Indiana launches investigation after discovery of remains of aborted babies at doctor’s home

By Natalie Hoefer

The story of 2,246 aborted fetal remains found at the Illinois home of the late Dr. Ulrich “George” Klopfer continues to unfold, with the new focal point being on doctors in Indiana where he performed abortions.

From medical records found in close proximity to the remains, “We’ve been able to ascertain that over 2,246 fetal remains do come from the state of Indiana,” he added.

Klopfer, whom Hill referred to as “one of the most notorious abortionists in the history of Indiana,” formerly operated abortion centers in the northern Indiana cities of Fort Wayne, Gary and South Bend. It is estimated that he performed more than 30,000 abortions through the course of his career, according to Jackie Appleman, executive director of Right to Life in St. Joseph County, where South Bend is located.

The buildings that served as his abortion centers were abandoned after his medical license was suspended indefinitely “as a result of a whole host of violations, including record keeping,” Hill said.

Pro-life volunteers told Today’s Catholic, a reason to continue living.

After losing his sight in a devastating crash, Greg Mark found light amid the darkness

By John Shaughnessy

Greg Mark kept trying to find the right words to keep the young woman from killing herself.

The 25-year-old woman was calling from a suicide intervention hotline from a car that was going 30 mph. He hoped and prayed that it would save her life, too.

“Move over, Charlie!” He didn’t. There were guardrails on both sides of the road. There was nowhere for me to go. It was a head-on collision.”

The darkness and the light

The extensive injuries to his face required plastic surgery. He had a couple of broken ribs, and the injuries to his legs left him with casts up to his knees, leading him to spend six weeks in a hospital.

Worst of all, he lost his sight in his intensive training, and he still wasn’t able to convince her to choose life. That’s when he said, “If you don’t mind, let me tell you about myself.”

Mark then shared the story of the near-death experience that crumpled his body and left him blind at the age of 25—an experience that changed his life and his faith.

As he shared the details of that story with the young woman, he also hoped and prayed that it would save her life, too.

“I was on my way to 11:30 Mass on a two-lane country highway. My fiancée was in the car with me. In the distance, a car crossed the center line. I told him, ‘Move over, Charlie!’ He didn’t. There were guardrails on both sides of the road. There was nowhere for me to go. It was a head-on collision.”

Archbishop Thompson hopes new team approach will foster a ‘culture of vocations’ in archdiocese

By Sean Gallagher

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson has announced a restructuring of the staff of the archdiocesan vocations office.

For decades, one priest in a full-time position as vocations director has promoted vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life across central and southern Indiana, guided the application process of men seeking to become archdiocesan seminarians, and oversee the priestly formation of the archdiocese’s future priests, regularly visiting them and the staff of the seminaries regularly in which they are enrolled.

Beginning on Sept. 27, these responsibilities will be assigned to a team of priests serving in regions across the archdiocese.

Father Eric Augenstein, who has served as archdiocesan vocations director since 2013, will become the director of seminarians, overseeing the seminarian application process and the priestly formation of men accepted as seminarians.

He will also continue to serve as pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, a ministry he began in January.

Father Michael Keucher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and sacramental minister of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County, will become the director of vocations, overseeing the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life across the archdiocese.

Assisting him in this ministry will be a team of five priests who will serve as associate directors of vocations. They are Fathers Daniel Atkins, Daniel Bedel, Michael Keucher, Mark Lynn and John Shaughnessy.
James Brockmeier, Anthony Hollowell and Douglas Marcotte.

Andy Miller, who has served as associate director of the vocations office, will now become the coordinator of the office, assisting Father Augenstein, Father Keucher and the associate vocations directors in their ministries.

“Father Keucher is excited about the changes in the vocations office. ‘I think the Holy Spirit has produced a very good idea here,’” he said. He also thinks that having priests ministering in parishes and schools in the regions where they minister, and meet with individual men who are beginning to discern a possible priestly call, each will also contribute in the parish or school ministry to which they are currently assigned.

Father Augenstein is excited about the new position.

“I think the Holy Spirit has produced a very good idea here,” he said. He also thinks that having priests ministering in parishes and schools in the regions where they minister, and meet with individual men who are beginning to discern a possible priestly call, each will also contribute in the parish or school ministry to which they are currently assigned.

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Kurtz: Cancer treatments will end by Oct. 20; surgery is planned for Nov. 11

By John Shaughnessy

After all Father Glenn O’Connor did for her and for so many other women trying to reclaim their lives, Marvetta Grimes wants to make one of his last decisions come true.

She believes it would be especially fitting to make that dream a reality during this 20th anniversary year of Seeds of Hope—the recovery program that the late Father O’Connor founded on the grounds of St. Joseph Parish in Indianapolis to help women who are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

For the last 30 years, Seeds of Hope has provided a transitional residence center that offers a structured, spiritual environment designed to empower the women to overcome their addictions, reunite with their families and start their lives anew. About 700 women—and their families—have benefited from the program.

“Father Glenn was the type of person who was for the underdog,” says Grimes, who went through the program and has served as the executive director of Seeds of Hope since 2005. “He would give the shirt off his back to help someone. Seeds of Hope was the perfect organization for him.”

In the three years before he died of cancer on March 15 of this year at the age of 66, Father O’Connor dreamed of making one more addition to the Seeds of Hope program, Grimes says.

“He wanted to have a three-quarter house for the women,” Grimes says, explaining that the priest’s vision was to create an apartment building where the recovering women could live for another 18 months after they completed the program and before they immersed themselves once again in society.

“We have these board meetings, and I’d have one of the ladies come to every meeting. And what we found is that the ladies are scared due to the opioid crisis. They’re scared of going back out in the world and relapsing. They want to stay clean. Once they graduate, they go back to the same places, and it’s not good for them. There are drugs there. Father Glenn sat in on all those meetings. He saw their tears and how scared they were. This is what he wanted. He just ran out of time.”

So Seeds of Hope has started “the Father Glenn Challenge,” an effort to raise $70,000 to help build 11 apartments in the three-quarter house, with an eventual goal of creating enough rooms to have a second floor with another 11 apartments.

“As acting chairman of the committee of the U.S. bishops’ Committee for Religious Liberty, Bishop Robert J. McManus of Worcester, Mass., was appointed on July 23 to serve as acting chairman of the committee by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.†

“Because she chose adoption, we now have our son...and we are beyond grateful.”

You can help others by giving online at www.archindy.org/UCA.
Tragic discovery reminds us that now, more than ever, we must stand up for life.

We’re about to begin October, which the Church recognizes as Respect Life Month. It is a time for people of faith and all people of goodwill to affirm every human life is sacred, from conception to natural death. As Catholics, we believe each of us—the unborn, the sick, the elderly … no matter what your state in life—is made in the image and likeness of God and worthy of dignity.

On Respect Life Sunday, Oct. 6, members of the Church are invited to a 10:30 a.m. liturgy at Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will be the principal celebrant. Later that day, the annual Life Chain will take place at several locations throughout central and southern Indiana, including in Indianapolis from 2:30-3:30 p.m. along Meridian Street from North to 38th streets. For a complete list of the Life Chain events in the archdiocese, see page 7.

While people of faith will no doubt make a concerted effort during October to stand up for life, the unrelenting facts of the tragedy unfolding on the Illinois property of an abortion doctor. On Sept. 13, police announced that 2,236 preserved aborted babies had been found at the rural Illinois home of recently deceased abortionist Dr. Ulrich "George" Klopfer. On Sept. 10, the doctor’s body was found in Will County, Ill., the county in which Klopfer lived. They will eventually be brought back to Indiana, and "treated in accordance with current Indiana law [requiring] burial and cremation and dignity and respect," said Hill. "We’re thankful the attorney general is treating these babies as babies, with the dignity and respect they deserved all along," said Marc Tuttle, president of Right to Life of Indiana, after the Sept. 20 press conference.

And we’re thankful he’s taking this seriously, to get to the bottom of any laws or regulations that were violated. We hope this is a wake-up call to the God authorities to continue to monitor and regulate the abortion industry, because these practices happen too often.

As we move forward in October and beyond, we pray that Klopfer’s case is an indication that our writers will continue to argue that God cares deeply for us. And I’m fairly confident I can pinpoint love: It’s the gift of himself, the unalterable, visible, obvious and even unassailable, unchangeable essence of God, which we perceive to be frustrating or annoying. If we articulate that, then there’s no reason to not have hope. If I know that God loves me, deserts me, longs for me and plans for me, then I can have hope for tomorrow, even hope in today.

If I know that Christ died on the cross for me and believe that he was thinking of me as he shed his blood, then I can rest assured my sufferings and crosses will have a purpose.

If I know that Christ is alive and believe he is acting even right now, then I can order my steps and live my life for him. We can keep our eyes open to the very best thing: that our hope is in Christ, who is also alive.

We don’t necessarily need a cheap T-shirt from Target to remind us of that reality, but it sure does help.

(Katie Prejean McGrady is an International Catholic speaker and author. She is project manager of Ave Explores from Ave Maria Press and logs more than 100,000 travel miles a year speaking to audiences of all ages and sizes. She has her degree in theology from the University of Dallas and lives with her husband and daughter in Lake Charles, La.)

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as space and the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible expression of freely-held and expressed opinion among the people” (Communion et Progressio, 116). Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be limited to one letter every three months (up to 300 words) are more likely to be printed. Letters must be signed, but, for sensitive issues, may be submitted with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.

Don’t miss the best thing

My daughter has this T-shirt. I found it on the clearance rack at Target marked down 75 percent. Without hesitation, I tossed it in the cart, and ironically, that store is a deal that has become her favorite shirt, worn at least once a week.

Across the shirt is a line from a Deus Serenus. Rose wears it with pride. I think she loves the shirt because it’s soft. Simple pleated cotton. She says she loves it because it reminds me to keep my eyes open rather than turned down at a screen. It tells me to pay attention and to look for the wonder, especially in the quiet, mundane, ordinary moments that could pass by entirely unnoticed. It reminds me to take notice of what’s around, and what could be, rather than swallow in what I perceive to be frustrating or annoying.

In some way, that gray T-shirt and its colorful wording has become a mission statement for my motherhood, my marriage, my job: to keep my eyes open, take it all in and never forget the goodness of the very best things happening right in front of me, big or small. She only wears this shirt once a week, but every day, 2-year-old greets the morning with an excited "Mama!" and proceeds to babble away, describing her dreams in toddler gibberish that I so wish I could understand. She runs through the house and yard with endless energy. She bounds into her classroom each morning with a joy that is unspoiled and what would make me millions. She watches TV, reads books, eats meals, dances and plays games with a carefree joy, the likes of which I’ve never seen.

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• Were these babies being preserved for whatever purposes, is simply sickening. This discovery opens a flood of questions that must be answered.

• Some of the questions, Fichter stated, included:
  • Why were these babies preserved?
  • Did the mothers of these babies know their remains were going to be preserved?
  • Were these babies being preserved in order to be sold to universities or research facilities?

• Are there staff members of Dr. Klopfer’s operations implicated in the preserving and transportation of these remains?

• Are Indiana abortion doctors doing the same exact thing, even today as we speak?

• Does anyone make sure this never happens again?

The questions are legitimate ones, and while the federal and state authorities must do all they can to answer them. Fichter and others have called for an investigation, and Hill and Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul are working together to find answers to this troubling discovery.

The aborted fetuses, Hill said, are currently being housed at the coroner’s office in Will County, Ill., the county in which Klopfer lived. They will eventually be brought back to Indiana, and “treated in accordance with current Indiana law [requiring] burial and cremation and dignity and respect,” said Hill.

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La semana pasada, señalé en esta columna que el cardenal Pierre de Bérulle, quien cambió la vida de un joven sacerdote, recibió la influencia de dos hombres que abrieron sus ojos a la humanidad. Uno de ellos fue el trabajador social, St. Vincent de Paul, y el otro, St. Francis Xavier. "Dedicaron su vida y el ministerio de san Vicente a la misión de los pobres y los marginados," el papa dice. "El papa Francisco a menudo nos desafía a rechazar la vida de comodidad e indiferencia y a entregarnos de todo corazón a Jesús, tal como nosotros realizamos nuestra vida en el seno de la comunidad," el papa dice. "Cuando reconozcamos el amor de Dios, su palabra de amor es dueña de nuestro corazón."

Como dice el dicho "todo santo tiene un pasado y todo pecador tiene un futuro". Cada santo transformó su vida cuando reconocieron el amor de Dios. Los siguieron con todo su corazón, sin condiciones ni hipocresías. "Dedicaron sus vidas al servicio del demás, soportaron sufrimientos y adversidades sin odio y respondieron al mal con bien, difundiendo alegría y paz," expresa el papa.

San Vicente de Paúl tenía un pasado, pero no había sido un gran pecador como san Pablo o san Agustín. Podríamos llamarlo un pecador "ordinario," alguien que, al igual que la mayoría de nosotros, jamás cometió delitos graves, sino que vivía cómodamente sin demostrar virtudes extraordinarias ni tampoco vicios terribles. Vicente fue un buen hombre y un sacerdote fiel, cuyos pecados fueron reales, pero no escandalosos. Pero de pronto, algo pasó que le cambió la vida. Cuando era todavía un joven sacerdote, recibió la influencia de dos hombres que le abrieron los ojos a una nueva forma de vivir el Evangelio: el carisma de Vicente de Paúl, que hacía gran énfasis en la condición humana de Jesús, y San Francisco de Sales, quien enseñaba sobre la tierna misericordia de Dios. Inspirado por las enseñanzas y el ejemplo de estos hombres santos, Vicente dedicó el resto de su ministerio sacerdotal a atender a los pobres y marginados.

El Papa Francisco a menudo nos desafía a rechazar la vida de comodidad e indiferencia y a entregarnos de todo corazón a Jesús, tal como nosotros realizamos nuestra vida en el seno de la comunidad. Cuando reconozcamos el amor de Dios, la palabra de amor es dueña de nuestro corazón. Cuando reconocemos la bondad de Dios, su palabra de amor es dueña de nuestro corazón. Cuando reconozcamos la bondad de Dios, su palabra de amor es dueña de nuestro corazón. Cuando reconozcamos la bondad de Dios, su palabra de amor es dueña de nuestro corazón.
St. Anna Parish in Indianapolis to host talk on coping with illness and grief on Oct. 13

A presentation on coping with major illness and grief as Catholics will be held in the parish hall of St. Ann Parish, 6350 S. Mooreview Road, in Indianapolis, from 10:30 a.m. on Oct. 13.

The presentation is designed for those struggling with serious illness, their families and caregivers, and those grieving the loss of a loved one.

The presenters will be grief counselor and certified group counselor/facilitator Providence Sister Connie Kramer, and Carol Applegate, a registered nurse and an experienced elder law attorney knowledgeable in the physical, emotional and financial needs of family caregivers. No registration is needed for this free event. More information is available by calling 317-757-9141 or emailing mblesd1@aol.com.

Pilgrimages will honor Mary at Monte Cassino Shrine on Sundays in October

Saint Meinrad Archabbey is offering a series of pilgrimages to honor the Blessed Mother at the Monte Cassino Shrine, one mile east of the abbacy at 13312 Monte Cassino Shrine Road, in St. Meinrad, from 2-3 p.m. on CT for the Sundays in October.

Each pilgrimage will begin with an amicable hymn and a short sermon, followed by a rosary procession. The service ends with the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and a hymn. Speakers and topics for the pilgrimages are:

Oct. 6, Benedictine Father Sean Bechhorn speaking on “The Virgin Shall Be with Child.”
Oct. 13, Benedictine Brother Nathaniel Szidik speaking on “Living the Divine Now.”
Oct. 20, Benedictine Brother Kolyen Wilschewski speaking on “Mary, Our Faithful Mother.”
Oct. 27, Saint Meinrad Archabbat Kurt Stasiak speaking on “Mary, One Who Trusted in the Lord.”

For more information, call Mary Jeanne Schumacher during business hours at 812-357-6501. For updates on the day of the event, call 317-236-6611.
The following Life Chain events in central and southern Indiana are listed in alphabetical order by location:

- Bloomington: 2-3:30 p.m., neighborhood parking and signs available at 16 locations along E. Third Street from College Mall Road west to College Avenue, then south on College Avenue to Planned Parenthood. Information: Carole Canfield, 812-232-8114.
- Brazil: 2-3 p.m., Highway 40 at Alabama Street. Information: Jeff Etting, 812-230-6365.
- Brookville: 2-3 p.m., Main Street at Courthouse. Information: Jerry Mersch, 513-702-4809.
- Columbus: 2-3 p.m., Second street at Washington Street. Information: Don Dumas, 812-172-0774.
- Central Indiana (Indianapolis): 2:30-3:30 p.m., Meridian Street from North Street to 38th Street. Parking is available at either Hope and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., or Knights of Columbus Mater Dei Council 431, 2160 N. Pennsylvania St. Short-sleeve and long-sleeve T-shirts with the phrase “Life: the first Inalienable Right” from the Bible and the Scripture passage from Mt 18:14 on back will be available for $8-$12 in sizes youth-medium through adult 3XL. Pre-orders available through Sept. 30 at centralindianalifechain.org.
- Richmond: 2-3 p.m., S. A Street at S. 16th Street. Information: Cheryl Spence, 765-935-1786.
- Terre Haute Area Life Chain, 2-3 p.m., 3rd Street at Wabash Avenue. Information: Contact Tom McMillan, 812-841-0060. 

In a joint statement issued with the poll results, several USCCB committee chairs said: “An overwhelming majority of Americans agree: No health care professional should be forced to violate deeply held beliefs in order to keep a job.” The practice of medicine depends on those courageous and generous enough to serve all people—especially the poor and marginalized—with the highest ethical standards, they said. “If we exclude people of faith from the medical profession, Americans will suffer, especially those most in need.”
immediately and permanently. “I didn’t throw tantrums, but I was totally devastated,” Donna Kay says. “It was a pretty lady, and it was awful that I couldn’t look at her.” he says about his then-fiancee, who suffered a broken back in the accident. “I couldn’t see the sun rise and the sun set. It was so overwhelming.”

At the darkest time of his young life, Mark focused on a simple approach to living that gave him a measure of hope, strength and direction. “I actually lived with the thought of literally putting one foot in front of the other,” says the member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “I broke down all my tasks into these small things, and that made a very big difference.”

So was the support of Donna Kay, her parents and his family. Equally crucial was the faith to which he and his wife, Donna, were brought up. “I knew she would be OK,” he says. “The faith in God is the foundation of his faith and his life.”

Still, there were moments of questioning about the couple’s future—following the discovery that the accident had left Greg blind. “He didn’t want to drag me into something I didn’t want to be dragged into,” Donna says. “I went to the hospital with my mom and dad about it. I did recommit again. I said, ‘He may not have his sight, but he would still be Greg Mark, the man I was engaged to.’”

Thirty-nine years later, that commitment has deepened. “Not a lot of people could have done this and kept their sense of humor, their faith and their love. But I’m blessed with her,” Mark says. “There are good times and tough times, but we’ve always focused on the positive.”

She adds, “And he just keeps deepening his faith. He’s a true inspiration.”

There was an explosion in my faith”

Petra Cava is among the many people who have been touched by Greg and his life, and who, as often is the case between men who are good friends, Cava starts his appreciation of Mark with a story of how a young boy—himself involved in his “seeing-eye dog” at the time—Lonnie, a black Labrador retriever. “I’m not sure how this happened,” says Cava. “As we were ushering the congregation, he was using a computer, explaining the process this way: ‘I have always been guided by the Holy Spirit, and I can tell you that God is now reading and announce it. And then I listen to the next line and announce it.’ It’s all done with reverence.”

“Greg told Andrew not to interrupt and went back to the conversation. But Andrew was interested. It turned out that Greg was standing next to a table where the Communion wafers had been stored, and was being interviewed on the radio. Andrew asked for absolution for Lonnie’s transgression. He was told that since the hosts have been separated, both dog and master were off the hook.”

searched by police on Sept. 19. No additional fetuses were discovered. But what was found were “thousands of abandoned medical records,” Hill said when a physician retires, ‘ordinarily there’s some process in place where those records are transferred to another physician or the Indiana Department of Health for exam. The transferred records have now been secured by the attorney general’s office to ensure their accessibility and protect patient privacy.”

Hill also noted that the situation is “indicative of the correctness of states like Indiana giving a law that provides for what should happen to a fetus that’s been aborted,” a reference to 2016 state legislation that was up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Hill summarized the investigation moving forward as “trying to determine how this happened, who was involved and what, if anything, we can do about it, and what we can do going forward to prevent this from happening in the future.”

As for the 2,246 aborted fetuses, which Klopfers preserved with a biological- preservation method, Hill said they “are now safe” at the coroner’s office in Will County, Ill., the county in which Klopfers lived.

“Klopfers did not attempt to keep those babies back home,” he said. “We want to make sure we have a safe and appropriate disposition.”

“Klopfers did not attempt to keep those babies back home,” he said. “We want to make sure we have a safe and appropriate disposition.”

Ultimately, the fetuses will be “treated in accordance with current Indiana law,” Hill said. (requiring) burial and cremation and dignity and respect,” said Hill. “We’re thankful the attorney general that’s his blind,” says Dickmeyer, who notes that he was seen Mark gold, snow and play darts.

And while Dickmeyer also praises Mark’s sense of humor, he especially appreciates another quality about his friend. “Greg sees more clearly than me because he is not biased by appearances. “He is willing to listen and gains the true person better than I ever could.”

He truly worries about each person’s soul, and his willingness to talk to people about religion. “He’s not afraid to ask people about their faith and even challenge them in a non-obnoxious way. The quote, ‘All hope is saved,’ is a big thing for him.”

Everything good comes from God”

There are moments when Mark thinks back to that head-on collision nearly 40 years ago. The crash not only took away his sight, it took away the life of a young woman in the other car, and it left the driver of the other car with a severe brain injury. “The fact that I’m even here is kind of crazy to me,” Mark says. “If that accident never happened, my ability to think wasn’t taken away in that accident. I didn’t always think of that in the past, but now I think of it as a turning point in my faith.”

Mark pauses for a moment, trying to gauge what that means in the importance of Christ’s place in his life. “There’s so much about being Catholic that is dying to say,” he says. “When you live to be something for someone else— for Jesus Christ—you’re heading north. And then you come across the line and take it and try to live God’s will as best as you can. And that just frees you. I can go do my work, provide for my family, and I can touch eternity.”

Donna Kay and Greg Mark have continued to share a life marked by humor, faith and love. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)
Oldenburg Franciscan sisters celebrate jubilees

60-year jubilarians

Sister Mary Lynne served as director of communications for her community for six years. Since 1992, she has served in the mental health field in Ohio and Arkansas. Sister Jean Marie (formerly Sister Joseph Marie Cleveland) (a native of the archetype from Indianapolis) served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the following schools: Indianapolis St. Monica, Cardinal Ritter Jr./St. High School and the former Holy Trinity, and in Oldenburg at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception. She also taught in Ohio.

Sister Jean Marie served as a pastoral associate, pastoral administrator or parish life coordinator in the archdiocese at the following parishes: St. Peter in Franklin County, St. John the Baptist in Osgood, and in Indianapolis at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, St. Patrick and St. Mary.

Sister Ruth Eggering (formerly Sister Monica) served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the following schools: Holy Name of Jesus in Beech Grove, the former St. Francis de Sales in Indianapolis, and St. Mary in Rushville. She also served in schools in the Evansville Diocese and Missouri.

Sister Rose Lima Frerick served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the following Indianapolis schools: St. Mark the Evangelist, Cardinal Ritter Jr./St. High School and the former St. Bernadette. She also taught at schools in the Evansville Diocese and in Ohio.

Sister Rose Lima served as communications director for the Sisters of St. Francis for 11 years. She is currently serving at the Franciscan Media Center in Cincinnati.

Sister Dianne (formerly Sister Mary Vincent) Kaimann, served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the following schools: St. Michael in Brookville, and St. Therese of the infant Jesus (Little Flower) and the former St. Bernadette, both in Indianapolis. She has also taught in Missouri and Ohio, and served as pastoral minister, secretary, bookkeeper and office manager in various locations.

Sister Dianne served for five years as executive director of the Franciscan Federation in Washington. In 2016, she returned to the motherhouse where she ministers as administrative assistant to the leadership team and assists in the development office, phone room and flower gardens.

Sister Barbara (formerly Sister Mary Limus) Pillar served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the following schools: St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) in Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, and St. Mary in Rushville. She also taught at schools in Ohio and served as pastoral associate at St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis.

Sister Barbara served for five years as director of Shalom Community, an intercommunity group of general profession women religious based in Indianapolis.

Sister Mary Lynne (formerly Sister Mary Magdalene) Calkins served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the following schools: St. Mark the Evangelist School in Aurora, and at a women’s shelter.

Sister Dianne served as a teacher or assistant at St. Therese Spiritual Center in Ohio.

Sister Carolyn Hoff served in the archdiocese as a secretary at St. Michael-St. Gabriel Archangels School and as a bookkeeper at Cardinal Ritter Jr./St. High School, both in Indianapolis. She also served in schools in Missouri and Ohio.

She has served at the motherhouse as project manager and later as co-director of Michaela Farm, and as head of Olivia Hall.

Sister Carolyn currently serves at the motherhouse as housekeeping supervisor and volunteers at Michaela Farm.

Sister Patricia Murray (a native of the archetype from Shelbyville) served as a teacher in the Evansville Diocese and in Missouri. She served for 37 years as a director of religious education, parish minister, liturgy coordinator and pastoral associate in Missouri.

She currently works at the motherhouse in the community development and finance offices.

Sister Patricia currently resides in St. Clare Hall and ministers by presence and prayer.

Sister Marjorie Niemer served in the archdiocese as a teacher at the former St. Mary Academy in Indianapolis and at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg. She also taught in Ohio. She also served as parish life coordinator at St. Peter Parish in Franklin County and at the former St. Mary-of-the-Rock Parish in Franklin County.

Sister Marjorie ministered at the motherhouse in community leadership as vocation director and as a counselor. She is currently serving as parish administrator at Mother of Christ and St. Bernard parishes, both in Cincinnati.

Sister Monica Zore (a native of the archetype from Indianapolis) has served as a teacher in Ohio since 1983, Sister Monica has served on the faculty of Marian University in Indianapolis, where she continues to minister as assistant professor of mathematics.

Sister Rita Thomas served in the archdiocese as a teacher at St. Mark the Evangelist School in Indianapolis and as a tutor and secretary at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg. She also taught in schools in the Evansville Diocese and in Ohio.

Sister Rita has worked in Missouri since 2004 as a caregiver for children and seniors.

Sister Therese Gillman (a native of the archetype from Brookville) served in the archdiocese as a teacher at St. Mary School in Aurora and as president at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg. She also taught, and served as an acting principal and pastoral associate in Missouri.

Sister Therese currently serves as executive director of the Jesuit Spiritual Center in Ohio.

Sister Carolyn Hoff served in the archdiocese as a secretary at St. Michael-St. Gabriel Archangels School and as a bookkeeper at Cardinal Ritter Jr./St. High School, both in Indianapolis. She also served in schools in Missouri and Ohio.

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Recent tragedy frames El Paso gathering in support of migrants

EL PASO, Texas (CNS)—You could feel the hurt that remains in this border city by the tension and occasional tremble in the voices.

When local Catholic leaders on Sept. 23 welcomed a delegation from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, including lay ministers who tend to refugees and migrants, they proudly spoke of the “DNA” of the El Paso community, one that doesn’t treat those who aren’t from the area as strangers.

As El Paso, a community, practices welcoming, the new extreme, it’s felt it personally in this border region. It’s not somebody else. It’s us,” said Bishop Seitz.

They have been referred to as a place that is experiencing an “invasion” from outside, “that rapists and thieves and gang members are crossing over,” said Bishop Seitz. But that’s not the case, he noted.

El Paso merely stepped in to help when it saw a humanitarian crisis at its doorstep and decided to help vulnerable people in need. That’s what the local diocese hoped to explain to its Catholic visitors.

There was no government support to help the migrants who had been dropped off by immigration authorities without warning in their cities, said Bishop Seitz, and many had been released after being stripped of their phones, their rosaries, you name it.”

“I’m very proud of our community, of our Church, for its answering the question,” he said. “Can you imagine? We’re one of the most economically challenged regions of the country based on income, but we were receiving more than 1,000 a day, feeding them, cloth them, giving them a chance to bathe, giving them chance to contact families. We were doing that for days, for months, purely a community response.”

It was painful when those actions were said to be the reason El Paso was targeted, he said.

Suspected shooter Patrick Crusius, believed by authorities to be an anti-immigrant, white nationalist, had railed in writing about “Hispanic invasion of Texas” prior to the shooting.

“While I would never suggest a direct connection between [Trump] administration’s words and Aug. 3, certainly it was not a mistake, it wasn’t just coincidence.”

A man from the Dallas area decided to travel 640 miles to our border binational cities in order to kill as many as 2,000 per day. When their phones, their rosaries, you name it.”

“I consider El Paso part of my family with whom to stay in other parts of the country. Sometimes they helped as many as 1,000 per day. When their numbers dropped because U.S. government policies changed, leaving the migrants stranded on the Mexican side of the border, it felt like a good friend had died,” recalled El Paso Bishop Mark J. Seitz.

And it’s exactly that welcoming attitude, that embracing of strangers from Latin America, that a gunman tried to extinguish said Bishop Seitz.

“Whatever they had when they arrived: their phones, their rosaries, you name it.”

But he urged the group to keep in mind Catholic teaching during their visit and what it says about the dignity of human life.

“The Catholic catechism tells us that human dignity is based on our being created in God’s image and likeness, not on the beauty, not on the size of our bank account, not according to our citizenship, but because we are human,” he said.

“And so, how do we get to see one another as human?” he continued. “We can’t do it so from beyond barriers and walls. We need to have encounters, to be able to see someone, not as other, but as brother. We need to listen to their stories. We need to share their tears. We need to listen to their hopes.”

Bishop Oscar Cantu of San Jose, Calif, who previously was the bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces, N.M., was clearly moved by Bishop Seitz’s recounting of the situation. His community, also one of the most economically challenged regions of the country, experienced similar violence in late July during a family festival in the town of Giloyn, which celebrates its most popular crop: garlic.

“Families come out to enjoy food, and it was disrupted by gunfire. Three innocent people died, two of them children. One whom I buried, “he said, choking back tears.

When he saw the news about the Walmart shooting, he talked to parishioners in California and told a couple about having been a bishop in El Paso’s neighboring city of Las Cruces.

“I don’t know how these parishioners saw me … but when I made that comment, I saw surprise in their faces when I mentioned that I [had been] the bishop of the twin city to El Paso, to which I traveled in and out of. I considered El Paso part of my home. As a Hispanic myself: I consider you all friends. We have been together,” he said. “Maybe they didn’t see me as Hispanic, but I saw the change in their complexions, in their eyes. At some point, when it becomes personal, when it becomes relational, that’s when it changes.”

When barriers are erected, it becomes easier to demonize the other, he said, it becomes easier to scapegoat, “and that’s exactly what we have seen.”

He repeated the sentiment of others in the room about the symbolism, presumably of the border wall President Trump keeps talking about building, to keep immigrants out.

“A wall has definitely been built,” he said. “We have become the wall. But he urged the group to keep in mind Catholic teaching during their visit and what it says about the dignity of human life.

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El Paso’s Bishop Seitz asks migrants be treated as Jesus would be treated

EL PASO, Texas (CNS)—At the start of a week focused on the plight of migrants, El Paso Bishop Mark J. Seitz asked on Sept. 23 whether Christians are ready to encounter a Christ who exists in the migrants at the U.S. border, in the children who have lost their lives while under immigration custody and those seeking to enter the country looking for work or safety.

“That is the question,” said Bishop Seitz said in a homily during Mass at St. Pius X Parish in El Paso, where he welcomed bishops from throughout the country and members of a delegation from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and many who tend to migrants in various parts of the U.S.

Leading up to the Catholic Church’s Sept. 14 celebration of the 75th anniversary of the USCCB’s Secretariat for Migration and Refugees, the group planned to visit farmworkers, youths and other migrants, and celebrate the Eucharist each day, keeping in mind the plight of refugees and other vulnerable populations.

“Are we willing to accept our responsibility as Christians?” he asked.
Several strategies can attract young women to serve the Church

By Elise Italiano Ureneck

In a January 2014 address, Pope Francis expressed that he would like women to play a more "capillary and incisive" role in the Church and in places where the “most important decisions are adopted.”

Since that time, Pope Francis has examined the critical role of women in the family during Wednesday audiences and in the apostolic exhortation, “Amoris Laetitia.” He commissioned a scholarly and historical study of women and the diaconate, and he has appointed women to several key positions in Rome, including leadership roles within Vatican congregations and dicasteries.

Is a deeper theological reflection on women leaders a priority for the Church at this time, given everything else it’s facing? Without a doubt. A cursory look at the changing landscape of Catholic women in the United States and its potential impact makes this evident.

Catholic women have traditionally taken on leadership roles in the family and religious orders. And for the past several decades, they have served broadly in the U.S. as lay ecclesial ministers in both parishes and dioceses.

But parishes in the U.S. are reporting a drastic decrease in the number of the number of Catholic marriages. This means that many women are finding themselves single or in “vocational limbo” longer than they’d like.

Second, though a July 2019 article on The Huffington Post website examined an upsurge in millennial women discerning religious life, the number of religious sisters in the U.S. has never recovered from a steady decline since 1965.

As a result, the missionary areas where sisters have traditionally taken a leadership role—education, health care and social services—have faced a number of challenges.

Last, in 2015, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported that the median age of lay ecclesial ministers—those involved in religious education, sacramental preparation, liturgy and/or music ministry or general parish administration—was 55.

Considering that 80 percent of lay ecclesial ministers are women and only 37 percent of millennial Catholic women have ever served in a parish ministry, that median age is bound to rise.

So how can those in authority encourage women to commit to ministry or careers in the Church? Three critical steps come to mind:

—Remove the obstacles that prevent women from making these commitments. Catholic organizations, parishes and dioceses can do an internal audit of what roles must be done by clergy, which roles are preferably done by clergy, and which roles can be filled by religious or laypeople. This would open up immediate opportunities to lead.

—Catholics can continue to expand opportunities to help reduce or alleviate the burden of college debt for serious candidates to religious life.

Catholic organizations can offer better maternity leave benefits and flexible work solutions for working mothers. This will require creative and long-term financial planning on the part of Catholic institutions, but given that it’s one of the biggest obstacles to recruiting and retaining talented Catholic women in the workplace, the return on investment will likely be significant.

—Facilitate opportunities for young Catholic women to meet lay and religious women leaders. In many places in the U.S., women hold leadership positions in organizations like Catholic Charities, in Catholic hospitals, as school principals and superintendents, in religious orders, and in the fields of communications, finance and law.

In my experience working with young women, many simply don’t realize the diverse ways that they can put their gifts and talents at the service of the Church’s mission. Offering meet-and-greets can stir their hearts to pursue paths they hadn’t previously known were open to them.

—Identity and recruit young women with leadership potential and provide them with human and professional formation to strengthen their gifts. Spiritual and theological formation are non-negotiables for those working for the Church.

But so, too, is the cultivation of a wide-ranging skill set that can be applied across different fields, one that includes effective communication, management techniques, conflict resolution, goal-setting and time management.

One way to provide this support to emerging leaders is through mentor relationships, which might take the form of apprenticeships or internships, or one-on-one coaching sessions so that women are poised for success.

Investing in young women leaders is a win-win for the Church. It’s a proactive strategy that will meet coming challenges, and it’s a response to the Holy Spirit’s prompting for a deeper understanding of how women can make God more visible in the world.

(Elise Italiano Ureneck is associate director of the Center for the Church in the 21st Century at Boston College. She is a columnist for Catholic News Service.)
Sister Helen Prejean to speak at Corrections Ministry Conference

Sister Helen Prejean, teaching the young and forming the Church’s core teaching of the individual, was featured in an interview with the editor of the Corrections Corner column. She discussed her experiences and insights on the death penalty, as well as her dedication to the cause of justice and mercy. Prejean, who recently retired, and was enjoying 15 years of service in prison ministry, shared her thoughts on the current state of the death penalty in the United States and the importance of education and advocacy in the fight against executions.

Faith and Family: Sean Gallagher

Mary doesn’t tire of being called upon for help

On a day when my Grandma Opal had a number of grandchildren at her farm, she kept hearing one child after another asking her for her name to ask her for something. Finally, she had had enough. “Grandma! Grandma! That’s all I’ve been calling you, Grandma Opal! But you see my name is for her. As the youngest of her grandchildren by years, I often, I always call out Grandma by myself. So, I really didn’t understand that story for a while.

Then I became the father of five boys. I shared the story once with my wife, Cindy. More than once since then, after hearing my story, she’s asked me, “Just call me Grandma Opal!”

Cindy, of course, loves our boys very much. But they’re human, just as we are. At times, they can be focused almost entirely on their own desires and can treat us like vending machines.

And at times, Cindy and I, despite our good intentions, can get bogged down in frustration when too many rapid-fire demands have been made of us. I’ve responded to this by reminding myself of the old saying, “Keep your boot on your head, but your arm around your child.”

I pray that each of you, myself at the head of the list, cooperate more fully with God’s plan. And perhaps, even more, cooperate more fully with God’s plan.

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The Sunday Readings
Sunday, September 29, 2019

• Amos 6:1a, 4-7
• 1 Timothy 6:11-16
• Luke 16:19-31

The Book of Amos provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. The book states that it was written during the reign of King Uzziah of Judah, who reigned between 783 and 742 BC. It was a time of tranquility and prosperity. No wars troubled the kingdom. Still, Amos strongly spoke against laxity in religion and morally careless living. It was not necessarily a denunciation of utter vice, but rather it condemned lukewarmness.

To be precise, chief among his concerns was the sluggishness with which people practiced their faith. All in all, Amos insisted, the situation was a sure recipe for problems and even disaster.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy supplies the second reading. Last weekend’s second reading also came from this letter. Timothy was an early convert to Christianity. The apostles wrote to him, now contained in the New Testament, assured his place in the tradition of the Church. As his life unfolded, he became a disciple of Paul and then a Christian leader in his own right, destined to be one of the major figures in the development of Christianity. In this reading, Paul calls Timothy to genuine virtue by being diligent and dedicated in following Jesus and in leading the community committed to Timothy’s pastoral care.

It was easy to be distracted from such faithfulness in the face of the glory, power and excesses in the mighty Roman Empire, to say nothing of the peril Christians faced since their religion was outlawed. To encourage Timothy, Paul cited the example of Jesus in the Lord’s trial before Pontius Pilate.

St. Luke’s Gospel furnishes the last reading, a parable with a rather straightforward message. A rich man is enjoying all the benefits of financial success and well-being. By contrast, Lazarus is desperately poor, yearning to have just the scraps that fall from the rich man’s table.

In time, Lazarus died. Then the rich man died. As the rich man reached the hereafter, he realized that he himself was then in great need, whereas Lazarus was being held close to Abraham, the holy father of the Hebrew people.

By this time, the once-rich man is desperate. He pleads with Abraham for just a drop of water to quench his thirst, and implorers Abraham to send Lazarus back to Earth to warn the rich man’s brothers that they too will be punished unless they turn to God and forsake greed.

Abraham replies that messengers already have been sent, namely Moses and the prophets, but that they were ignored.

Reflection
At first glance, the readings, and especially that from Luke’s Gospel, seem to present a clear message. But beneath the obvious is another, stronger lesson.

It is more than a question of avoiding greed or being unjust in commercial dealings.

It is instead the lesson that Christians must judge earthly life by a standard that not often is embraced by humans, as it renders everything secondary or even irrelevant in the process of judging life, pursuing the belief that only the things and ways of God are worthy of attention.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is more than merely a coincidence about a person who has succeeded in the world versus a person who has not succeeded.

At the time of Jesus, many thought that earthly riches showed that God blessed the rich, whereas poverty and want indicated that a great sin somehow lay in the background of a poor person.

Jesus totally debunked this notion by offering a different perspective of life and its rewards, a new standard for living.

Question Corner
By Kenneth Doyle

Church in the U.S. allows multiple postures to receive Communion

When receiving holy Communion, some at our parish church stand and some kneel. Is there a “right way” to receive? (Georgia)

A

As the current “General Instruction of the Roman Missal” states, “The norm established for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the United States of America is that holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling” (#160).

The answer to your question, then, is that there is no required “right way.”

Q

My family has all been cradle Catholics, but currently we are at odds. How can any Catholic vote for a Democrat who professes to be pro-abortion? How can Catholics look forward to someday meeting their Maker when they have voted for a candidate that will kill innocent human beings? (Iowa)

A

During a local retreat, I was given a guide for the sacrament of penance. Under the Fifth Commandment, it stated that voting for a pro-choice candidate is a mortal sin. Is this actually so? And what would happen if both candidates were pro-abortion? (Virginia)

I have addressed this issue before in this column. But the two questions above are samples of those that arrive regularly—indicating to me that the topic is one of perennial concern.

Let’s take the second inquiry first. It is simply wrong to say that a Catholic who votes for a pro-choice candidate is necessarily committing a mortal sin.

The guiding document on this is called “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” which the U.S. bishops refine and publish every four years prior to a presidential election. It addresses various moral issues that Catholics should consider before voting—a g., defending the sanctity of human life, racism, promoting religious freedom, defending marriage, feeding the hungry and housing the homeless, welcoming the immigrant and protecting the environment.

The document says clearly that a Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who endorses a policy that promotes an intrinsically evil act such as abortion “if the voter’s intent is to support that candidate for other morally grave reasons” (#35).

As to what to do when both candidates support abortion, the bishops’ statement says that a voter may take the “extraordinary step” of choosing not to vote for any candidate—or “after careful deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods” (#36).

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdove@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.)

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column. Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. “Prayers should be no longer than 25 lines (including lines between stanzas if applicable) of either 44 characters (including spaces) to allow room for a staff-selected photo, or 79 characters (including spaces) if no photo is desired.” Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God.” The Criterion, 1460 N. Meijer St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367 or e-mail to theoffice@archindy.org.
Amazon inhabitants hope upcoming synod will address lack of priests

QUITO, Ecuador (CNS) — The upcoming Synod of Bishops for the Amazon will focus on the devastating effects of climate change on the environment and on indigenous communities, but it also will look at ways to meet the spiritual needs of the region’s people.

One of the big challenges in evangelization and ministry is the lack of missionaries and priests, which some people in the region believe can be resolved by the ordaining of married men, suggested studying “the document, published by the Vatican in June, suggested studying the possibility of ordaining married men for very remote locations, such as the Amazon and the Pacific islands, where Catholic communities seldom have Mass because there are no priests.”

One of those remote locations is the Kichwa indigenous community of Sarayaku, located deep in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon region and accessible only by small plane or a four-hour canoe ride.

Franco Tulio Viteri Gualinga, former president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon and member of the Sarayaku community, told journalists on Sept. 17 that sometimes a priest or a bishop will come every two weeks or sometimes just once a month.

In the absence of a priest, a nun living in the village will lead the community in a Liturgy of the Word, he said.

When asked about the possibility of having an ordained married elder person in the community, Viteri said, “That’s what the Church needs to do.” He cited the example of his uncle, who is a catechist in Sarayaku, as a possible candidate.

“However, for 58-year-old Sister Rosa Elena Pico, ordained married men is not the only solution in an area that is ‘a challenging place to evangelize.’”

Sister Rosa Elena, a member of the Missionaries of Mary Co-Redemptrix, and two other sisters arrived in Sarayaku in 2017 and often lead the Liturgy of the Word in the absence of a priest.

“Many do not want to commit to what the Church demands,” Sister Rosa Elena told journalists. One example is that out of the 1,400 members of the Sarayaku indigenous community, only six couples have received the sacrament of marriage. Many of the others, she said, believe that people who marry eventually will separate or divorce and would not be able to keep the lifelong bond of sacramental marriage.

Although she said she feels welcome in the community, she said she was asked to leave on two occasions for explaining the Church’s teaching on marriage. Nevertheless, she told them she would “until the bishop tells me to leave.”

Sister Rosa Elena said that Christian formation, particularly among those who want to fulfill a ministry within the community, was very important in the region and that while there is a lack of priests, ordination of married “viri probati” isn’t the only solution.

“I believe that it is necessary that if there isn’t a priest, there must be somebody who should be a representative, for example, a permanent deacon who can administer the sacraments,” she said. “There should be permanent deacons in the communities.”
Religious liberty and DACA highlight court’s new term

WASHINGTON (CSN)—The upcoming Supreme Court term—which starts on Oct. 7—will offer plenty of cases that Catholics will be paying close attention to, including: the status of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); a number of religious liberty cases including a school-choice program in Montana; and workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender. The court also has a lot of hot-button cases in the wings that it hasn’t decided yet, including: a Louisiana abortion law requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals, and if a city or state can require religious adoption services to place children with same-sex couples despite faith-based objections.

The court will look at a consolidation of three DACA cases. President Donald Trump has been wanting the high court to overturn appellate court rulings that have kept in place the DACA program initiated by President Barack Obama in 2012, which has protected nearly 700,000 young adults. Outreach from the high court, the lower court rulings have been kept in place, blocking Trump’s 2017 order to end the program where qualifying DACA recipients receive a work permit and get a reprieve from deportation and other temporary relief.

Federal judges who have blocked ending the program have said that Trump administration needs to provide a clear explanation of why the program should end. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2017 called the cancellation of DACA “reprehensible” and said it caused “unnecessary fear for DACA youth and their families.” The USCCB, along with several Catholic groups, organizations and religious orders, have since called for a solution to help these young adults.

Elizabeth Murrill, solicitor general of Louisiana, writing on Sept. 13 in www.sootblog.com, a blog about the Supreme Court, said “The federal government should prevail in the DACA cases for one straightforward reason: DACA is unlawful. While children—and indeed, cannot—stop the executive from rescinding a plainly unlawful edict that the government never had the power to issue in the first place.” The DACA cases will be argued on Nov. 12.

Another case of interest this year is about a school choice program in Montana that has barred all religious schools in the state from participation. In a Sept. 17 telephone briefing with reporters, Mark Rienzi, a law professor at the Catholic University of America and president of Becket, a nonprofit religious liberty law firm, said last year’s Supreme Court term was the “calm before the storm” as far as religious liberty cases go.

The court’s main religious case last term was the 40-foot Peace Cross, which it ruled in favor of. A Maryland tourist who had received from attending local Catholic schools, urged the court to take this opportunity to declare the state’s Blaine Amendment unconstitutional.

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Mark Rienzi

Richard Garnett, a law professor at the University of Notre Dame, wrote in www.sootblog on Sept. 17 that the Trump case was “not really about recycled tires and safe playgrounds and was instead about vouchers, tax credits and scholarships for families who want to send their children to qualified, religiously affiliated schools;” adding that school groups and others were not concerned while tire and playground equipment companies didn’t.

“Trinity Lutheran, like Espinoza, was about pluralism, opportunity and fairness in education. School-choice programs are growing and expanding across the country, but broadly-interpreted Blaine Amendments often deter or block reform,” he added. A number of the court briefs were written by a group of Montana Catholic school parents, which outlined the benefits their children had received from attending local Catholic schools, urged the court to take this opportunity to declare the state’s Blaine Amendment unconstitutional, and “make clear that barring religious institutions and religion-exercising persons access to generally available public programs and benefits” goes against the Constitution and shouldn’t stand.

On Oct. 8, the court will hear arguments about federal employment discrimination laws protecting LGBTQ employees in a combination of cases—two claiming discrimination based on sexual orientation and one claiming discrimination based on transgender status.

Luke Goodrich, Becket’s vice president and senior counsel, said that if the court rules against these cases, “this will likely be new lawsuits and ‘massive liabilities with churches, schools and religious organizations’ that expect their employees to follow certain standards, although there are exceptions, he pointed out, and church leaders in ministerial roles with a religious function. But no matter how these exemptions get interpreted, he said, there is likely to be a lot of confusion.

A big case that could be taken up by the court this year is Fulton v. Philadelphia, which centers on the city of Philadelphia’s refusal, as of last year, to permit foster children to be placed with families that worked with Catholic Social Services of the Philadelphia Archdiocese. City officials made the decision after the agency refused to write an amicus brief that it would adhere to Catholic teaching on marriage and would not place a child with a same-sex couple but would refer them to another agency.

The issue before the court is whether Philadelphia discriminated against Catholic Social Services and its foster parents by preventing the agency from serving children in same-sex partnerships, which the court ruled against. The Trump administration also sided with the Catholic Social Services.

Another potential case involves the Little Sisters of the Poor. After their 2016 Supreme Court victory exempting them from the contraception mandate of the Affordable Care Act, California, Pennsylvania and several other states sued in federal court to take away the sisters’ exemptions. It ended up before the 3rd Circuit court ruled against the Little Sisters in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. "Trinity Lutheran, like Espinoza, was about pluralism, opportunity and fairness in education. School-choice programs are growing and expanding across the country, but broadly-interpreted Blaine Amendments often deter or block reform," he added. A number of the court briefs were written by a group of Montana Catholic school parents, which outlined the benefits their children had received from attending local Catholic schools, urged the court to take this opportunity to declare the state’s Blaine Amendment unconstitutional, and “make clear that barring religious institutions and religion-exercising persons access to generally available public programs and benefits” goes against the Constitution and shouldn’t stand.

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Notre Dame releases study on sexual harassment among U.S. seminarians

LAS VEGAS (CNS)—The University of Notre Dame on Sept. 21 released a groundbreaking report that looked at sexual harassment in U.S. Catholic seminaries, revealing that just 6 percent of seminarians reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment or misconduct, while 90 percent reported none.

Another 4 percent said they might have experienced misconduct but were not sure. Of the 10 percent who reported they had experienced sexual harassment or indicated they might have, 80 percent identified a fellow seminary student or indicated they might have, 80 percent reported they were never taken seriously by those in authority. Of those who reported an incident, about four in 10 (42 percent) believe that their reports of sexual harassment were taken seriously and acted upon “completely” (24 percent) or “for the most part” (18 percent).

Twelve percent said that their reports were taken seriously “somewhat, but not adequately,” and 15 percent said they believed their reports were “not taken seriously or properly acted upon.” Those who said “they didn’t know” how seriously their reporting of an incident was taken or whether it was acted upon accounted for 31 percent; and 21 percent said reports were “not taken seriously or properly acted upon.”

“We hope to hold people to a higher standard,” Cavadi said.

The survey was e-mailed to 2,375 seminarians from 149 seminaries and houses of formation across the United States. The study is titled “Sexual Harassment and Catholic Seminary Culture.”

John Cavadi, Notre Dame professor of theology, who presented the results at a press release in Las Vegas, said the survey was a response to rumors about what was happening in seminary culture after allegations surfaced concerning former U.S. Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick. “The vision for the survey came in the wake of the clerical sex abuse scandal and abuse allegations against the now-laicized Theodore McCarrick, who was accused of grooming victims during their seminary years,” Cavadi said.

Some of the concerns seem to center on the question of whether reports of sexual harassment were taken seriously and acted on by the responsible authorities. Of those who reported an incident, about four in 10 (42 percent) believe that their reports of sexual harassment, abuse or misconduct “to the responsible authorities” were taken seriously and acted upon “completely” (24 percent) or “for the most part” (18 percent).

Twelve percent said that their reports were taken seriously “somewhat, but not adequately,” and 15 percent said they believed their reports were “not taken seriously or properly acted upon.” Those who said “they didn’t know” how seriously their reporting of an incident was taken or whether it was acted upon accounted for 31 percent; and 21 percent said reports were “not taken seriously or properly acted upon.”

“We hope to hold people to a higher standard,” Cavadi said.

The survey was e-mailed to 2,375 seminarians from 149 seminaries and houses of formation around the country with a 65 percent response rate. Cavadi said researchers tried to compare some of the data, but there weren’t studies focused on the seminary culture to make a comparison.

Jesuit Father Thomas Gaunt, executive director of CARA, who was present for the release of the results, said he believed the research marked the first time such a study has been undertaken. Some of the data can help create or institute policies to ensure that seminarians who report abuse against them will be taken seriously by those in charge, he noted.

“It’s not just our opinion. We have data to show so we’ll be able to say that it is not our imagination,” Cavadi said.

“We want to affect the seminary culture. We want to create a culture where that ambiguity goes down.”

PORT OF PALM BEACH, Fla. (CNS)—An expert in disaster search and rescue who recently concluded a 13-day post-Hurricane Dorian operation in the Bahamas said that if there are scores of undiscovered fatalities there, their bodies were likely claimed by the sea.

The government of the Bahamas says that the official death toll following Dorian has reached 50, and hundreds remain officially listed as missing while search-and-rescue teams continue to comb through widespread wreckage.

“No one was looking for his grandchild, but we couldn’t find the boy and the fishermen say that the water was so high that many of the bodies went into the ocean,” said Hector Mendez, one of Mexico City’s famous Los Topos (“The Mole”), which formed spontaneously in response to the deadly 1985 earthquake that flattened 30,000 buildings in Mexico City and killed thousands.

“Our specialty is to go inside the buildings when they fall down, and working in the sun and swamp was very hard on us, but we stayed there and we did find one [deceased] lady inside the remains of a building,” said Mendez, who spoke with the Florida Catholic diocesan newspaper, after he caught a ride to Florida courtesy of the Florida-based Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line.

The company, through its Mission Recovery program formed after Dorian, concluded its second humanitarian round-trip mission by providing the transportation from Florida to Freeport, Grand Bahamas, carrying some 400 volunteers and 200 vssa-carrying Bahamas evacuees.

Mendez added that his team of four Central Americans had arrived in the Bahamas by yacht and airplanes to join a larger group of 20 rescue professionals working on the east side of Grand Bahama Island. He said the 2010 Haiti earthquake was a more devastating situation to work in, but that Hurricane Dorian was significantly devasting for key parts of the Bahamas.

“The east side [of Grand Bahama] was completely destroyed; the hurricane was there for 40 hours slamming everything,” Mendez said. He was heading back to Mexico City for a three-day training event but said his organization was likely to send a fresh team and search dogs back to the Bahamas, probably to the hard-hit Abaco Islands.

Mendez said his instincts tell him there may not be much to discover in the rubble there.

“We had the dogs with us, and I am 35 years working on this all over the world and I know that when we can’t smell it,” Mendez said of the search for the deceased.

Also returning from the Bahamas on the cruise ship was Richard Raines, who is retired from the U.S. Air Force and recently retired from the City of Margate Fire Rescue Services northwest of Fort Lauderdale. He also had his team helped clear debris from wrecked homes, and provided medical support and compassionate outreach with a Christian-based team of disaster volunteers.

“I have been through all the hurricanes locally, including Hurricane Andrew [in 1992], and it was just as bad,” Raines said. “The water line was up high and there were a lot of tragic stories, but I have to say that the people were the most positive.”

Raines noted that long-term relief and rebuilding coordination is what is most needed in the Bahamas now.

“You can give somebody water and you give them food, but they will be hungry again and they will be thirsty again but you can give them living water and they won’t thirst again and they will have hope for tomorrow,” he said, adding that the Florida cruise ship transportation provided a good point of reference for coordinating team efforts.

“As you are going over on the ship, you are able to talk to other people and find out other groups that are helping out and feel satisfied that you came to help as well,” Raines said. “You aren’t standing around talking. You can actually do something.”

John Marshall, an electrical engineer from Mobile, Ala., went with a team of Christian volunteers from around the U.S. He drew some comparisons of the situation to his firsthand experience in working in the post-Hurricane Maria disaster in Puerto Rico in 2017.

Marshall said he felt called to be on the ground after seeing the post-Dorian images in the Bahamas.

“We meet basic needs first, including solar lights, water filtration, food,” he said. “The electrical system on the Bahamas is in much better shape than in Puerto Rico—except for east of the canal in Grand Bahama, where it was just total devastation. Freepost is coming online very quickly.”

Water filtration is a huge need in the Bahamas, he noted.

But the devastation in the Bahamas—because it was contained to a much smaller area than in Puerto Rico and because it is so close to Florida—will recover more quickly, according to Marshall.

“Three weeks from now when the Bahamas is off the news, that is when it will get critical for the Bahamas. People forget about it and it falls off the press radar screen, but they will still need food and still need water and so many people have lost absolutely everything,” he said. “They are sleeping outside and they have taken them. Repairing houses is going to be huge.”

(Hurricane relief donations to Catholic Relief Services can be sent to: https://support.crs.org/donate/hurricane-dorian )