN Radio, kept the entire program flowing smoothly despite any behind-the-scenes hiccups.

Sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the convocation brought together more than 3,100 lay and religious leaders from 160 dioceses and 185 national organizations (See local delegates on page 4). They gathered to explore the current challenges and strengths of the church and its evangelization efforts. “All the good, dedicated, committed lay faithful present truly touched me,” Bishop Burns told Catholic News Service, “especially knowing that they are the Catholic leaders in their dioceses and Catholic organizations.”

The West River Catholic did online interviews with three of the local delegates.

“It was a privilege to represent the Diocese of Rapid City at the Convocation of Catholic Leaders. Centered on Pope Francis’ Evangelii Gaudium, it was an opportunity to celebrate the beauty of our Catholic faith with the U.S. bishops and a rich diversity of lay and religious leaders from across the country,” Dionne Eastmo, Rapid City, said.

“Together we explored the cultural landscape of the Catholic Church and identified those who might be lost in the peripheries (such as the sick, poor and imprisoned). We were reminded that as missionary disciples we must be authentic witnesses to best impact those in need of the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. In the upcoming months, our delegation will meet to discuss further how we can share the pope’s vision of new and creative ways to engage our culture.”

Whitney Driscoll, Spearfish, said, “The convocation had so much to offer and there is so much for the diocesan team yet to discern, but if I had to pick one thing that I would personally do it would be to encourage all Catholics to read Pope Francis’ book “The Joy of the Gospel” (Evangelii Gaudium).” The convocation discussions were based around this book and I think it encourages Catholics to reflect and have discussions about the state of our church and the personal role we serve. I think most Catholics will find it inspiring and refreshing and might be surprised at what we are called to do.”

Jenny Black Bear, of St. Francis, agreed it was a blessing and an honor to be invited by Bishop Robert Gruss to attend the Convocation of Catholic Leaders. She said, “It was a great learning experience to take part in. We saw how diverse the Catholic Church really is. There were many young people, clergy, religious, lay leaders from all over the United States. There was so much joy in this weekend.

“I feel very inspired and look forward to sharing what we learned about discipleship, unity, joy, mission, and hope. We all gathered together to gain so much knowledge and to return home with tools to bring joy to the gospel to all our people in our communities, parishes, and diocese.”

Drawn from CNS and WRC staff reports.

Bishop Robert Gruss

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Bishop’s Calendar
July 18-August 14, 2017

July 18, Tuesday
6:30 p.m. CSS Board Meeting, CSS office

July 19, Wednesday
10:30 a.m. Sioux Spiritual Center Board Meeting, Chancery Main Conference Room

July 19-22, Wednesday-Saturday
National Tekakwitha Conference, Rapid City

July 23, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Mass/Installation of Pastor, St. Anthony Church, Hot Springs

July 27, Thursday
11:15 a.m. Mass with Totus Tuus Boys Vocations Retreat, Terra Sancta Retreat Center

July 28, Friday
8 a.m. Mass/Staff Celebration of Bishop Gruss Episcopal Anniversary, Cathedral

July 29, Saturday
11 a.m. Terra Sancta Guild Luncheon, Terra Sancta

July 30, Sunday
8 a.m. Mass/Installation of Pastor, St. Bernard Church, McLaughlin

July 31, Monday
Clergy/Seminarian Day
Noon Mass/Farewell for Fr. Hatcher, St. Charles Church, St. Francis

August 5, Saturday
1:15 p.m. Veritatis Splendor Institute, Terra Sancta

August 14, Monday
Noon Bishop’s Golf Tournament, Arrowhead Country Club

Subject to change without notice

Ride with the Bishop

The 2017 Bishop’s Ride made $15,000 on June 25. It began with Mass at St. Joseph Church, Spearfish. Fundraising proceeds are going toward completing the capital campaign to build a new Newman Center at the campus of BHSU. (Top) Riders on the highway. (Second Row Left) Bishop Robert Gruss blessing bikes before the ride. (Second Row Right) Riders pose for a photo at the BBQ following the ride. (Third Row) BHSU Newman Center Student Julie Knight serves the meal to bikers at the BBQ following the Bishop’s Ride. (Fourth Row) “The Black Sheep and the Shepherd” entertains the crowd at the BBQ following the ride. Msgr. Michael Woster, pastor of St. Joseph and chaplain of the BHSU Newman Center Chaplain is featured in the photo on lead vocals. (Photos by Angie McDonnell)
July 21, Friday

• Heart to Heart Weekend for the Engaged: For engaged couples to deepen their relationship with each other and God by exploring the Catholic Church’s vision of marriage. Attendance is required for couples doing marriage prep in the diocese. Ends July 23. Next weekend, October 27-29. Register at terrasancta.org/heart2heart/ or Amy 605-716-5214 x236.

July 22, Saturday

• NPM Summer Meeting: Presenter and Rapid City native Leah Sedlacek will explore how all true beauty can evangelize the culture and inspire people to know Jesus. Held at Blessed Sacrament Church, Rapid City, from 9:30 a.m.—4 p.m.

July 23, Sunday

• Natural Family Planning Holy Hour and Reception: Celebrate the 49th Anniversary of Humanae Vitae, NFP, and married love. Held at Blessed Sacrament Church, Rapid City from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Amy Julian 605-716-5214 x236.

July 24, Monday

• Totus Tuus Boys: An opportunity to reflect on God’s call with seminarians and priests. Leadership camp, grades 9-12 ends July 28. Grades 6-8, July 25-18. Registration forms can be found at www.godscall.org/events or 605-716-5214 x233.

July 29, Saturday

• Knights Texas Barbeque Dinner to Benefit Seminarians: Held at the Blessed Sacrament Church Hall from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Free will offering. Reservations requested but not required. 605-721-7636

July 31, Monday

• WRC Deadline for submissions. Paper mailed Tuesday, August 15. 605-343-3541.

• lhallstrom@diorc.org or bbbereth@diorc.org

August 4, Friday

• World Apostolate of Fatima: First Friday Mass at 5:30 p.m. with prayers and devotions. First Saturday, August 5, begins with prayers at 7:45 a.m. followed by 8 a.m. Mass and exposition. Both in Our Lady’s Chapel, Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Dr. Kopriva 605-343-6202.

August 10, Thursday

• Big Horn Young Adult Retreat: Open to young adults ages 18-35. Join Father Mark McCormick camping and hiking in the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming. There will be time to talk about prayer and discernment, celebrate daily Mass, and spend time in prayer and fellowship. Deadline to register August 3. www.godscall.org/events or 605-716-5214 x233.

August 14, Monday

• Bishop’s Golf Classic and Bunco Social: Four person scramble begins with registration at 11 a.m. Bunco begins at 1 p.m. See page 4.

September 15, Friday

• Healing Retreat with Father Richard McAlear: “Jesus Healer of My Body and Soul,” held at Blessed Sacrament Church. Includes Mass, adoration, healing service, confession, and talks by Fr. McAlear. Jean 605-399-9522 or www.blessedsacramentchurch.org. All are invited.

Standing Events

• Centering Prayer: Held Wednesdays at 5 p.m. at Terra Sancta. Led by Sandi Ohlen. Please use south patio entrance and join the group in the Solarium at Terra Sancta.


• Prayer and Lecture: Thursdays 6:30 p.m., St. Martin Monastery. Sister Marmion Howe, OSB, 605-343-8011.

• Patriotic Rosary: Thursdays 6 p.m., Blessed Sacrament Church, Rapid City. Ellen Robertson 605-718-9909.


• Family Rosary: Sundays, 7 p.m., St. Therese the Little Flower Church, Rapid City. Mark Biggs 605-343-2467.

• Hope for New Life Jail Ministry: Third Monday, 7 p.m., Catholic Social Services. Tony Galles 605-348-2301 or Mary Sperlich 605-342-9343.

• Vocation Discernment Retreats: Sister Mary Wegher, OSB, 605-343-8011.

• Spiritual Direction: At St. Martin Monastery. Sr Margaret Hinker, OSB, or Sr. Edna Marie Stephenson, OSB, 605-343-8011.

• Divine Mercy Image: Would you like to host a traveling Divine Mercy Image in your home for up to 27 days to pray the Divine Chaplet/Novena? A rosary and information about the image are included. Georgine 605-441-8140.

• Spanish Faith Study: Learn about the Catholic faith, from 5:45–7 p.m., at Blessed Sacrament Church, Rapid City, room 107. Everyone welcome. Aprendiendo nuestra Fe Catolica los Miércoles de 5:45-7p.m. Todos estan Bienvenidos, salon 107. Maria Munoz 605-791-3430.

• Tutors Volunteers Needed: Overcoming the language barrier ministry at Blessed Sacrament Church, Rapid City, is looking for volunteers interested in helping adults with English reading, writing, and speaking skills. Participants will be introduced to the Lauback Way to Reading with an emphasis on English language learners. Christine Leichtman 605-342-8598, cleicht@rap.midco.net or Maria Munoz 605-791-3430.

You are cordially invited to our WOPLIA honoring for Fr. John Hatcher, SJ, for 14 years of service to the St. Francis Mission and Lakota people

“A celebration of what we have accomplished together.”
- Fr. John Hatcher, SJ

Plan to become a Stewardship Parish

I wanted to share some good news with you! After many months of work, the Office of Stewardship has finalized “The Characteristics of a Stewardship Parish,” which is called for in our diocesan priority plan, Through Him, With Him and In Him: A Spiritual Guide to the Diocesan Priority Plan.

If you have not taken the time to read and pray over our diocesan priority plan, I encourage you to do so because it lays out the mission and the vision for our diocese for the next three to five years. Just think if all of us took the time to read and pray over our diocesan priority plan and worked with our pastors, finance councils, parish councils, stewardship committees and vocation committees — to name a few — what an impact it would have in the way we live our Catholic way of life. We would truly “attract and form intentional disciples who joyfully, boldly and lovingly proclaim and live the mission of Jesus Christ leading us to eternal life.”

“The Characteristics of a Stewardship Parish” was sent to every pastor in our diocese. This document outlines the characteristics that an ideal parish, one that is committed to living Stewardship as a way of life, would have. It is the first step in meeting one of the goals outlined in the diocesan pastoral plan — to increase by five to ten the number of parishes who have met the criteria to be recognized as stewardship parishes.

This document strives to paint a picture of the ideal parish, a vision of what a parish could be. As Tom Corcoran shared recently at Pastoral Ministry Days, a vision is often seen as unrealistic and hardly attainable, but one worth pursuing as it can impel us to live more fully the life to which Christ is calling us.

All parishes in our diocese will find outlined in this document characteristics they are already doing well; they will also find many that challenge them. It is our hope that parishes will look at these characteristics as providing helpful assistance in long-term planning.

When Bishop Robert Gruss approved this document, he said something I have heard him say many times. Namely, it is his greatest desire that our people fall deeply in love with our Lord. He is hopeful that this document is seen as a means to that end. If it serves to help parishes more effectively bring people into a deep encounter with Jesus, then it will prove its usefulness, whether or not in the end we have five or 50 “Stewardship Parishes.”

In my letter to pastors, I suggested the document be used in this way:

1) Meet with the leaders in your parish and ask them to read it, pray over it and then begin by using these characteristics to form an honest and realistic picture of your parish. This becomes the baseline for where your parish is today. Basically, what are the parish’s strengths and weaknesses?

2) Know that these characteristics build upon one another and that if there are weaknesses in the foundational structures, these should be addressed first. In the areas of Hospitality, Lively Faith and Dedicated Discipleship, simple and complex criteria are expressed.

3) Use the strengths and weaknesses identified by parish leaders as a baseline for setting some realistic goals for growth and development, remembering that stewardship is a way of life, not a program; it is always an ongoing process of growth.

Some questions to think about:

• How do these goals align with our mission statement?

• What are going to be the markers we can point to in meeting these goals?

• What does success look like in particulars?

Commit to an annual assessment of these goals. Choose to pursue formal designation as a stewardship parish through the Office of Stewardship.

The Office of Stewardship is here to serve the diocese and we are happy to assist in this process in any way we can. I will be working to develop a way to assess parishes and a system for designating parishes as stewardship parishes. A tiered system best encourages us to keep working toward achieving this lofty vision as well as conveys the reality of stewardship as a way of life.

The first step in achieving the designation of stewardship parish will be to be designated as a foundational parish, indicating that your parish has in place all of the foundational structures necessary to begin fostering stewardship in your parish. After this, there will be three additional benchmarks, each more challenging than the previous one, requiring a greater number of criteria be met. Parishes meeting these benchmarks will be designated as hospitable parishes, lively parishes and then, finally, stewardship parishes.

If you would like to see this document, please ask your pastor for a copy or download one on our webpage at www.rapidcitydiocese.org/stewardship.

I also want to point out the dates for this year’s Stewardship Summit: Friday and Saturday, Sept. 29 and 30 at Terra Sancta. Our keynote speakers for this year’s conference will be Tony Brandt and Chris Stewart from Casting Nets Ministries: http://castingnetsministries.com.

This year we are providing childcare and stewardship tracks for children at the Summit. If we want stewardship to really become a Catholic Way of Life, then we need to help our families to embrace stewardship. Thus, I encourage you to bring your children to the Summit.

Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response, a pastoral letter on stewardship from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, highlights that stewardship “above all requires that parents themselves be models of stewardship, especially by their selfless service to one another, to their children and to the church and community needs.” I look forward to seeing your whole family there.

For more information about the Summit or our other stewardship initiatives, please contact me at (605) 716-5214 x235 or mmccormick@diorc.org.
Independence Day abroad – esteem for U.S. is waning

CRACOW — Because of annual teaching commitments in Poland, I haven’t spent Independence Day in the United States for almost twenty years. This year was like its predecessors in many respects: in beautiful Cracow, there was no Fourth of July barbecue, no ballgame, no John Philip Sousa, no fireworks. But in another respect, things were quite different: my students from central and eastern Europe no longer reflexively look to the United States as the paradigm of what they want for their own countries, which auto-liberated themselves from Soviet tyranny more than a quarter-century ago.

My European students aren’t anti-American cynics. They dress in a fashion first defined by their American counterparts; they use American technology as profligately as their peers on the other side of the Atlantic; they admire the openness and free exchange characteristic of American classrooms, which is in some contrast to the more formal European style; they are eager to get to America to visit or study. But they are worried about the United States, its commitments, and its character in a way I’ve not experienced before.

And I can’t say I blame them.

The 2016 electoral cycle had a lot to do with this. That Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were the best a mature democracy could come up with as candidates for the world’s highest secular office had a corrosive effect on perceptions of the United States — as did the rancid nature of the 2016 campaign and its descent into Twitterized vulgarity and social-media “Gotcha” games. And from the perspective of my students, who know a lot more about my country than most Americans know about theirs, not much has changed for the better since. For they see an America even more bitterly divided than last year, a Congress unable to devise legislative answers to serious problems, the further criminalization of political differences, and an American political class dangerously incapable of getting to grips with the cyber-warfare being conducted by Russia, save in terms of trying to find short-term political advantage. In this rough geopolitical neighborhood, this last American incapacity seems very dangerous indeed.

So I’ve tried to explain to my students that American political culture is in trouble because American public moral culture is in trouble — and that America’s moral culture is in trouble because it has dumbed down the idea of the human person to the point where, according to the U.S. Supreme Court, we’re all just twitching bundles of desires, the satisfaction of which is the state’s primary function. And running parallel to that distorted vision of human aspiration and possibility is a dumbed-down idea of freedom-as-license: freedom unmoored from any notion of truth.

These problems are not unique to the United States; they are at the root of a crisis of moral, cultural, and political exhaustion that seems pandemic throughout the West. In the mid-20th century, the English historian Christopher Dawson argued that a secular democratic society with no aspirations beyond its own material satisfactions could not endure indefinitely. In the 1970s, the German jurist Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenhöfer suggested that “the liberal, secularized state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself.”

Which is to say: Democracy is not a hardware that can be run by any software. It takes a critical mass of people, living certain virtues, to make the machinery of democracy work. Absent that moral and cultural “virtue capital,” which produces social capital, the result is chaos or authoritarianism. Conversely, a society rich in social capital can enable genuine human flourishing in a just democratic state that lives solidarity domestically and can defend itself against aggressors.

The America that marked its 241st birthday on July 4, 2017, needs a new birth of freedom. That birth will come from a different kind of Great Awakening: a re-awakening to the moral truths on which American democracy rests, and a recommitment by a sufficient number of citizens, believers and unbelievers alike, to “living in the truth” — the moral truths about the human person that teach us that we are more than twitching bundles of desires.

Here in Poland, and throughout this part of Europe, men and women who took the risk of living in the truth bent the course of history in a more humane direction in the 1980s. On its 241st birthday, America should ponder their example — and take heart and inspiration from it.

(An extended form of this proposal for a “New Awakening” may be found here: http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/a-new-awakening)
Jesus asks, ‘Do you want to walk away too?’

“To whom else shall we go? You have the message of eternal life.” Peter says these words to Jesus. But they are spoken in a very conflicted context: Jesus had just said something that upset and offended his audience and the Gospels tell us that everyone walked away grumbling that what Jesus was teaching was “intolerable.” Jesus then turns to his apostles and asks them: “Do you want to walk away too?” Peter answers: “To whom else can we go?” But that’s more a statement of stoic resignation than an actual question.

His words function at two levels. On the surface, they express an unwanted humility and helplessness that sometimes beset us all: “I have no alternative! I’m so invested in this relationship that now I have no other options. I’m stuck with this!” That’s a humble place to stand and anyone who has ever given himself or herself over in an authentic commitment will eventually stand on that place, knowing that he or she no longer has another practical choice.

But those words also express a much deeper quandary, namely, where can I find meaning if I cannot find it in faith in God? All of us have at some point asked ourselves that question. If I didn’t believe in God and had no faith or religion, what would give meaning to my life?

Where can we go if we no longer have an explicit faith in God? A lot of places, it seems. I think immediately of so many attractive stoics who have wrestled with this question and found solace in various forms of what Albert Camus would call “metaphysical rebellion” or in the kind of Epicureanism that Nikos Kazantzakis advocates in Zorba, the Greek. There’s a stoicism which offers its own kind of salvation by drawing life and meaning simply from fighting chaos and disease for no other reason than that these cause suffering and are an affront to life, just as there is an Epicureanism that meaningfully grounds life in elemental pleasure. There are, it would seem, different kinds of saints.

There are also different kinds of immortality. For some, meaning outside of an explicit faith, is found in leaving a lasting legacy on this earth, having children, achieving something monumental, or becoming a household name. We’re all familiar with the axiom: Plant a tree; write a book; have a child!

Poets, writers, artists, and artisans often have their own place to find meaning outside of explicit faith. For them, creativity and beauty can be ends in themselves. Art for art’s sake. Creativity itself can seem enough.

And there are still others for whom deep meaning is found simply in being good for its own sake and in being honest for its own sake. There’s also virtue for virtue’s sake and virtue is indeed its own reward. Simply living an honest and generous life can provide sufficient meaning with which to walk through life.

So, it appears that there are places to go outside of explicit faith where one can find deep meaning. But is this really so? Don’t we believe that true meaning can only be found in God? What about St. Augustine’s classic line? You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Can anything other than faith and God really quiet the restless fires within us?

Yes, there are things that can do that, but all of them — fighting chaos, curing diseases, having children, living for others, building things, inventing things, achieving goals, or simply living honest and generous lives — leave us, in an inchoate way, radiating the transcendental properties of God and working alongside God to bring life and order to the world. How so?

Christian theology tells us that God is One, True, Good, and Beautiful. And so, when an artist gives herself over to creating beauty, when a couple has a child, when scientists work to find cures for various diseases, when artisans make an artifact, when builders build, when teachers teach, when parents parent, when athletes play a game, when manual laborers labor, when administrators administrate, when people just for the sake of integrity itself live in honesty and generosity, and, yes, even when hedonists drink deeply of earthly pleasure, they are, all of them, whether they have explicit faith or not, acting in some faith because they are putting their trust in either the Oneness, Truth, Goodness, or Beauty of God.

Lord, to whom else can we go? You have the message of eternal life. Well, it seems that there are places to go and many go there. But these aren’t necessarily, as is sometimes suggested by misguided spiritual literature, empty places that are wrong and self-destructive. There are, of course, such places, spiritual dead-ends; but, more generally, as we can see simply by looking at the amount of positive energy, love, creativity, generosity, and honesty that still fill our world, those places where people are seeking God outside of explicit faith still has them meeting God.
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The health of the Catholic Church can be measured in many ways, and the Vatican has a special office just for that purpose.

The Central Statistics Office, which operates under the Vatican Secretariat of State, conducts a variety of studies for the Roman Curia throughout the year. But one of the office’s biggest projects is compiling the annual, 500-page Statistical Yearbook of the Church.

Of course, the yearbook tracks the Catholic population, both by a head count of the baptized in each country and as a percentage of the world’s population. The latest report, based on numbers gathered Dec. 31, 2015, tallied 1.28 billion Catholics, which is about 17.7 percent of the global population.

Ten years earlier, according to the statistics office, the Catholic community numbered just over 1.1 billion, which was 17.3 percent of the population at that time.

Worldwide Catholics operate close to 118,000 hospitals, clinics, homes for the aged, orphanages, counseling centers and rehabilitation facilities. Ten years ago, the number of such facilities was less than 115,000.

When the Statistical Yearbook of the Church is released each year, one of the first figures many people look at is what the book defines as the “workforce for the church’s apostolate.”

For the year ending Dec. 31, 2015, that included: 5,304 bishops; 281,514 diocesan priests; 134,142 religious order priests; 45,255 permanent deacons; 54,229 religious brothers; 670,330 religious sisters; 351,797 lay missionaries; and more than 3.1 million catechists.

But the yearbook looks even deeper, for example, by giving an indication of the “pastoral workload” of priests both in relation to the number of baptized Catholics as well as to the general population.

Catholics in Tajikistan can expect personalized pastoral care. With 38 Catholics for every priest, the country has the best Catholics-to-priest ratio in the world. Of course, there are only four priests in the country and fewer than 200 Catholics. Catholics on the nine-island nation of Tuvalu in the South Pacific do nicely with a ratio of 120 Catholics for every priest.

On the other end of the scale are Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which have tens of thousands of Catholic foreign workers from countries like India and the Philippines and restrictions on the ministry of clergy. According to the Vatican, the ratio of Catholics-to-priest is 52,000-to-1 in Qatar and a staggering 125,000-to-1 in Saudi Arabia.

The worldwide average is 3,091 Catholics for every priest. The situation in North America is better than average. In Canada, there are 2,242 Catholics for every priest, and in the United States, the ratio is 1,808 Catholics for each priest.

But both Canada and the United States also made the list of more than two dozen nations where the number of priests who died in 2015 was greater than the number of new priests ordained. Most of the other countries on the list are in Western Europe.

For the Vatican, one of the most important statistics is the number of baptisms performed each year and, specifically, what percentage of those involve new Catholics who are over the age of 7, the traditional “age of reason.”

In 2015, the yearbook reported, there were a total of more than 15.7 million baptisms, and just over 17 percent of them involved persons over the age of 7. The percentage of baptisms involving older children and adults was highest in Africa (32.6 percent), followed by the Caribbean (23.3 percent) and Southeast Asia (17 percent).

Around the world, 481 parishes are “entrusted to women religious.” Both North America and Europe have 104 such parishes, while 126 parishes in South America are run by sisters.

Vatican City State is not included in the survey.
This chart is based on the May 2017 priest assignments. Below the priest’s address may be additional places where they serve.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priests Photo Directory</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Janusz Korban</td>
<td>St. Rose of Lima Church, PO Box 236, Hill City, SD 57745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. James Kubicki, SJ</td>
<td>St. Francis Mission, PO Box 499, St. Francis, SD 57572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Jam es Kubicki, SJ</td>
<td>St. Francis Mission, PO Box 499, St. Francis, SD 57572, St. Francis, Rosebud, Parmelee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Jim Lafontaine, SJ</td>
<td>PO Box 499, St. Francis, SD 57572, St. Francis, Rosebud, Parmelee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Brian Lane</td>
<td>Blessed Sacrament Church, 4500 Jackson Blvd., Rapid City, SD 57702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. David Matzko, SJ</td>
<td>PO Box 396, Mission, SD 57555, Mission, Wood, White River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Mark McCormick</td>
<td>Diocese of Rapid City, 2101 City Springs Rd., Ste. 200, Rapid City, SD 57702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Michel Mulloy</td>
<td>Diocese of Rapid City, PO Box 678, Rapid City, SD 57709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Edward Witt, SJ</td>
<td>St. Isaac Jogues Church, PO Box 1304, Rapid City, SD 57709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Ron Seminara, SJ</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church, PO Box 185, Lower Brule, SD 57548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Msgr. Woster, Michael</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church, 844 North 5th St., Spearfish, SD 57783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Vincent Suparman, SCJ</td>
<td>St. Mary Church, PO Box 309, Philip, SD 57567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. John Paul Trask</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church, 844 North 5th St., Spearfish, SD 57783</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. David Vanorny</td>
<td>Blessed Sacrament Church, PO Box 85, Buffalo, SD 5772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Riccardo Pennati</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church, PO Box 307, Faith, SD 57626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Ed Vanorny</td>
<td>Of fice of Stewardship and of Vocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bella Vista Nursing Home, c/o Fr. Michel Mulloy, PO Box 678, Rapid City, SD 57709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Riccardo Pennati</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church, PO Box 307, Faith, SD 57626</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. John Paul Trask</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church, 844 North 5th St., Spearfish, SD 57783</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. Gerald Scherer</td>
<td>St. Therese the Little Flower Church, 532 Adams St., Rapid City, SD 57701</td>
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<td></td>
<td>St. Therese the Little Flower Church, 532 Adams St., Rapid City, SD 57701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Bryan Sorensen</td>
<td>Holy Cross Church, PO Box 70, Timber Lake, SD 57656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Andrzej Wyrostek</td>
<td>Our Lady of the Black Hills Church, 12365 Sturgis Rd., Piedmont, SD 57769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Praying for Our Priests**

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

*(From USCCB)*
RAPID CITY — Sister Florence McManamen, 88, died on July 10 at Rapid City Regional Hospital in Rapid City after a short illness.

Anne Elizabeth McManamen was born March 24, 1929, in Lone Pine, Wyoming, the daughter of Florence and John McManamen. She, with her parents and three brothers, lived on '85 Divide Ranch, where they helped in the fields and with the cattle. Anne and her brothers learned spirituality and Christian values through the faith and dedication of her parents. Her junior and senior years of high school were at St. Martin's Academy in Sturgis.

Homesickness took its toll in the first semester, but by the close of the senior year, Anne felt God's Call to enter the Benedictine Order. She entered as a postulant on September 8, 1947. Sr. Florence received the Benedictine Habit and white veil of a Novice and her mother's name the following June. She made Temporary Profession June 27, 1949, and Final Profession July 5, 1952. She received her bachelors from Ursuline College at Louisville, Kentucky, and her masters at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa.

The September following her first profession, after two months of summer school, she taught third and fourth graders at St. Ambrose School in Deadwood. Thus began her lifetime ministry as teacher or principal. In addition to St. Ambrose, Sister Florence taught at St. Mary, Lemmon; St. Martin, Sturgis; St. John the Evangelist, Rapid City; and Our Lady of Fatima, Casper, Wyo. Sister Florence served as principal of St. Ambrose, St. John the Evangelist, Our Lady of Fatima, St. Catherine School, Laguna Beach, Calif., and St. Margaret School, Riverton, Wyo.

She was novice director in 1961 and 1962 and served as prioress from 1992-2000 after which she ministered through a “Traveling Enrichment Center.”

After her 2010 retirement, she oversaw the kitchen at the Monastery, watered the plants at Terra Sancta, taught CCD at St. Therese Parish and summer catechism classes in Rapid City, Wyoming and Montana. She read to the fifth graders at St. Elizabeth Seton Elementary School, volunteered for Totus Tuus, and tended a large rhubarb patch and a small garden. As the person in charge of hospitality she made every guest welcome and offered breakfast for the coffee hour after daily Mass. She also wrote a news column about the Benedictine Sisters at St. Martin Monastery for the West River Catholic.

Sr. Florence had a sense of God being always with her. She wrote, “I have had many wonderful experiences in my life.” Before she died, she said, “I am not afraid. I have lived my whole life for this.”

Sr. Florence is survived by her Benedictine community, her brother Paul (Lynn) McManamen, two nieces and two nephews and many grand nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers.

Visitation and Vigil were held July 12, St. Martin Monastery Chapel, with Mass of Christian Burial July 13, at Holy Cross Chapel, Terra Sancta. Burial is in St. Martin Cemetery.
Considering the options for infertile couples

When Catholic couples experience trouble getting pregnant, they often seek medical help and begin to research what options are available to them. A number of moral considerations and questions generally emerge during this process: Why are techniques like in vitro fertilization (IVF) considered immoral? What approaches will the church allow us to try? What does our infertility mean, spiritually and personally, in the face of our fervent but frustrated desire for a baby?

When a couple, after having non-contraceptive sexual intercourse for a year or more, begins to investigate whether there are issues related to infertility, some medical professionals simply encourage them to turn to the infertility industry and try IVF or a related technique like artificial insemination. These approaches, however, raise a host of moral concerns, including that they substitute an act of “production” for the act of marital self-giving, allow a third party outside the marriage to become the cause of the conception, often require masturbation, and may result in significant “collateral damage,” including embryo destruction, embryo freezing and disruptive effects on a woman’s physiology from the powerful super-ovulatory drugs used during the procedures.

It can be helpful to keep in mind a particular “rule of thumb” for determining whether a procedure is morally acceptable: treatments that assist the marital act are permissible, while those that replace, or substitute for, the marital act raise serious moral objections. The ideal approach to resolving infertility involves identifying the underlying causes (endometriosis? fallopian tube blockage? problems ovulating? etc.) and addressing those causes so that marital intercourse can now result in a conception.

While this may seem sensible and even obvious, many obstetricians and gynecologists today do not offer much more than a cursory workup or exam prior to recommending that the couple approach a fertility clinic and employ their services to produce a baby via IVF. Couples ought instead to look into techniques that can methodically diagnose and heal the underlying reasons for infertility, like FEMM (Fertility Education & Medical Management, https://femmhealth.org) pioneered by Dr. Pilar Vigil, or NaProTechnology (Natural Procreative Technology, see http://www.naprotechnology.com), led by Dr. Tom Hilgers. Both are Catholic ob/gyns with great track records in helping to resolve underlying infertility issues and helping couples to conceive naturally.

NaPro has been around a little longer and employs a range of approaches which may include, for example, hormonal modulation of menstrual cycle irregularities; surgical correction of fallopian tube damage or occlusions; fertility drugs to help a woman’s ovaries to release eggs; Viagra or other approaches to address erectile dysfunction; correcting penile structural defects such as hypospadias; addressing premature ejaculation; using NFP (natural family planning) to observe naturally occurring signs of fertility during the woman’s cycle to time intercourse; using LTOT (low tubal ovum transfer), in which eggs are retrieved and transplanted into the uterus or fallopian tube at a point likely to result in fertilization following the marital act; and surgical resolution of endometriosis. Dr. Hilgers has formed and trained a number of other physicians who work as independent NaProTechnology specialists in the U.S. and abroad. FEMM is building a similar network.

On the other hand, a number of other widely-available techniques, instead of assisting the marital act, end up replacing it with another kind of act altogether, namely, an act of “producing” or “manufacturing” children in laboratories. These techniques — like IVF; intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI); artificial insemination; hiring a surrogate to carry a pregnancy; and cloning — obviously raise serious moral objections.

In some cases, a couple’s infertility will end up being irresolvable. Even as a husband and wife face the grief and sorrow of not being able naturally to conceive children of their own, they can still realize their paternal and maternal desires in other meaningful, fruitful and loving ways. For example, they may discern a call to adopt a child, providing a mom and a dad to someone whose parents have died or felt that they could not care for the child. They might decide to become a camp counselor or a schoolteacher, or provide temporary foster care to a child in crisis, generously taking on an authentic parenting role. They may become a “Big Brother/Big Sister” to youth in the community who yearn for a father or mother figure in their lives.

Although these solutions do not take away all the grief, they are a means by which God helps to draw good out of their situation. By these means, couples are challenged to “think outside the box” and enter into the mysterious designs of God within their marriage. By stepping away from a desire to conceive and raise biological children of their own, couples facing irresolvable infertility can discover new and unexpected paths to marital fruitfulness, paths that bring great blessings to others, and that can lead to abiding joy and marital fulfillment.

Using a NaProTechnology approach for the treatment of infertility can be highly effective and often even more effective than current approaches to infertility. For more information about Creighton Model FertilityCare and NaProTechnology resources in South Dakota, contact the Family Life Office at 605-716-5214 ext 236 or ajulian@diorc.org.
When joining the diocese as Family Life Director in 2015, one of Amy Julian’s priorities was to promote the understanding and use of NFP throughout the diocese. “NFP was an integral part of my conversion when I came into the Church in 2001,” says Julian. “After falling in love with St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, I turned to NFP as our family planning method. Not only was it much better for my body, it drew my husband I so much closer as a couple.

“Since then I’ve found that many Catholics haven’t ever had the opportunity to fully embrace NFP. Either they haven’t had the science or the theology adequately explained to them, and they’ve never given it a chance.” With only two NFP teachers in the diocese in 2015, Julian was unsure how to kindle a demand for NFP without having an adequate supply of teachers on hand. “In the last 18 months, our two Creighton FertilityCare teachers, Lisa Kinyon and Randi Brickey, have really had more clients than they could reasonably handle. We have received a grant to send another teacher to Creighton to be trained, but it is a really long and intensive training period.

The only solution was prayer. In July of 2016, Family Life Ministries hosted an NFP Talk, Holy Hour and Social at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Spearfish, to pray for an outpouring of God’s grace on the NFP Ministry in the Rapid City Diocese. Since then, several couples have approached or moved into the diocese who are trained in the Billings Ovulation Method or the Sympto-Thermal Method and Julian is delighted to have seen the number of teachers more than doubled, and the methods offered to have tripled. “One of the teachers, Renee Schroeder, DO, is an NFP only physician in Chamberlain, who also practices in the Kennebec clinic. I never expected for God to answer our prayers so abundantly!”

This year, the FLM NFP Holy Hour will be held at Blessed Sacrament Church in Rapid City, on Sunday, July 23, at 6:30 p.m., followed by social.

Want to learn more about the methods of NFP offered in our diocese? See the Family Life Ministries page at www.rapidcitydiocease.org or visit the NFP section of the USCCB website at: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/.

If you are interested in learning or teaching NFP, please contact us to get involved: 605-716-5214 ext 236 or ajulian@diorc.org.

Join us to spread the word about God’s design for married love and the gift of life! (Article courtesy Sue Jimmerson)

U.S. and European Catholic Bishops Call for Strategy to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons Globally

WASHINGTON — A joint declaration issued July 6 by U.S. and European Catholic bishops calls for all nations to work together to develop a “credible, verifiable and enforceable strategy for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.”

Entitled “Nuclear Disarmament: Seeking Human Security,” the declaration was issued to coincide with the conclusion of a meeting hosted this week by the United Nations “to negotiate a legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.” Although the United States and most European nations are not joining these negotiations, the Catholic bishops acknowledge, “the fact that most of the world’s nations are participating in this effort testifies to the urgency of their concern, an urgency intensified by the prospect of nuclear terrorism and proliferation, and to the inequality and dissatisfaction of non-nuclear states about the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament efforts.”

“The teaching of our church about the urgent need for nuclear disarmament is clear,” said Bishop Oscar Cantú of Las Cruces, New Mexico, chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace. “It is time for us to heed this moral imperative and promote human security both within the United States and Europe, and globally.”

Catholic Social Services helps birth mother and daughter reunite

BY MARY GARRIGAN
CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

In 1987, Catholic Social Services helped Merri Blake make an adoption plan for her newborn daughter.

Twenty-eight years later, CSS was there again for Merri when she decided to search for the baby who grew up as Courtney, the happy, healthy and beloved daughter of Joan and John Luft.

Because Merri shrouded her pregnancy and adoption decision in deep secrecy, only her parents, now deceased, some close friends and her husband, Jake, knew of the baby. Merri, already the single-mother of a toddler, never told her six siblings or her four other daughters, now ages 30, 24, 21 and 16, about Courtney.

“I was raised to believe that something like this was a bad thing, you know, like you did something bad and that’s why this has to happen. I didn’t realize that it could be something other than a bad thing,” Merri said.

The culture of adoption has changed dramatically in recent decades, says Natalie Lecy, director of the CSS Family Services Department. “We really encourage open adoption for everyone today. It’s healthier all around. Open adoption doesn’t mean that you’re going to be each other’s best friends, or even have regular contact. It’s just that the lines of communication are always kept open, so that medical questions or grief issues that may come up with a child can be addressed as they do,” Lecy said.

Over time, Merri came to see her adoption decision as a beautiful choice. “I just wish I would have known that a lot sooner,” she said. But once she decided to search for Courtney, things happened quickly.

By law, any birth parent or adoptee is allowed to initiate a search once the adoptee has reached the age of 18. Catholic Social Services is one of the few adoption agencies that still assists with searches.

CSS was able to quickly connect Merri with Courtney’s mom, Joan, who grew up in Mud Butte and happened to be in the area visiting relatives.

“Courtney was the second child we adopted through Catholic Social Services and it was never a big secret that they were adopted,” Joan said. “The doors of communication between CSS and us were always open.”

After the two women met over coffee, Joan quickly shared Merri’s phone number with Courtney, who is married and living in Nashville now. The next day, Merri received a text that read: “This is Courtney. I want to talk sometime. How about tomorrow?”

“This whole thing moved a whole lot faster than I expected it to,” Merri laughed.

Courtney calls Merri’s decision to reach out to her “perfect timing.” Her older sister, Erin, had recently searched for her birth parents and the experience was a positive one. “I was planning to do it soon, too,” Courtney said. “Ever since I was little, I was always intrigued and kind of wanted to know who she was. After all, she’s part of who I am and the reason I am where I am today.”

Merri and Courtney’s first meeting took place in 2015 at a Nashville mall. There were lots of questions and answers, and plenty of tears, too. “We stayed and talked and talked until they kicked us out,” Merri said. “She just asked and asked and asked and I just answered and answered and answered.”

Courtney’s questions were mostly about Merri’s circumstances at the time of her birth, her birth father and the history of her extended birth family. “She was so gracious answering all my questions,” Courtney said.

Merri’s biggest fear — that Courtney would resent her for choosing to parent her first child but place her second for adoption — proved unfounded. “I just wanted her to know the reason that I did this. I couldn’t bring another baby into my home when I couldn’t even feed or clothe the one I already had.”

Courtney says she would have done the same thing. “I never felt any resentment at all. I know I was very fortunate to wind up where I did,” she said. “If someone has the courage and bravery to give their child up for adoption, then they must be a really caring and kind person.”

Merri says she couldn’t have chosen better parents for her baby, something which was not an option 28 years ago.

“Her parents could not have raised her any better. She is so caring and considerate and such a good person. She is such a sweet girl,” Merri said.

Today, Merri and Courtney keep in touch by text, telephone and Facebook. Tragically, John Luft died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack five years ago, before getting to meet the birth mothers of his two daughters. “Not a day went by that we did not want to thank the birth mothers and birth fathers for this gift,” Joan said. “We were never threatened by them searching, or thought it would hurt our feelings.”

Joan, Courtney and Merri come from different perspectives on the adoption experience, but they share a common gratitude.

“We are all very lucky,” said Joan.

Catholic Social Services is one of the few adoption agencies that still assists with birth parent/child searches. Merri Blake and her daughter, Courtney, found each other after 28 years. (Courtesy photo)
**Spirituality and culture: reading the Gospel to recognize Jesus as our brother**

**By Deacon Marlon Leneaugh**

Director of Native Ministries

At the very dawn of creation was God. God spoke his word. The spirit swept over the darkness of the waters and life began. It all began with the simplest of words and yet authoritative words, “Let there be light,” and there was light. Then God “created man in his image.” And so from the dust of the earth, God formed man and breathed his spirit into him and he began to live.

The same is true from the Lakota creation story that everything came from Wakantanka, “the Great Mystery.” All cultures or people have creation stories, and they are all connected with a common thread — a creator, a supreme spiritual being whether it be God, I Am, Tunkasila, Yahweh or Allah. All life began from a supreme being.

All nations have experiences and accounts of God revealing himself in a way that they could understand. We all have our Old Testament histories and our spiritual journeys searching for God. God heard the prayers of all those seeking strength and wisdom from hilltops as they sought visions. He heard the prayers as sacrifices were made for all the people as pierced warriors pleaded and sang their songs in the Sundance Circle. The same message has constantly reverberated throughout the centuries — God is with his people.

Throughout history, God sent certain revelations to his people to show them how much he loved them and wanted to be a part of their lives. He sent various prophets, spiritual leaders, and holy men and women such as Nicholas Black Elk, Mohammed, Gandhi, White Buffalo Calf Woman, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela, and others, who bore witness to this love. And from this immense love he sent his only Son, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” so that all may share in the joy of eternal life regardless of race or color.

“So when we as native people read the Gospel, we must read it as native people, for this is who we are. We can no longer try to be what we think the dominant society wants us to be. As native Catholic people, we must set out with open minds and hearts; then we will encounter Jesus Christ. We must learn to subtract the chauvinism and the cultural superiority with which this Gospel was often presented to our people. We must ‘de-colonize’ this Gospel, which said we must become European in order to become Christian. We have to go beyond the white gospel in order to perceive its truth.

When we can do this, we shall meet Jesus as our brother and recognize him as the one who has been with us all along as the quiet servant, the one who has strengthened us through these centuries. Then we will know that the cry of Jesus Christ from the cross was the cry of our people at Wounded Knee, Sand Creek and other places of the mass death of our people. He was our companion during these years of our invisibility in this society. This same Jesus is the one who challenges us to grow beyond ourselves. This is the challenge of evangelization. If we take up the challenge, we shall sense that the Holy Spirit is with us and be glad. This is the heart and core meaning of the Gospel” (The People, National Catholic Educational Association, 1992).

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**The 2017 Kateri Tekakwitha Conference Raffle**

The conference committee is selling raffle tickets, $20 each or 3 for $50. Drawing July 21. Need not be present to win.

**Prizes:**

- **1st Prize**
  - 2017 Polaris
  - 900 Ranger

- **2nd Prize**
  - 2017 Polaris
  - Sportsman 450 HO

- **3rd Prize**
  - Samsung 65-70” Flat Screen TV

To contribute a memorial gift or to purchase raffle tickets, contact the conference treasurer, Deacon Marlon Leneaugh at 605-343-3541 or mleneaughsr@diorc.org.

Thank you for your support in making this Conference a reality. We would love to have your continued support through your prayers and gifts.

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**Diocese of Rapid City — Vacancy Announcements**

Applications are being accepted for the half time (20 hours per week) position of Filing Clerk for the Office of the Chancellor.

**Function:** Is responsible for maintaining the filing system in an organized manner for the function of the Chancellor’s office.

**Qualifications:**
- Excellent clerical skills with an emphasis on details, organization and logical thinking.
- Must possess a high level of confidentiality and discretion.
- Competency with computers is required.
- Must demonstrate a willingness to learn the filing system and maintain it.
- Familiarity with the Catholic Faith and the operation of the Catholic Church preferred.

Open until filled. **Application Process:** Interested individuals should send a bio and letter of application by e-mail or postal mail listing three professional references along with a completed application form that can be downloaded from the diocesan website at: http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/chancellor/employment/

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Tekakwitha Conference — A Condensed History

- 1656-1680 Kateri Tekakwitha (Mohawk-Algonquin, 1656-1680) lived a holy life in the Mohawk Nation of New York and later in Quebec, Canada. Soon after her death, devotions were initiated by local Indian and non-Indian Catholics who had known her. In 1676 she was baptized Catherine after St. Catherine of Siena, also a mystic. The next year, three Mohawk catechists from La Prairie (Quebec) visited the Mohawk Nation and took Kateri with them on their return home. In Canada, her feast day became the anniversary of her death (Apr. 17) whereas in the United States, it became the anniversary of her flight to Canada (Jul. 14).

- 1884 At the Third Plenary Council at Baltimore, the U.S. bishops signed the postulation brief to introduce the canonization causes to Rome for the Jesuit martyrs and St. Kateri Tekakwitha. (Her cause was separated later)

- 1885 From Jan. to Apr. in Canada and the United States, 906 native people supported St. Kateri Tekakwitha's cause by signing letters of endorsement. The signers included Charles F. Finkbonner (Lummi ancestor of Jake Finkbonner — see 2006 entry), the holy man Black Elk (Oglia; baptized 1904), and over 150 Lakota people from present-day North and South Dakota. These letters were added to the postulation brief, which the Vatican published with signatures in 1916.

- 1891-1900 Congregation of American Sisters: Under the leadership of Mother M. Catherine Sacred White Buffalo (Hunkpapa) and Rev. Francis M. Craft (Mohawk), several Hunkpapa women from the Standing Rock Reservation founded a religious community inspired by Blessed Kateri. ... four of the American Sisters served as nurses in the U.S. Army in Cuba and reportedly they were the first American Indian women to serve officially in the Armed Forces of the United States.

- 1931 Since the Congregation of Rites had separated St. Kateri's cause from that of the Jesuit martyrs, her cause was reintroduced and a postulator was appointed.


- 1957 18th Annual Meeting, Rapid City, S.D.: Mother Butte Center, Sept. 23-25. Topics: Catholic schools, youth and urban adjustment with reports from Los Angeles, Rapid City, Salt Lake City, and elsewhere. 38 attendees.


- 1965 26th Annual Meeting, Marvin, S.D.: Blue Cloud Abbey, Aug. 9-11. By 1965, native clergy such as Reverend John J. Brown, S.J. (Siikska [Blackfeet]), were members of the conference.

- 1967 28th Annual Meeting, St. Norbert, Manitoba, Canada: Villa Marie Retreat House, Aug. 7-9. Topics: mission of church, effective evangelization, liturgical adaptation with the sacred pipe and problems of alcoholism. This was the first meeting held in Canada and the first to involve Canadian scholars and missionaries.

- 1969 30th Annual Meeting, Marvin, S.D.: Blue Cloud Abbey, August 4-8. Theme: The New Indian Generation. Topics: "Red power" with discussions led by Br. Edward M. Red Owl, OSB. The Tekakwitha Conference reorganized its governance with the position of Executive Secretary as the principal office. The conference's first newsletter was distributed.


- 1979 40th Annual Meeting, Yankton, S.D.: Mount Marty College, August 6-9. Highlights: Native American Catholics comprised 66 of the approximately 200 participants. They challenged the clergy to listen to the concerns of Native Americans. (They) met with Msgr. Paul A. Lenz (Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions), Bishop Harold J. Dimmerling (Rapid City, S.D.), Bishop Thomas Murphy (Great Falls, Mont.), and Bishop William G. Connare (Greensburg, Pa., Chair, U.S. Catholic Conference Mission Committee) to articulate their concerns. The Tekakwitha Conference incorporated with a board of directors, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops appointed an Episcopal Moderator, and it became listed in The Official Catholic Directory.

- 1989 50th Annual Meeting, Fargo, N. D.: North Dakota State University, Aug. 2-6. Theme: Walking the Sacred Circle with Jesus Christ. Also, 1989, a lay Native Catholic director was appointed as the first Native American director and the Conference is awarded the Pope Paul VI Award of the N.C.C.E. (National Council of Catholic Evangelization).

- 2000 64th Annual Meeting, Sioux Falls, S.D.: Augustana College, Jul. 30-Aug. 3. Theme: We are All Related through Kateri and Share our Culture and Faith on the Great Plains.

- 2006 On Mar. 4, by special request, Sister Kateri Mitchell went to Seattle to prepare for the annual meeting to be held in Seattle. She first visited Jacob Finkbonner at Seattle Children’s Hospital who was gravely ill with a strep A infection on his face. While at his bedside Sister Kateri and Jake's mother prayed to Kateri Tekakwitha for her intercession while pressing a first-class relic to his body. While in surgery minutes later, hospital staff removed Jake’s bandages and discovered that he was disease free. Yet on the previous day when they applied the bandages, the upper half of his body was disease covered.


- 2017 78th Annual Meeting, Rapid City, S.D.

(From Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, WI. Used with permission. Statue photo taken at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Rapid City)
Knights Texas Barbecue Dinner to Benefit Seminarians

Held at the Blessed Sacrament Church Hall, Saturday, July 29, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Free will offering. Reservations requested but not required. Call 605-721-7636

Baptism Reunion

Families from Our Lady of the Black Hills parish who had children baptized since May 2016 were invited to attend a celebration on June 13. They shared a meal, reflected on their child’s baptism day, and discussed the promises they made that day for their child’s faith journey in the Catholic Church. The parish will hold these Baptism reunion celebrations every 6 months. (Top) Shawn with Maggie Carlin; Dusty with Clarence Whiteside; Jennifer with Madyson Anaya; Becky with Avery Johnson; Fr. Andrzej Wyrosteck; Meredith with Jackson Willnerd; and Jenny with Blase Scherr (Bottom) Katie with Amelia Harwood. (Courtesy photos)

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Diocesan Seminarian Burses (as of 6/30/17)
Only income from these donations is used to support diocesan seminarian education.

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Appreciation is extended to the South Dakota State Council Knights of Columbus for contributing to the Bishop’s Burse; to the Father D. Craig Cower estate for contributing to the Cower and Vannix Burses; the Catholic Daughters of America, Court Maria Goretti #1584, Colome, for contributing to the Padula Burse; and the anonymous donor for contributing to the Scherer Burse.

PRAA Memorial Burses

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PRAA Board Chair Fr. Kerry Prendiville

For information on donating to PRAA Memorial Burse, contact Finance Manager Rick Soulek, 343-3541.
Service to Music Ministry Noted

Members of St. John the Baptist, Custer, honored Colleen Marht this spring for her 30 years of music ministry in the parish. She has worked with both adult and children’s choirs. She has given a total of 50 years of music ministry in the Diocese of Rapid City. National Pastoral Musicians Chair, Jackie Schnittgrund (in the yellow jacket), Rapid City is pictured in the center with Marht (wearing the olive green sweater) who was presented with a picture of St. Cecelia, patron saint of musicians. (Courtesy photo)

New Employees

In June, Craig Dyke, began work as the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. He graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, Ohio, and has a Masters in Theology and Christian Ministry with Catechetics Specialization. He has worked in family life and youth ministry for the Diocese of Peoria and Archdiocese of Boston. His office is located at the Chancery Annex at Terra Sancta. He and his family are members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Rapid City.

Deacon Greg Sass joined the chancery staff July 1, as Associate Director of Diaconate Formation and Coordinator of Lay Ministry. Deacon Sass was ordained in 2013 and has completed the Lay Ministry program. His office is located at the main Chancery, and his office hours are Tuesday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. He and his wife Nancy are members of Our Lady of the Black Hills, Piedmont.

To learn more about the youth and young adult ministry or the diaconate and lay ministry programs visit www.rapidcitydiocese.org.

St. Vincent de Paul Receives Grant

The National Council of the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul has announced the Our Lady of the Black Hills Conference, Piedmont, has received a $2,500 grant. The money is part of SVdP’s “Friends of the poor Grant Program,” which distributed 26 grants throughout the country. According to a press release, the grant money will be used to help provide temporary funding for rent and utility relief. Patrik Suiter, OLBH conference member, said that the grant will provide funding for 25 families. The chapter is part of the Rapid City District Council and was founded in 2016 and covers Piedmont, Summerset, Black Hawk, and Sturgis. Members have served more than 60 families in 2017 and hope to expand their services. For more information regarding the council, grant, or services call 605-389-6739.

Temporal Eremitical Vows


In Your Prayers

Happy Anniversary

During the Duc in Altum team visit to St. Patrick Church, Wall, campers helped Father Tim Hoag celebrate his 22nd anniversary of ordination in June. Father Hoag was ordained June 29, 1995. Duc in Altum is a summer traveling catechetical program for youth in kindergarten through high school. Teams of four young adults travel to parishes across the Diocese of Rapid City, teaching the faith, playing games, praying, and participating in Mass and reconciliation. (Courtesy photo)

Prayer for Rain

Father God, Our ancestor in faith, Noah, was saved on the waters of the flood. The Jewish people passed through the waters of the Red Sea to come into a new land. Jesus signaled a new birth to eternal life in the river Jordan.

When we celebrate the gift of our own new life in the baptismal waters, we ask you to send rain to nourish our thirsty land. Give us the moisture we need for planting and harvest and to keep us safe from fires.

Father we pray for this blessing, confident that you will shower your mercy and love upon us once again. We pray in the name of your Risen Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Movie Night

World Apostolate of Fatima, USA/Blue Army Shrine sponsored a Fatima movie night in June. More than 100 people attended the evening that included a brief talk from Jim Jacquot and a movie by Warner Bros. about our Lady of Fatima. (Courtesy photo)

Welcome to Our Lord’s Table

St. Mary, Reliance

(Photo submitted by parish)
Catholic Extension announces eight finalists for Lumen Christi award

CHICAGO (CNS) — Catholic Extension has announced eight finalists for its Lumen Christi Award, which recognizes Catholic leaders “for bringing the light of Christ” to poor communities across the United States.

“Our Lumen Christi finalists have answered Pope Francis’ call to all Catholics to be ‘missionary disciples’ and are proclaiming and living the Gospel in America’s ‘peripheries,’” said Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension. “They are an example to all of us.”

The award is the highest honor bestowed by the Chicago-based organization, the leading national supporter of missionary work in poor and remote parts of the United States. The Lumen Christi winner will be announced later in the year.

The Latin phrase “Lumen Christi,” taken from the Easter Vigil, means “Light of Christ.” Since 1978, the award has honored individuals or groups who demonstrate how the power of faith can transform lives and communities.

This year’s finalists are:

- The Missionary Carmelites of St. Teresa in the Diocese of Beaumont, Texas, have been ministering to Latinos in three parishes in southeast Texas for the past 12 years. The four Mexican sisters develop lay leaders, hold retreats, provide religious education and outreach.

- Franciscan Father Ponchie Vasquez in the Diocese of Tucson, Arizona, is pastor of the San Solano Missions with the Tohono O’odham Nation at the U.S./Mexico border west of Tucson. The Tohono O’odham, or “desert people,” come together in 40 churches served by the missions.

- Sister Therese Maria Touma, based in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, serves young Maronite Catholics in youth and young adult ministry. She belongs to the Servants of Christ the Light, a new religious order, in the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, New York.

- Ruben and Rosario Cano and the Hispanic Lay Ecclesial Ministers of Utah, in Diocese of Salt Lake City, have been serving the rapidly growing Latino Catholic communities that make up 70 percent of the state’s Catholics. The Canos are at San Rafael Mission Church, Huntington, Utah. They lead religious education and community outreach at their church and travel throughout Utah.

- Father John O’Grady is serving with the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services as an Army chaplain at Walter Reed Medical Center in Maryland, where he provides pastoral ministry to active duty military and their families. He accompanies those in need of pastoral care and has brought the gift of healing to the spiritually, physically and mentally wounded.

- The St. Gabriel of Mercy Center in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, is led by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. The center is in the Diocese of Jackson. The sisters partner with local organizations to provide services such as the St. Gabriel Closet, parenting and GED classes, a computer learning lab, senior services and summer youth programs.

- Antonio Trujillo in the Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, has revitalized the small St. Joseph Mission School in San Fidel, New Mexico, which serves mostly Native American students.

- Father Enrique Herrera in the Diocese of Monterey, California, is the son of a migrant farmworker who traveled regularly from Mexico to work in California’s Salinas Valley. Today, he is the pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Greenfield in Salinas Valley, a parish comprised mainly of immigrants.

These are the eight finalists for Catholic Extension’s Lumen Christi Award. Pictured from left to right and top to bottom: the Missionary Carmelites of St. Teresa, Father Enrique Herrera, Father John O’Grady, Antonio Trujillo, Franciscan Father Ponchie Vasquez, Sister Therese Maria Touma, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, Ruben and Rosario Cano and the Hispanic Lay Ecclesial Ministers of Utah. (CNS photos/Catholic Extension)
**TWENTY SOMETHING**

*History and humility: an old man’s plea to young adults*

The old man with the typewriter would like a word with us texters and tweeters: Don’t be a blockhead.

David McCullough’s bestselling new book, “The American Spirit,” takes up a cause he has long championed, lends it added urgency and aims it squarely at young adults. “We are raising a generation of young Americans who are by and large historically illiterate,” McCullough writes.

At 83, the prize-winning historian has ample evidence. His preferred mode is to be holed up in his writing studio, a tiny shed in the backyard of his Martha’s Vineyard home with no running water or working phone. To keep from startling him, visitors whistle as they approach.

But McCullough is even more shocked when he’s on the speaking circuit. A Missouri college student, for instance, once thanked him for coming to campus and said “until now, I never understood that the original 13 colonies were all on the East Coast.” Another student asked him: “Aside from Harry Truman and John Adams, how many other presidents have you interviewed?”

The trouble, McCullough writes, is that we don’t know who we are or where we’re headed without a sense of where we came from.

Peppered with the kind of anecdotes that make his biographies spring to life, this book — a collection of his speeches — is different. It is an unabashed love story, McCullough’s ode to history, “an antidote to the hubris of the present,” a pleasure that “consists in an expansion of the experience of being alive.”

Here’s where I must admit that my summer reading has gotten a bit light, reduced to the bleary-eyed boomerang of blogs and Instagram feeds. I was surprised how good it felt to hold this book and entertain its ideas. It illuminates the footbridge from knowledge to character, and it offers a clear takeaway for the Catholic Church.

To learn our nation’s history is to be inspired by the likes of Abigail Adams, who penned 2,000 letters. “Great necessities call out great virtues,” she wrote to her 11-year-old son, a future president, setting sail across the Atlantic. “When a mind is raised and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities which would otherwise lay dormant wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.”

McCullough dedicates the book to his 19 grandchildren and does out plenty of wholesome advice. Read widely. Be generous. Take an interest in people.

He also borrows Abigail Adams’ admonition to her son and directs it at modern-day history-illiterates: “How unpardonable it would be for us — with so much that we have been given, the advantages we have, all the continuing opportunities we have to enhance and increase our love of learning — to turn out blockheads.”

We must never take for granted the work of those who went before us, McCullough writes. “To be indifferent to that isn’t just to be ignorant, it’s to be rude.” Then he throws his sharpest barb — cushioned, as it is, by a Mr. Rodgers cardigan: “And ingratitude is a shabby failing.”

When it comes to our religion, the oldest Christian faith, so many of us young Catholics risk ditching the path from ignorance to ingratitude. McCullough’s caution applies: “We have to value what our forebears — and not just in the 18th century, but our own parents and grandparents — did for us, or we’re not going to take it very seriously, and it can slip away.”

I love my faith and my family, which intersect in deep, fascinating ways. To learn more of Catholicism’s rich history — our saints and our sacraments, our symbols and our songs — brings a wellspring of appreciation. It is to discover, in the words of McCullough, an “inexhaustible source of strength.”

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**Do not say ‘I am only a youth’**

A “YouCat” nugget courtesy of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

*youcat.org*

**How does God help us to be free?**

Christ wants us to be “set free for freedom” (see Gal 5:1) and to become capable of brotherly love. That is why he sends us the Holy Spirit, who makes us free and independent of worldly powers and strengthens us for a life of love and responsibility (1739-1742, 1748).

The more we sin, the more we think only about ourselves and the less well we can develop freely. In sinning we also become more inept at doing good and practicing charity. The Holy Spirit, who has come down into our hearts, gives us a heart that is filled with love for God and mankind. We avail ourselves of the Holy Spirit as the power that leads us to inner freedom, opens our hearts for love, and makes us better instruments for what is good and loving.

**What does freedom mean?**

Being free sets man above the animals and in a certain sense even makes him like God. True freedom is not the capacity to choose whatever one wants, good or evil, but rather the capacity to choose the good. Only free human beings can take responsibility. Being personally free makes human beings unique. Within the range of possibilities, someone can freely choose his occupation and his vocation; human beings can come or go, choose this or leave that aside. It is a fundamental human right the exercise of which must not be restricted without good reason. With respect to freedom of expression, human beings must be allowed to articulate freely their own religious, political, and cultural ideas. Everyone must be able to express his own opinion in freedom. For this to happen, there must be a legal order that guarantees a person's freedom and protects it against pressure from the misuse of freedom by others.

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**“What to do” The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church**

A “DoCat” nugget

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**Movie Review**

**Spider-Man: Homecoming (Columbia)**

By John Mulderig (CNS) — Vibrant comic-book adaptation follows the double life of seemingly ordinary high school student Peter Parker (Tom Holland) as he struggles to keep his extra-curricular crime-fighting activities as Spider-Man concealed from his easily worried guardian, Aunt May (Marisa Tomei). In this reboot for the franchise, industrialist Tony Stark, aka Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.), makes Peter his protege, and tries to keep him focused on thwarting petty misdemeanors. But Peter, who yearns to secure a place among the elite Avengers, finds an irresistible target when he stumbles across the dangerous schemes of mechanically winged villain Adrian Toomes, aka the Vulture (Michael Keaton). Director and co-writer Jon Watts crafts a lively and satisfying action adventure, showcasing both loyal friendship (Jacob Batalon plays Peter’s best pal) and restrained romance (Laura Harrier portrays the schoolmate for whom he pines). Yet, while the combat is kept virtually bloodless, some of the dialogue puts this off-limits for the many youngsters who would otherwise likely enjoy it. Possibly acceptable for older adolescents. Much stylized violence, including gunplay and a beating, a single gruesome image, brief sexual humor, a couple of mild oaths, some crass expressions, an obscene gesture. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

**Classifications**

- Baby Driver.................................L
- Despicable Me 3................. A-II
- The House................................O

Classifications used by the USCCB are: A-I, general patronage; A-II, adults and adolescents; A-III, adults; L, limited adult audiences, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O, morally offensive. For more information, visit: http://www.catholicnews.com/movies.htm.