

— THE CATHOLIC —  
**MISCELLANY**

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MAY 2022



***Mer-ci!***

*Beloved diaconate  
director retires*

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FROM THE BISHOP

## My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*This month, I became your new bishop, taking on a new role in my life and in the life of the Church in South Carolina. My date of ordination, May 13, was chosen because it is the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima. From my earliest days, I have had a special devotion to Our Lady, and my mother dedicated me to her care.*

The Church celebrates Mary in May, focusing on our most loving Mother. Through her joyful consent to the Holy Spirit, she bore and raised Christ Jesus, the Word Incarnate. Through him, we are given a second chance at unity with the Father in grace.

Mary, preserved from original sin, was favored by God to be the new Eve, a mother in whom we find a compassionate advocate. Through her intercession, our sacrifices and prayers become a sweeter and purified oblation to the King of Kings: Jesus Christ, her son and our Lord.

In this edition, we cover the topics of grief and loss broadly in the stories of those who have undergone such sorrows and those who assist them through. Thankfully, we have been reminded of God's perfect mercy through the celebration of Christ's victorious resurrection at Easter, plus the feast of Divine Mercy. In the same way that he transformed death by his rising, let us run to Jesus and offer our own grief and struggles to Him to be transformed, through the intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows. Then, let us act in mercy to all our neighbors and family members who are suffering, and to imitate Mary in our love.

We dedicate our diocese and this state to restoring all things in Christ, guided by the hand of our Queen and Mother. I pray that her mantle covers and protects us from the snares of the enemy, and that her strong example gives us the courage to evangelize all those our lives touch through word and deed.

May God bless and keep you all. †

In the Lord's peace,

Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS  
Bishop of Charleston



Getty Images/Mark Stinson

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

## May gives us a comparison that's worth pursuit

I became a mother rather suddenly on a sunny afternoon in October. I worked until 2:00 p.m. and left early because the seven-year-old we were about to start foster-parenting got out of school at 2:15.



BY ALISON BLANCHET

*Alison Blanchet lives in Panama City with her husband and three children. She works as a therapist for children and teens. Email her at [alisondblanchet@gmail.com](mailto:alisondblanchet@gmail.com).*

With little fanfare, I introduced myself to him, and we walked to my car. I made sure he was buckled in. Then I realized I had no idea what to do next.

“Do you have a toothbrush?” I asked.

“Nope,” he replied.

We started there.

The next 24 hours I felt like I was trying to jump on a speeding train. There were so many things to learn and remember! I forgot to pack a juice box. I forgot to check homework. It took me a solid year to learn that if a kid says they don't need to potty, they still need to try before we leave the house.

It was quite the learning curve but little by little parenting felt more natural. I stopped being afraid I'd forget something, or someone, and learned to pack a coat and a snack.

I also realized, when I talked to other moms, that no one felt like they were acing parenthood. “Mom guilt” is real and for many, the last few years of trying to parent in a pandemic hasn't brought out our best selves. Adapting to all the challenges families have faced has left everyone

feeling a little like I did my first 24 hours as a mom.

Comparison can be the beginning of this distress. Looking around — either on social media or in real life — will inevitably reveal families taking more exotic vacations, wearing more coordinated holiday outfits or watering a garden that actually grew for them during the shutdown.

However, the month of May gives us a comparison that is worth pursuit, and of course that's the example of Our Blessed Mother. While there's nothing wrong with aspiring to create a comfortable life or picturesque home for our family, we'll often find that when this is our end goal, these pursuits will leave us feeling inadequate because someone is always going to appear more put together than we feel.

Meditating on the life of Christ and Mary's “yes” from the moment she was asked if she would be the mother of God can give us much needed perspective. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes *Lumen Gentium*, explaining, “In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is a mother to us in the order of grace” (#968).

The world will always hold stressors for families but looking to the example of Mary and the ways she directs us to Christ helps us rise above this. Meditating on the rosary or reading about Mary in Scripture gives us so many examples of how we can direct our thoughts, words and deeds toward eternity.

Mary, as the Queen of Heaven, gives us a wonderful model of how to focus our lives while we are on earth. †

“While there's nothing wrong with aspiring to create a comfortable life or picturesque home for our family, we'll often find that when this is our end goal, these pursuits will leave us feeling inadequate because someone is always going to appear more put together than we feel.”



## For over 50 years, Birthright has been helping women with unplanned pregnancies

*'Oh my gosh!'*

Those often are the first frightened words of a young woman who comes to Birthright for a pregnancy test, and then it turns out positive.

**BY JOEY REISTROFFER**

*Joseph Reistroffer is a long-time writer who teaches religious education classes at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Spartanburg. Email him at jrjoeyr@gmail.com.*

"They can't hear beyond that," Terry Hodaly said. She is an executive at the Birthright Crisis Pregnancy Center in Columbia. "We assure them that it is going to be OK, and we are there for them."

They don't want to be pregnant, but now they have to confront reality and often, that reality is stark and scary. Life has just taken a very unexpected turn.

Birthright can help, said Heather Diamond, director of the crisis pregnancy center's Charleston location at 1365 Ashley River Road. While Birthright is non-denominational, many Catholics work with and for the organization, which has four locations across South

Carolina, including Columbia's in a historic house at 1316 Richland St.; the Greenville office at 21 Ellison St.; and the Georgetown location at 1905 Front St.

"It is hard. They don't know if they are OK with being pregnant," Diamond said of the women who come in. "We help them talk out their thoughts and options."

Three options exist for a woman: Keep her baby. Put her baby up for adoption. Abort.

"They're all hard, but two of them are life-giving. Abortion is not," said Meg Kocher, an executive at Birthright in Greenville. "We encourage life. We want her to know that all her plans are not dashed. The timing

[has] changed. It gets put off for a while, but it's not over. Our timing is not always God's timing."

Diamond agreed.

"Life changes, and they have to make life worth living again," Diamond said. "They know the situation they are in. We help them find hope and some solutions.

"We want them to know that they are not alone; that they are cared for, loved and accepted," she said. "We are compassionate, understanding and not judgmental. Anybody can come to us and seek help."

### Real, practical assistance

Birthright lends a big hand, providing maternity and infant clothing, baby gifts, wipes and diapers, toys, pacifiers and car seats, and that's just the beginning.

Denise Lee, who is on the board of directors for Birthright of Georgetown, said that during their 20 years of operation, the location has served over 3,800 clients, distributed nearly 100,000 diaper packages, provided over 3,500 baby layettes, assisted 300 clients with education support and saved 364 babies.

And Birthright does so much more. It also offers resources for housing, insurance, finances and even tuition.

Hodaly said the center also offers women video training throughout their pregnancy to familiarize themselves with the changes in their bodies, plus provides classes in newborn care and breastfeeding.

Hodaly said Birthright's historic house in Columbia takes away that cold, impersonal feeling, offering instead a more comfortable, warm atmosphere.

"This helps put them at ease," she said. She tells them, "Take a deep breath. You can do this. We are going to talk about this. We are going to help you relieve your fears."

For college-age women who worry that they will not be able to pursue their studies, Belmont Abbey College offers a beautiful solution, Hodaly said. The school just outside Charlotte, North Carolina, provides young mothers a home on campus, where they can pursue higher education that will help them establish themselves, Hodaly said.

Other young mothers might opt to pursue their education online.

"Thank God for technology," Diamond said. "The younger women are more up to speed with technology than I am. It is easier to continue with your education now."

Once they get their degrees, they can pursue solid job opportunities, she said.

"A lot of jobs are online now. Women can be at home, work and be with their babies," Diamond added.

### Options and safety

Finances during the COVID-19 era, however, can handcuff a couple's decision to keep their baby.

"Sometimes the father and mother will both come in," Diamond said. "Financing is a big reason why some people don't want to become parents."

She said Birthright helps these couples explore their options. In some cases, adoption is the best choice.

"Everything is so different with every person," Diamond said. Are they safe? Are they hungry? Do they need food? Do they need shelter?

In each case, the dignity of the mother is a priority.

"We're trying to help her," Kocher said. "You have to help the mother to save the baby. Most women want to keep their baby, but they are just overwhelmed."

In some instances, a father might be pressuring the mother to abort, telling her that he will leave if she does not, Kocher said. In other instances, a woman might be in an abusive relationship.

"If they are in immediate danger, we encourage them to seek help now," Diamond said.

And Birthright will connect them to the proper agencies or authorities.

It's a tough situation that requires positive, loving support for the mother, Kocher said. It also requires following through and keeping in touch.

Birthright's support does not end once the baby is born. It continues, sometimes two years after the birth, depending on the needs, added Diamond.

### From 'Oh no!' to 'Thank God!'

Feedback shows that Birthright is making a positive difference.

In 2019, one woman came into the Greenville office and was considering an abortion.

"We talked to her, and she decided to keep her baby," Kocher said. In March, "she referred another woman to us."

A lot of them are so grateful that somebody cares that they begin to cry, Diamond said. "Then they bring their babies back to show us."

That is an awesome feeling.

They come in with an "Oh my gosh!" panicky look, and they leave supported and at peace.

And we say, "Thank God!" for the lives saved. †

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# Cross Catholic Outreach Supplies Safe Water to Poor Families in African Dioceses

Every 15 seconds, a child in a developing country dies from cholera or some other waterborne disease because their water is contaminated with bacteria and parasites.

When a community does not have its own water system — which is often the case in many African nations — the community's women and children must walk for miles over rough terrain each day to find and collect water from a remote source. Even when they are successful in this daunting task, the

current water projects undertaken by Cross Catholic Outreach will help communities in Ghana, Malawi and Zambia.

“Our mission team is currently working with Bishop Richard Kuuia Baawobr in the Diocese of Wa, Ghana; Bishop Martin Anwel Mtumbuka in the Diocese of Karonga, Malawi; and Bishop George Zumaire Lungu in the Diocese of Chipata, Zambia. Each of these wonderful Catholic leaders has a deep love of the people in his



water they collect can be risky to use because most of these groundwater sources are contaminated. (See related story on opposite page.)

“It is an incredible hardship for these families, but the Church in Africa is working hard to find solutions to these challenges, and we are partnering with bishops in several dioceses to help provide that relief,” said Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, an official Catholic ministry with a history of success in supporting African missions. The

diocese and is very concerned about the water crisis rural families are facing on a daily basis,” Cavnar said. “They’ve identified the areas of greatest need, and we are working with them to ensure those communities are provided with safe, abundant sources of water.”

To address this need, Cross Catholic Outreach drills wells and installs pumps and enclosures that will protect the quality of the water. Drilling the wells to a depth determined by a local hydrology company ensures they will continue to supply clean water even during the driest



*Cross Catholic Outreach is working to provide safe, clean water sources in poor, rural communities in Ghana, Malawi and Zambia.*

season of the year, when substandard wells are known to dry up.

“It is important to do the job to a high professional standard and to provide sturdy pumps at each location because our goal is to have these water systems serve generation after generation, providing safe water for many years to come,” Cavnar explained. “We also work with the diocese to create water committees at each well location. These local leaders play a critical role in managing the use of the well and ensuring it remains in good condition. They also set up a community fund to cover the cost of any repairs that become necessary. These additional steps also help extend the water system’s effectiveness and longevity.”

While the donors who help Cross Catholic Outreach fund these water projects appreciate the care the ministry takes with its work, it is the impact of providing water to poor families that appeals to them most, Cavnar said.

“Many of our donors are aware of the

terrible fatalities caused by waterborne diseases, especially among children,” he said. “They value life, and they want to make sure the vulnerable are protected. Giving to support water projects achieves that goal, but it also produces other important benefits because it supports the Church’s educational goals and helps families lift themselves out of poverty by eliminating the burden of searching for and collecting water.”

*Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach’s many relief programs to help the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02028, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.*

## Cross Catholic Outreach Endorsed by More Than 100 Bishops, Archbishops

Cross Catholic Outreach’s range of relief work to help the poor overseas continues to be recognized by a growing number of Catholic leaders in the U.S. and abroad.

“We’ve received more than 100 endorsements from bishops and archbishops,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach. “They’re moved by the fact that we’ve launched outreaches in almost 40 countries and have undertaken a variety of projects — everything from feeding the hungry and housing the homeless to supplying safe water and supporting educational opportunities

for the poorest of the poor. The bishops have also been impressed by Cross Catholic Outreach’s direct and meaningful response to emergency situations, most recently by providing food, medicines and other resources to partners in Haiti, El Salvador and areas of Belize impacted by natural disasters.”

Archbishop Thomas Rodi of Mobile, Alabama, supports this mission, writing, “It is a privilege for me to support Cross Catholic Outreach. This organization funds ministries to our neighbors in need in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Pacific.

Through the generosity of so many, the love of God is made visible to many who are coping with the most difficult of daily living conditions.”

In addition to praising Cross Catholic Outreach’s accomplishments, many of the bishops and archbishops are encouraged by the fact that Pontifical canonical status was conferred on the charity in September 2015, granting it approval as an official Catholic organization. This allows Cross Catholic Outreach to participate in the mission of the Church and to give a concrete witness to

Gospel charity, in collaboration with the Holy Father.

“Your work with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is a strong endorsement of your partnership with the work of the universal Church,” Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco said. “By providing hope to the faithful overseas by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, delivering medical relief to the sick and shelter to the homeless, and through self-help projects, you are embodying the Papal Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.”



# American Catholics Working to End Water Crisis Faced by Poor Families in Africa and Beyond

When families lack access to essential resources for life, like food, water and safe shelter, their time and energy is often consumed with a desperate search for those resources. By necessity, survival becomes their first priority. It dominates their every thought, consumes their valuable time and saps their useful energy. It is a terrible and stressful way to live.

“Some describe this constant daily pursuit of survival without any real progress as ‘the deadly cycle of poverty,’ because once a family is trapped in it, it steals the potential of one generation after another. Today’s children are born into the poverty of their parents, and they in turn are unable to offer any hope to their sons and daughters. The tragic cycle just keeps repeating itself,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the most successful Catholic ministries working to end this kind of poverty around the globe.

According to Cavnar, there are only a few ways to successfully break this cycle of poverty, and one of them involves water.

“When you look for the source of poverty in developing countries — particularly in Africa — you often discover that water scarcity or unsafe water is at the root of the problem,” he said. “In the poorest communities, families usually lack access to water and spend enormous amounts of time and energy finding and collecting it. These women and children leave home before dawn and walk miles to the nearest borehole, dam or stream, whether the water there is clean or not. Some even sleep in those remote places just so they can be first in line for water in the morning. That is risky because it makes them vulnerable to wild animals and human predators.”

While this risk may seem unwise, the poor consider it an unavoidable trade-off to save precious time. Once the queue starts forming, it can take hours for a family to collect the water they need.

In the dry season, their lives become even more difficult. At certain times of the year, streams and other groundwater sources literally dry up. Then families dig holes in a dry riverbed and wait for muddy water to well up from below so they can fill their buckets.

“It would be bad enough if water scarcity was the only problem the poor face. But even when water can be found, it is often unsafe for human consumption,” Cavnar said. “As you would imagine, water from



*The search for and collection of water remains a daunting task in many African countries. During dry seasons, holes are dug in the riverbeds. As muddy water slowly seeps up to fill these pits, it is collected for drinking and cooking.*

ponds and streams is used by animals and also becomes contaminated with debris and chemical runoff. Still, these families have no other options, so they drink water polluted by parasites, bacteria and waste — risking their health to quench their thirst. When they become sick, it only adds to their trials and adds to the burdens they must endure in order to survive.”

Fortunately, this troubling situation has not been ignored by the Church or ministries serving the poor. In fact, partnerships between dioceses and Cross Catholic Outreach have produced practical solutions to water scarcity problems in Africa and beyond. Very often, American Catholics are part of this important cause too. Their donations fund the wells African communities desperately need.

“We can end the misery of poor families in remote areas of Africa by installing simple deep-water wells in their communities, and American Catholics can play a critical role in that outreach,” Cavnar confirmed. “Supplying water has an obvious benefit — it addresses a basic human need. But

the impact of these projects goes much deeper. Donors who support our efforts to provide poor communities with clean, easily accessible water are also improving public health and helping promote the education of needy children. When we install wells in a community, children are sick less often and spend fewer hours searching for and collecting water. That has a huge impact on their education because they can attend classes regularly and have the time and energy to study.”

To bring all of these blessings to the poor in Africa, Cross Catholic Outreach recently launched a new *Wells of Salvation* campaign aimed at helping poor families in three African dioceses. (See related story on the opposite page.)

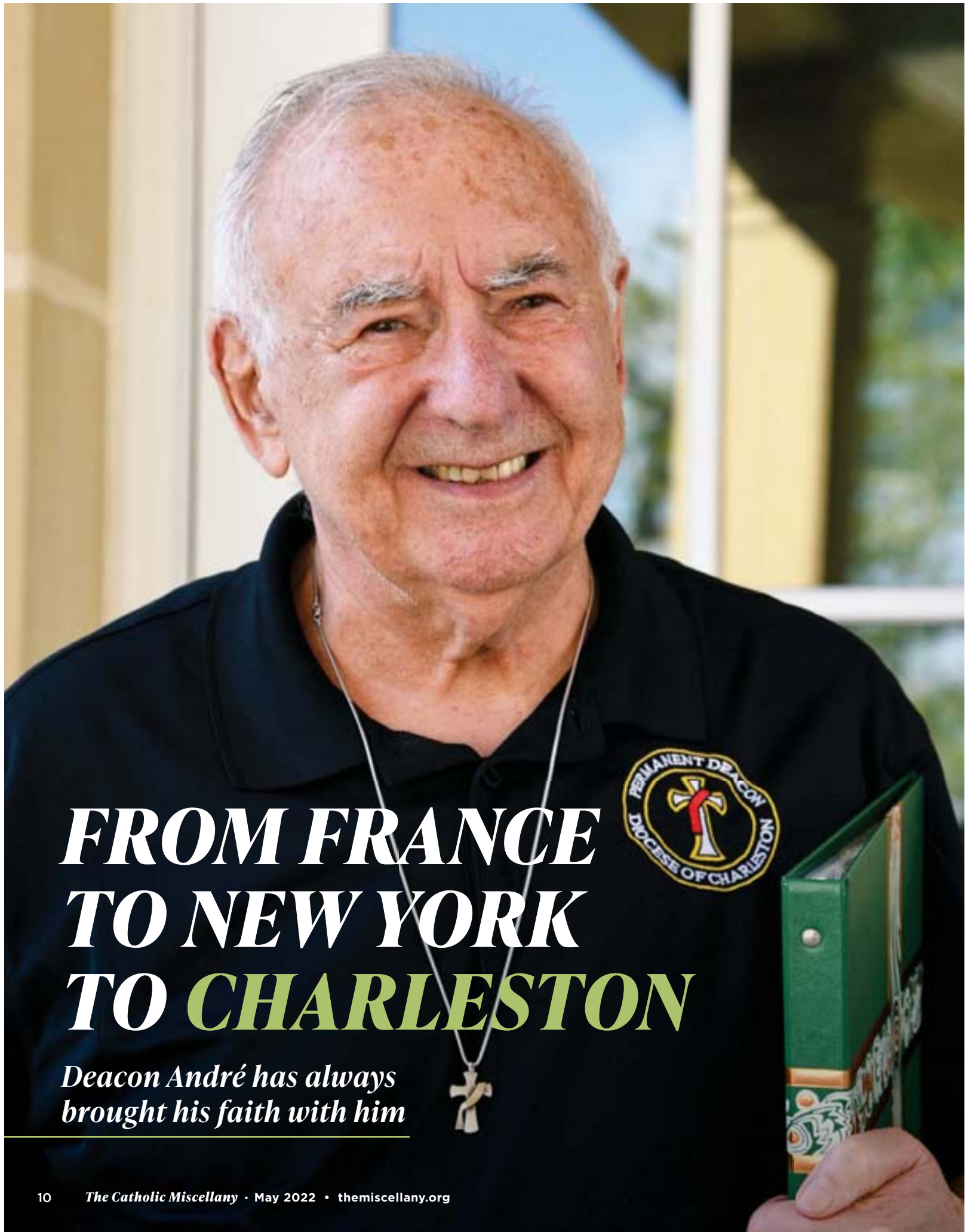
Cavnar’s prayer is that hundreds of compassionate Catholics will donate generously so dozens of wells can be installed in these African communities, ending the terrible burdens water scarcity has placed on them.

## How to Help

**To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02028, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.**

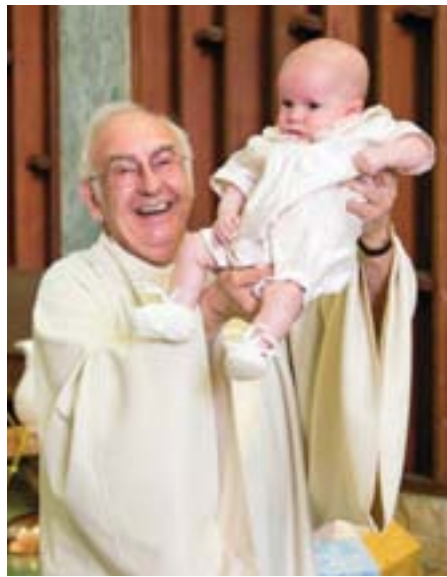
If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.





# ***FROM FRANCE TO NEW YORK TO CHARLESTON***

*Deacon André has always  
brought his faith with him*



**Deacon André Guillet has certainly made his mark during his 37 year tenure as a deacon, but now it is time to retire from his current role as the director of the diaconate for the Diocese of Charleston.**

**BY THERESA STRATFORD**

*Theresa Stratford is a freelance writer for The Miscellany. She lives in Charleston with her husband and three children and attends Blessed Sacrament Church. Email her at tmmart89@gmail.com.*

**PHOTOS BY DOUG DEAS**

Born in January 1943 in Talence, France, Deacon André's connection to his faith began that June when he was baptized.

"I was born blind, but my mother and aunt took me to Lourdes and a few months later, they said I was able to see," he said. "To me, it is no coincidence that I probably became able to see after my baptism. My devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes has always been sacred to me."

Deacon André was an only child to a single mother. He grew up in the restaurant industry and admitted that "the Catholic Church became my escape from doing the dishes."

Going to Mass alone made him envious of families that went to church together.

"I knew that was what I wanted," he recalled.

For college, he attended restaurant school three days a week and two days were spent working in a restaurant. From 1960-1962, he served in the French army. Deacon André said the day he was on his way to fight, the Algerian War ended.

"I was fortunate because of my restaurant background to get a

job at the officer dining room and sometimes I worked in the soldier bar."

When he left the military, he started paperwork to come to the United States. He was headed to work at a hotel in Los Angeles, but before he got there he decided to stop in New York to visit an American girl, Marie, whom he had met in France.

"I never made it to L.A.," he smiled. "The girl I visited in New York became my wife and the mother of our four sons [Michel, Marc, Matthew and Martin]. We now have nine grandchildren."

He said that he was blessed to have the family that he'd dreamed of as a boy — the ones he admired in church. André and Marie were very involved in their parish, both teaching religious education, lecturing and being extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist.

He applied to become a permanent deacon in 1980 and was ordained in 1985. Deacon André served at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Copiague, N.Y., and during that time was running a successful French restaurant in Long Island.

"We earned accolades from *Newsday*, *The New York Times* and in 1986, we became the restaurateurs of the year in the state of New York."

Deacon André eventually left New York state to be closer to his

grandkids, which was around the time that he got a call from Bishop Robert E. Guglielmone to be the director of the diaconate in Charleston. Deacon André said he had known Bishop Guglielmone for 30 years from their time in the Diocese of Rockville Centre in New York.

When Deacon André came to Charleston, he worked for three years as the general manager of the popular downtown Charleston restaurant McCrady's.

At first, he was assigned to Christ Our King Church in Mount Pleasant, then he went to St. Thomas the Apostle Church in North Charleston and then Divine Redeemer Church in Hanahan, where he is now.

It has been 10 years in the Charleston area and as much as Deacon André has loved his work, he said it is time to retire.

"God has been so good to me," he reminisced.

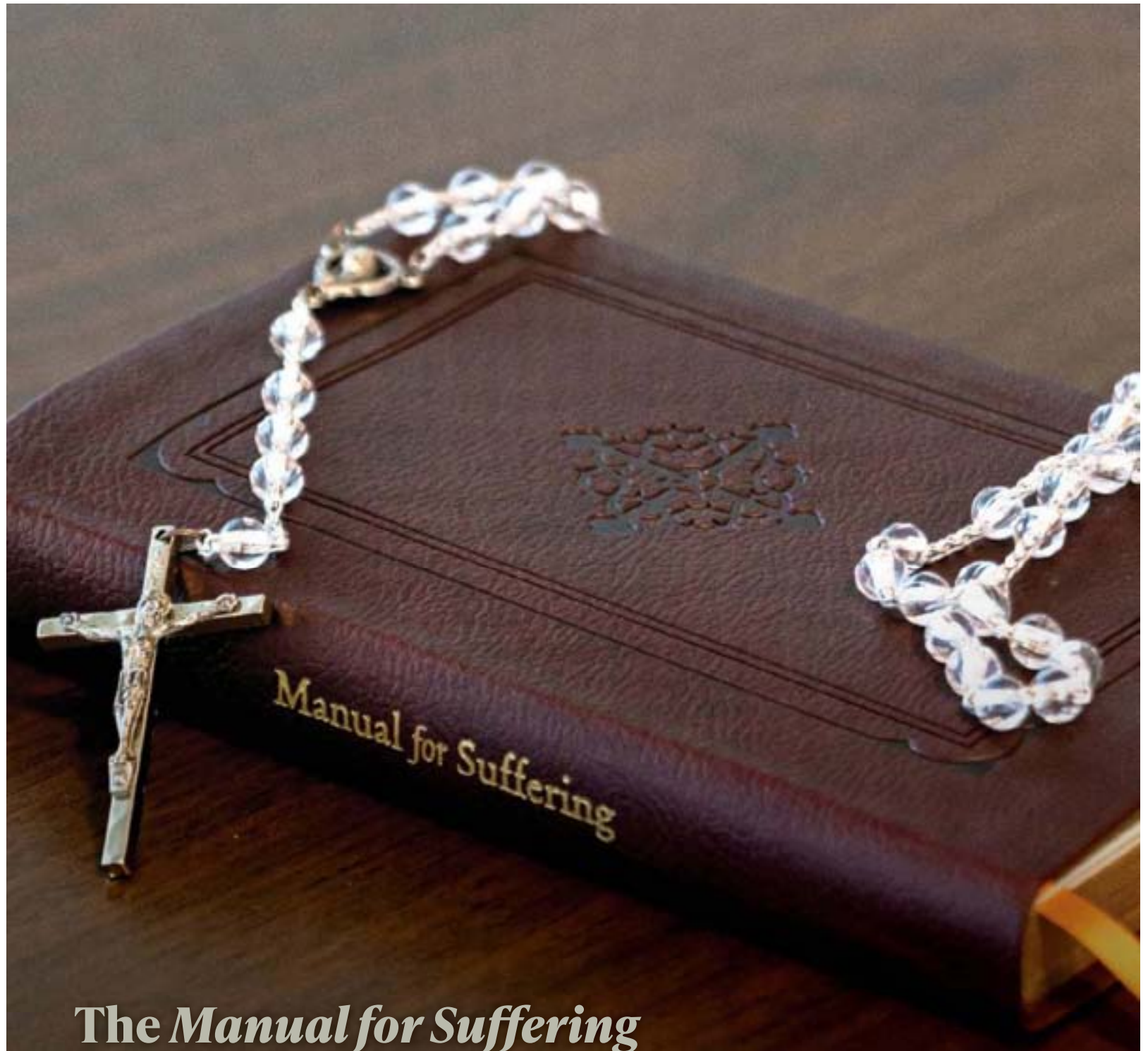
As director of the diaconate, he has seen 87 men ordained and brought another 51 into formation. Deacon André said his favorite aspects of being a deacon were baptism, wakes and weddings.

"There hasn't been one day where I woke up and didn't love being a deacon," he said.

He has been instrumental in RCIA work and youth ministry. Deacon André said he isn't going anywhere as he will be moving to live in the rectory at Divine Redeemer. He plans to volunteer with the parish and substitute in religious education.

"The parish loves me, the children love me, and I love all of them. This truly comes from the heart." †

**“There hasn't been one day where I woke up and didn't love being a deacon.”**



*The Manual for Suffering*  
helps tackle one of

# LIFE'S HARDEST QUESTIONS

## It is human nature to question the divine intentions of our Lord when something terrible happens. When we see someone we love suffering, or when we hear about an awful situation that a fellow human being is in, we wonder: why would God allow suffering?

BY THERESA STRATFORD

PHOTO BY MIGUEL PEREDA

Father Jeffrey Kirby, STL, pastor of Our Lady of Grace Church in Lancaster, decided to write about this frequently asked question.

In his *Manual for Suffering*, he addresses what everyone is thinking as they stand over a loved one's deathbed. It tackles the complicated thoughts running through our minds when we hear extremely bad news.

Father Kirby said the manual came from "a series of homilies I gave at my parish during the pandemic on the cause and meaning of suffering."

He said that as COVID-19 wore on, many people in his parish would ask him why God would even allow a pandemic to happen and what they were supposed to do with it.

"These are very human questions and divine wisdom can help us answer them," he said. "At times, in our comfort and routine, we can neglect these questions or forget why it's important for us to pursue answers to them."

In the book, Father Kirby described a situation where he entered the hospital room of a woman dying of cancer. Her son was upset and asked, "Father, this is terrible. I can't believe this is happening. Please help me. Please explain why God would let my mother suffer like this."

The priest answered that "in a pastoral situation, the best approach is one of comfort and encouragement. It's oftentimes not the place for extended explanations or pious platitudes. When there is time, the best approach to the question of suffering is the broader perspective of why there is suffering at all. This can help a person

to realize that while their suffering is uniquely their own, they are not alone. Suffering is a shared experience within the human family."

He went on to explain that suffering was actually not a part of God's original plan for the world.

"Suffering came as a consequence of original sin. It is permitted by God as a means for us to grow, to love, to be united with God and others and to ultimately work out our salvation in Jesus Christ," he said.



**The person who is suffering is having things taken from them. In their vulnerability, they need to be honest with God and express to him exactly what is on their hearts."**

Father Kirby also added that God permits suffering so that a greater good can come of it, which could provide comfort in terms of the global pandemic and why we are all currently enduring such a difficult time with it. Perhaps there is a deeper reason why. Perhaps it will get us closer to a greater good down the road.

"Such goodness, however, can also be seen at different times in this life, such as reconciliation between loved ones, deeper gentleness to those around us,

renewed affection for family members and other graces such as these," he said.

Suffering is something that cannot be defined as worse for one person or another. Whether physical, mental, psychological, familial or even spiritual — suffering is relative to what we are all dealing with and as author Ian Macclaren said in the 1800s, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle."

"When people suffer, I encourage them to be as transparent in prayer as they're able. If they are angry, they need to tell God," Father Kirby said. "If they feel lonely, they need to tell God. If they're just fed up with being sick, they need to tell God. Prayer should be an active exchange between God and the person. There is no room for misplaced piety or religious platitudes. The person who is suffering is having things taken from them. In their vulnerability, they need to be honest with God and express to him exactly what is on their hearts. Eventually, through open prayer, the Holy Spirit will help the person to come to the awareness of God's plan and the purpose of suffering."

As for those being asked the question, "Why do people suffer?" Father Kirby advised, "As people who accompany those who suffer, we shouldn't try to impose real truth onto a person's experience before they are ready to receive it. Caregivers and those who walk with people who suffer should not attempt to resolve their own discomfort by asserting real truth at the wrong time."

Along with being the pastor of Our Lady of Grace, Father Kirby is a Papal Missionary of Mercy and an adjunct professor of theology at Belmont Abbey College. He holds a doctorate in moral theology from Holy Cross University in Rome. Along with the *Manual for Suffering*, Father Kirby has authored several books including *We Are the Lord's: A Catholic Guide to Difficult End-of-Life Questions*.

The *Manual for Suffering* can be found on Amazon.com. †



# ‘Transformation of Mourning’ HELPS THOSE WHO GRIEVE

Kathy Bourne lost her husband on Oct. 7, 2002. Twenty years later, his death is still raw, and she just can’t bring herself to visit his grave.

BY JOEY REISTROFFER

“It’s too painful,” she said. Bourne is still mourning and grieving. “It gets lonely at times, especially when I see married people together,” she said. “Living as a widow for 20 years is not easy.” She said she finds comfort in talking with Father David Whitman, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Spartanburg. At other times, she feels abandoned.

“Pray for those living alone,” Bourne said. “Widows are kind of forgotten. ... We are just cast by the wayside, and it’s not fair. I just want widows to have a voice.”

Kathy Schmugge, diocesan director of the Office of Family Life, also wants widows to have a voice, a place where they can unburden themselves. So, she and her friend Mary Frances Gerber started an online program called “Grief and Loss of Those We Cherish: A Transformation of Mourning.”

Their last programs went from Advent through Christmas and again

from Lent through Easter. Three have been held so far. Sessions were once a week and each meeting offered different topics and prayers, Schmugge said. It began as a resource for the Diocese of Charleston but has grown beyond South Carolina.

The program offers books and resources while helping people come to terms with their loss.



**It’s a very lonely journey if you don’t have someone to walk it with.”**

“It’s not psychological; it’s spiritual,” Schmugge said. “They share their experiences. They work through the grief. Most of all, they realize they are not alone.”

“Knowing that you are not alone makes those other pieces so much

easier,” she said. “It’s a very lonely journey if you don’t have someone to walk it with.”

Gerber, who facilitates the program from the Diocese of Kansas City, Mo., said participation in the online sessions extended “from the West Coast to the East Coast.” She said that a session on Our Lady of Sorrows can be the perfect companion for a person walking through intense grief.

“Our Lady has a lot of experience with grief,” Gerber said. “Meditating on Our Lady and their sorrows can certainly be very helpful” to those who are mourning, she added.

Damalis Martinez, a 34-year-old from New York City, is mourning the loss of her father.

“A year after my father’s passing, the group led by Mary and Kathy did more for me in a few months than almost a year of traditional talk therapy,” Martinez said. “I was alone, pregnant and extremely depressed. I don’t know what would have happened without them. All the other participants were really there for me as well. It was a very dark time in my life. I’m very grateful to their ministry.”

Another participant named

Barbara, from St. Michael Church in Murrells Inlet, said the program showed her how to process her feelings after losing her sister.

"I needed to be able to express my thoughts, and your group allowed me to do this," she said.

Then there was Kathleen from Las Vegas, who said she looked forward to participating in each Zoom session.

Kathleen, a family therapist who recently lost her husband, said the sessions were invaluable.

"I had to remind myself each week that I was participating for my benefit, for my healing, not as a therapist ministering to the rest of those on the call," she said. "Each week brought an opportunity to learn from each of the other participants and a safe place to express my feelings and loss."

Gerber and Schmutz said writing down feelings of pain helps participants deal with loss.

"We encourage writing a daily journal," Gerber said. "Writing helps us in processing what happens to us. When we can't process it, we can become sick," she said.

Schmutz said one widow took that to heart.

"She writes a letter every day to her husband," Schmutz said. That kind of dialogue helps her "get it out" and heal, she added.

Another way the program works is by generating friendships. Schmutz said it brought together three widows from Myrtle Beach.

"Now they go out for coffee, and they are tighter than tight," she said.

Schmutz believes Kathy Bourne could benefit from the "Grief and Loss of Those We Cherish" program.

"Jesus is asking us to comfort those who are in mourning," Schmutz said.

This online program is one way to do that during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If we were in person, you know I would reach out and give you a hug," she said.

While an actual hug may not be possible, a virtual one from those who understand grief and loss is surely the next best thing. †

# The Widow and the Auctioneer: God's call

**Two years ago, John Slaughter received a call from a widow named Mary Ellen, who left him this message: "I'm sitting in my house, surrounded by so much stuff, and I'm overwhelmed and I don't know what to do."**

Slaughter answered her call, and in doing so, he answered God's.

"I told her not to worry," Slaughter said.

He did much more than that. He visited her home in Landrum, near the North Carolina border, to comfort her.

"It was during COVID," Slaughter said. "She was so sad, lonely and overwhelmed."

So he told Mary Ellen his job was to help bring her some peace.

Three years ago, Slaughter stepped away from his 25-year career as a park ranger when he saw that people in his community and parish were hurting. Widowed men and women were broken and alone, not knowing where to turn, what to do, how to cope or even how to get through a day.

Some struggled with finances. Others couldn't find resources they needed to move forward, and they got taken advantage of, he said. So Slaughter started BidYall Auction Services to assist them in selling what they no longer wanted or needed.

Helping widows "morphed into part of my business," he said. "This is exactly why God has led me to this career."

He said he sees the widowed in their homes, surrounded by all their possessions and all their memories, but no one to share them with. They realize they need to downsize,

but they have no idea how to start.

"There should be a support system that we have in place for our [grieving], whether it's a widow or a young girl who has lost her parents," Slaughter said. "They don't know where to go or what to do."

Slaughter is determined to fill that gap and to see them not lose everything to unscrupulous business practices. He follows 1 Peter 4:10: "... serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."

"This is not a job; it's a ministry," he said. "I'm doing it one person at a time."

When Slaughter visited Mary Ellen, he walked through her house and saw a statue of Mary, along with a cross bearing three nails. He knew that cross. It came from Emmaus, a program where men get together to strengthen their relationship with Christ.

When he asked Mary Ellen about the cross, she said her husband had come back from an Emmaus retreat on fire with his faith.

Slaughter knew what he had to do. He made one phone call, and the Emmaus brotherhood immediately came to help.

"It was amazing," he said. "In a day, we had her packed up. In another day, we had her moved."

Slaughter said Mary Ellen sold her house, along with the things she did not want to keep.

"Sometimes letting them get rid of their stuff helps them turn a page in their life," he said.

Slaughter wants those who are grieving to know that they are not alone. There are people in the Church who can and will help, and today, Mary Ellen lives in Boiling Springs. Thanks to a bunch of guys who cared, she's no longer overwhelmed or alone. †

“  
Sometimes letting  
them get rid of their stuff  
helps them turn a page  
in their life.”

# Compassionate CAFÉ:

## You don't have to grieve alone

**“They say that everyone handles grief differently. That may be true, but I think it is safe to say that anyone experiencing grief finds comfort from the support of others.”**

BY THERESA  
STRATFORD

When Paul Brustowicz lost his 17-year-old son in 1992, he found comfort from a grief support group at his church in Trenton, N.J. He later trained in grief support and started a monthly support group at his parish. Brustowicz spent 40 years in life insurance prior to retiring and had experience in meeting management.

When he moved to Summerville, S.C., in 2012 and joined St. John the Beloved Church, he had many years of experience in grief ministry and offering programs in different formats and styles. He even underwent more

training from the Grief Recovery Method in 2018.

“I knew I loved to teach and educating people about grief,” he explained. “Plus I loved the interactions I had with people. They helped me as much as I helped them.”

He started the Compassionate Café in 2019 at St. John, which is a monthly grief support group that meets every second Thursday at 10 a.m. Eight people came to the first meeting and since then Brustowicz said he has had up to 12 people attending.

The format is informal and open. He announces ground rules from the get-go, but they aren't strict. He just wants everyone to respect each other, not monopolize the conversations, not pass judgment and to keep each other's stories confidential.

“It's widows mostly,” he said. “I like for everyone to introduce themselves, but they don't have to talk.

What is great about the Compassionate Café are the friendships that are made. I see people set up times to have coffee together and exchange numbers.”

He knows how important it is not to be alone when you are dealing with grief.

“Grievers often want to isolate, but it is important to share your feelings with people who are going through the same thing,” Brustowicz added.

June Gress shared that her husband of 50 years passed away in 2019. She started going to the Compassionate Café because her family and friends were uncomfortable when she spoke about her grief.

“I had to try and not cry when I spoke to them,” she said. “The Compassionate Café was a place where I could talk through my tears. I looked forward to going every month and hearing others who were in similar difficult situations. I attended the monthly sessions for two years. It was extremely helpful for me.”

Marian Wischerath lost her husband in 2017 and has been attending the Café since it started at St. John.

“I still grieve and hurt deeply. It is comforting to talk regarding the heartache, sadness and loneliness one suffers while grieving and getting much needed guidance,” Wischerath said. “The Compassionate Café gives me hope.”

For Angela Mahany, it has been almost five years since she lost her husband, but she admits that she is very grateful for the Café.

“It gives me freedom to grieve. It is a safe place to share and sympathize with others. We can boost each other's spirits. It has been a wonderful safe haven for expressing feelings when family and friends are uncomfortable or just tired of hearing it,” she said.

For Shirley Berardo, who has been widowed since 2016, attending the Café helped her realize that navigating grief is not a “one size fits all,” she said. “We each must travel in a manner that suits our individual emotional level at the time. By sharing, we learn new techniques for our grief journey, some may work for us, others may not. It is a very personal journey.” †

“

**They helped me as much  
as I helped them.”**

Paul Brustowicz





## RESURRECTION CHOIR and the ministry of presence

The Compassionate Café and grief support groups are great for the long term because anyone who wants to feel that camaraderie can attend for as long as they want – months or years.

BY THERESA  
STRATFORD

But what about the support for those grieving in the short term, with an immediate need? What about the respect given to the deceased? Or families who just lost a loved one and need to feel that immediate embrace from others?

For them, St. John the Beloved offers the Resurrection Choir.

Rodney Ward, director of music ministry at the parish, explained that for every funeral he gets eight to 10 volunteers from his choir to sing. Although the choir has been offered for funerals at St. John since before Ward started in 2018, he said that families report being “blown away” by the music at the funeral for their loved one.

“We’ll rehearse beforehand,”

he said. “Families are never expecting it. They are always so thankful for the offering of music ... It’s like we are wrapping our arms around the family.”

A member of the Resurrection Choir, Mary Jo Martin, said they represent “a prayerful presence and support for grieving families. We are inspired and blessed to be a part of this sacred rite.”

St. Michael Church in Garden City has a ministry where members of the parish volunteer to attend funerals.

Father Edward Fitzgerald, pastor, said that there are about 125 to 130 funerals on average at the church or at local funeral homes per year for members of the parish.

A diverse group of parishioners, Father Fitzgerald said that they are the largest parish in the Myrtle Beach Deanery and one of the largest parishes in the state. St. Michael consists mostly of retirees.

The ministry to attend funerals was the priest’s idea.

“About seven years ago, I began to offer a Mass on the fourth Monday of the month in the evening for the souls of purgatory,” he said. “I decided to preach at one of the daily Masses soon after I started about the importance of praying for the dead and supporting the grieving at funerals as we have so many here. St. Vincent DePaul Society began attending funerals about five years ago after I presented them with the idea as well.”

Between the volunteers at St. Michael and the St. Vincent DePaul Society, about six to eight parishioners go on a regular basis to the funerals.

The reason? To offer their support and condolences.

Tim and Nancy Czarny are among the parishioners that try to attend every funeral. They get a text from Darlene Lucido, a volunteer who sends out details on upcoming funerals to the group.

Lucido said the text goes out to a group of about 20 people, and sometimes they will have four or five a week.

“This ministry just hit me,” Tim Czarny said. “It spoke to me as something respectful to do for the ones that have passed on. I have been attending funerals for seven years on a regular basis.”

He said he likes that he can help pray them into heaven. His wife Nancy, who also goes to some of the funerals, added that attending funerals is an act of mercy. She said that her husband, who is a fixture at funerals, said he always feels better after he goes.

“He keeps a prayer card for every one he goes to,” she said. “We now have a collection of about 400 prayer cards from all the funerals he has been to over the past seven years.”

“It’s saying to the family that you may not know me, but I am keeping you all in my thoughts and prayers,” Lucido said. “That really goes a long way during a difficult time.”

Tim concurred.

“I am praying for them to go to heaven and someday someone will be praying the same thing for me,” he said. †

“They are always so thankful for the offering of music ... It’s like we are wrapping our arms around the family.”



# ‘WELL, BROTHERS, WHEN SHALL WE BEGIN TO DO GOOD?’

■ The Oratorian Congregation in Rock Hill are, from left to right, back row: Father Adilso Coelho, Brother Joseph Guyon, Father John Giuliani, Father Fabio Refosco, Father Joseph Pearce (congregation provost), and Father Edward McDevitt. Left to right front row, Father Agustin Guzman, Brother Johnni Do Bonfim Silva, Father Louis Quang, and Brother John Kummer (not pictured: Brothers Charles Andrew Tupta and Kevin D. O’Connor).

St. Philip Neri, whose feast day we celebrate this month on May 26, was the founder of the worldwide Oratorian congregation of religious men — one of their communities being located in Rock Hill. The Oratorians have served in South Carolina for nearly 90 years, and the congregation has a long history.

BY TOM DORSEL

*Thomas Dorsel, Ph.D., professor emeritus of psychology at Francis Marion University, lives on Hilton Head Island with his wife, Sue. He is a parishioner of St. Francis by the Sea Church and a cantor at Holy Family Church. He can be found on [dorsel.com](http://dorsel.com).*

## STARTING A CONVERSATION

We have all endured street preachers yelling at us and making us uncomfortable. Even the great St. John the Baptist seemed to favor this approach. But, John was “crying out in the wilderness.” People had to go out of their way to hear him, rather than John hounding them on the street.

One might also start a conversation by just sitting somewhere with a sign. Remember the 1980s “evangelist” with the rainbow-colored wig who held up signs at prominent events displaying John 3:16? How about his secular descendant “Dude with Sign”? This approach *might* stimulate curious people to engage in conversation, but more likely these days to keep swiping on their phone and to shuffle past.

St. Philip Neri had yet another approach. With his easy disposition and sense of humor, he would simply

ask passersby an intriguing question: “Well, brothers, when shall we begin to do good?”

Imagine the saint leaning back in his chair, smiling mischievously and rhetorically asserting that question, “When shall we begin to do good?” His combination of mood and words was sure to catch passersby off guard, get their attention and might even elicit a Shakespearean reply: “Well, my curious and jovial friend, just what kind of good are you alluding to?” And conversation can begin!

## POLITICIANS, BUSINESSMEN AND CELEBRITIES

“When shall we begin to do good?” Wouldn’t you like to ask that question to some of our politicians who are pursuing primarily their own self-interest and electability?

Or how about business folks who have money making as their primary focus, sometimes disregarding the detrimental impact their product or



Guido Reni, Public Domain

## Philip Romolo Neri (c. 1515-1595)

FEAST – MAY 26 | PATRON OF JOY

Born in 1515 in France, Philip aspired to be a prominent businessman. But as often happens with saints, Philip had a mystical conversion experience, turned away from worldly affairs and struck out for Rome with no money or plans.

Upon arriving there, he found lodging in the attic of a government official and began tutoring the family’s children for room and board. He spent most of his spare time in prayer, thereby discerning that he should move on and enter the university. But, once again, after a few years, he found the ivory tower unfulfilling, sold his books and set out to engage people on the streets in conversation about faith.

business practices might have on their communities or the planet?

And then celebrities, like athletes who play their sports with total disregard for others' health and safety, or movie stars who willingly portray roles and plots that glamorize crime and immorality to their admiring and vulnerable audience?

### THEN, THERE IS US

Well, brothers and sisters, when shall we begin to do good?

You and I may be plodding along, not doing anything particularly bad, but are we really doing anything good to contribute to the betterment of the people and places around us?

I'll bet many reading this are doing good, and yet many others might be delaying, procrastinating, waiting for the right time when they are going to put their own self-interest aside and engage others for their best interest.

So, what to do? I'm not sure, because I am one of those procrastinators. But I think St. Paul had an answer for us who are delaying, something to this effect: "You don't have to live Christ's life. All you have to do is live your life as Christ would have lived it."

We don't have to put on sandals, hit the streets, gather disciples, spend time in the desert in prayer, suffer and die on a cross. That was Christ's life.

Our lives are as businessmen and women, laborers, craftsmen, professionals, spouses, parents — and consecrated religious men serving in a now-bustling top corner of a Southern state.

St. Paul simply exhorts us to operate within our particular spheres as Christ would have operated, if he were in our shoes at this time in history.

As we go forth about our normal activities with colleagues, parishioners, family or friends, perhaps we might remind ourselves of the popularized but still meaningful admonition: "What would Jesus do?"

The answer to that question is always clear, and our resulting Christ-like actions might also satisfy St. Philip Neri that we are finally "beginning to do good." †



## The Mouth of Mary: The wonder of the Incarnation

May has traditionally been considered the month of Mary. Fittingly, we also celebrate Mother's Day in the secular sphere. This juxtaposition gives us the opportunity to reflect on Mary's motherhood and her importance to our spirituality as Christians. Mary is a mother in the physical and spiritual senses. We rightly call her the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church and numerous other maternal and queenly images.

As Catholics, our Marian devotion can be hard to explain to others, particularly Christians of other denominations. Often we are misunderstood or even accused of worshipping Mary — and other saints too. To put the criticism another way, Catholics are often accused of making Mary into a divine figure. The reality, however, is that the reason that Mary is important to us at all is the fact that she is not divine. It is Mary's humanity that is essential theologically and in our spirituality.

Theologically, when we celebrate Mary, we are celebrating the central event of salvation history — God's saving work in our world — in the Incarnation, when God enters human history in a unique way by becoming one of us in Jesus. Mary is fundamental in our tradition because it is through her that this happens. Jesus takes his humanity from his mother, bridging the gap that exists between God and his creation. Now in the person of Jesus Christ, the invitation to salvation is extended to us. It is with Mary's cooperation that salvation becomes available.

In the early Church, a controversy arose around the use of the term Mother of God, *Theotokos* in Greek. This ancient controversy mirrors some of the contentiousness we see today, as Nestorius, the Archbishop of Constantinople in 428, thought the title sounded as though Mary was

somehow the source of divinity. So at the Council of Ephesus in 431, it was decided that using such language to refer to Mary does not confuse the divine and human natures of Christ — rather it honors the greatness and wonder in the Incarnation.

This early discussion in Church history has shaped our understanding of Mary and how other doctrines and dogmas were articulated later. In fact, it is foundational for our theological understanding of Mary and Jesus himself. It only occurred because of the centuries of Marian devotion that preceded it, particularly the established use of the term *Theotokos*. It has implications for our devotions today by integrating Marian prayer into our spiritual lives. We take up the tradition that goes back to the earliest centuries of the Church.

Mary's humanity gives us commonality with her. It allows us to connect with her in a special way as an intercessor, and especially as one whose human connection with our Savior is so unique and so close. Our union with Christ in baptism means we too claim Mary as our mother. The human experiences of motherhood, those that are uplifting or those that need healing, help shape our relationship to Mary. They also help us to understand Christ in a deeper way.

Marian prayer always highlights for us the humanity of Jesus. It allows us to enter intimately into the wonder of the Incarnation. †

### BY DR. MIKE MARTOCCHIO

Michael Martocchio, Ph.D., is the diocesan secretary for evangelization and director of the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation. Email him at [mmartocchio@charlestdiocese.org](mailto:mmartocchio@charlestdiocese.org).

# THE CONSECRATED LIFE:

## *Religious women are spiritual mothers*

*From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has invited all religious to live the vow of fruitful chastity to create spiritual sons and daughters within the Church. Motherhood, then, is not only a biological matter but also a spiritual one. This living witness of faith was and is a pillar that helps believers uphold and maintain faith in Jesus Christ.*



**BY SISTER  
GUADALUPE  
FLORES, OLVN**

*Sister Guadalupe Flores is coordinator of Adult Faith Formation for the Office of Hispanic Ministry. Email her at [glfores@charlestondiocese.org](mailto:glfores@charlestondiocese.org).*

In the history of the Church, there has always been religious life. Spiritual motherhood has a very deep relationship with our consecration. From the beginning of our vocation, we welcome, serve and accompany our brothers and sisters in Christ. In this way, we give life to our femininity for the One who has called us to love without measure. We give ourselves with an open heart in all the situations that our communities and parishes need us, and in what God asks of us.

When people come to us and share their concerns, we listen with empathy and make their problems our own. With a few kind words we can help people feel that they are cherished and loved — we demonstrate God's peace and hope. God is the one who calls us to develop our motherhood and from this call we can love those most in need. In our walk and our work, we find many who come to us in search of help, those who are unprotected, disconsolate and abandoned. We become their spiritual mothers in the model of Our Lady, *the* spiritual mother.

To be a biological mother is to be open to receiving and seeing a life growing in the womb, and to welcome and love that life. Every woman who gives life takes on the responsibility to care for the person being formed in

her womb. In a spiritual way, women religious are open to welcome and love all those the Lord puts in our path. We accompany each son or daughter that Christ gives us. It is our responsibility to know and care for them, and because we have welcomed them into our hearts, we suffer with their pain, we rejoice in their joys and we are present to walk together with them, as a mother does with the son or daughter from her womb.

Women undergo physical changes in their bodies during pregnancy, experienced with joy and hope. By contrast, a woman religious experiences joy in consecrated chastity, which is not a lack of love, but a fullness of love that bears a different fruit in abundance. Consecrated women manifest our spiritual fruitfulness in listening to the voice of God in contemplative prayer. Then, we accompany spiritual children and collaborate in the formation of a new humanity that can commit itself to the construction of the kingdom of God.

Being a spiritual mother is to give oneself unconditionally to the spiritual growth of people. Knowing that we are loved by God, we can transmit this love to everyone. Our life from God, with God and in God makes us capable of freely loving our neighbor. The surrender to Christ of women religious requires us to work for the conversion and salvation of our brothers and sisters. This is the mystery and beauty of spiritual motherhood: giving our lives in service for eternal salvation.

May Mary our mother, who welcomed the eternal Word in her womb, help each of us — in a world divided and broken due to lack of hope and love — so that we may be true spiritual mothers. †

**“Being a spiritual mother is to give oneself unconditionally to the spiritual growth of people. Knowing that we are loved by God, we can transmit this love to everyone.”**

**+ VISIT**  
[mepkinabbey.org](http://mepkinabbey.org).



# THE MONKS AND REMEMBRANCE

**Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and renowned mid-20th century memoirist and spiritual writer, once said, “People have no idea what one saint can do: for sanctity is stronger than the whole of hell.”**

**BY SISTER PAM SMITH**

*Sister Pamela Smith, SSCM, Ph.D., is the diocesan director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Email her at [psmith@charlestondiocese.org](mailto:psmith@charlestondiocese.org).*

The observation came in the immediate aftermath of World War II and amid the first phases of the nuclear age. Later, when Merton began writing about racial justice and the conduct of the war in Vietnam, he is said to have wondered aloud whether the only reason that our world had not already blown itself up was that contemplatives and so many of the faithful were persevering in steady, silent prayer.

While Merton was making Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky famous, our diocese became home to the Trappist community at Mepkin Abbey, just outside Moncks Corner, in 1949. The property was donated by Clare Boothe Luce, an author and U.N. ambassador, and Henry Luce, the publisher of *Life*, *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*. Many of us first came to know of the Trappists through Merton’s writings and then met them

firsthand on visits to Mepkin. We admire and wonder at their hours of prayer, silence, unobtrusive labor to support the monastery, vegetarian diet and hospitality. What we don’t necessarily expect is activism. When Merton became a critic of social mores and engaged with matters of justice, he evoked not only misunderstanding but also hostility. People often expect monks to keep to their monastic cells and simply pray and smile a lot.

However, that isn’t the sum of their lives. They are titans who hold the world in prayer, and in that, they have a prophetic role to play. They point to the depth of Gospel values and ultimate matters of human dignity and destiny. They live in service of the kingdom of God — the one that is yet to come and the kingdom in our midst. So, we should not be surprised that our monks at Mepkin

engage in some projects that touch consciences and prod us to enlarge our embrace of our human brothers and sisters.

Two current projects in which the monks at Mepkin are involved are cases in point. One is a memorial, whose main feature will be a sculpture entitled “Thy Father’s Hands.” The monks are working with a collaborative group, including our diocesan Office of Black Catholic Ministry, to honor the enslaved who lived and worked at Mepkin long before anyone dreamed of an abbey. Through artistry, landscaping and narrative, the project will remember the enslaved and the Native Americans who once inhabited the property, many of whom were laid to rest in unmarked graves. As beautiful as it promises to be, it will remind us of a sad truth of history — people sometimes victimize and capitalize on other people.

Another event will be held on Pentecost Sunday, June 5. In response to the Lord’s call “that they may be one,” the abbey is hosting an event of shared prayer, sermon and song with people of varied faith traditions.

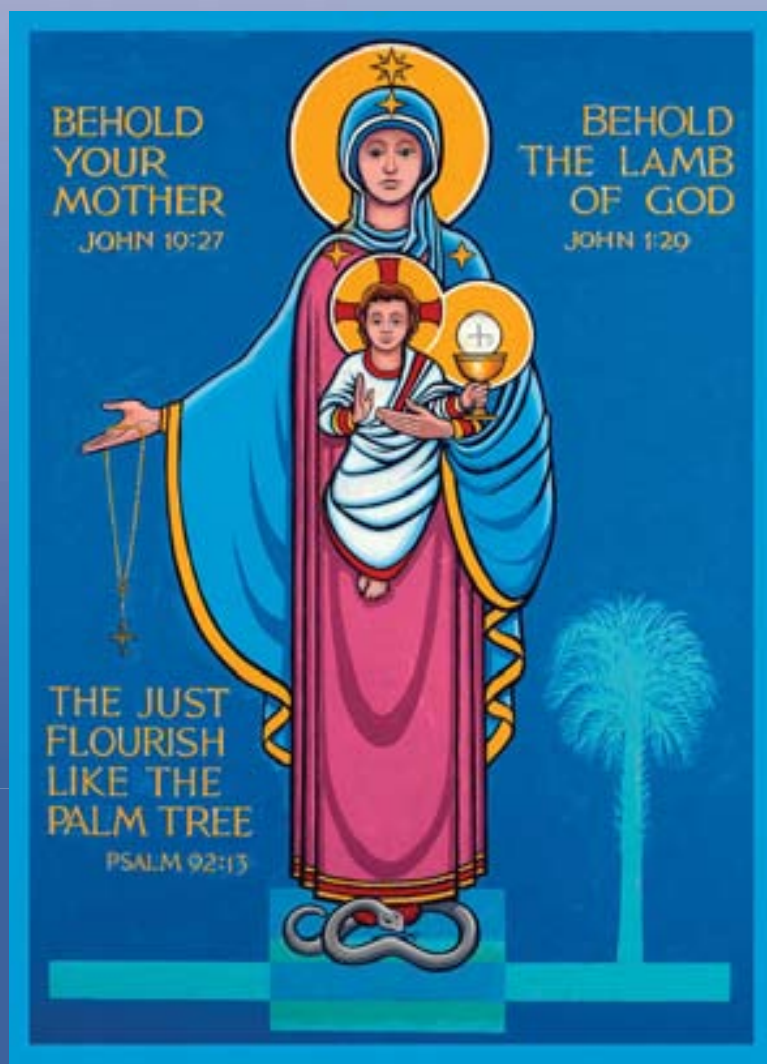
A main feature of the event will be a concert performed by the Taylor Festival Choir of Charleston. The work is an original composition by Cormac O’Duffy, music director at St. Theresa the Little Flower Church in Summerville, and based on the prison poems of Father Max Josef Metzger. Father Metzger was the founder of *Una Sancta* — a German movement to draw Christians together in faith, prayer and cooperative action for the common good — who was executed under the Nazi regime in 1944.

For those of us who aren’t monks, the humanitarian and religious projects at Mepkin will be a great reminder that we can be missionary disciples by what we say, what we do, how we pray, what we remember and what we support.

The world sorely needs our witness. †

# SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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# Blessed among women

In good times, motherhood is filled with joy and laughter. Yet, it is in times of suffering and sacrifice when true motherhood is tested, when her role to profess and witness the faith in hopes to lead her children to heaven is challenged. Throughout history, we have heard of heroine stories of such mothers, especially when faced with religious persecution.



**BY CYNTHIA WOOD**

*Cynthia J. Wood, JD, is a writer and presenter. She has taught religious education for more than 40 years. Email her at [cjwood013@gmail.com](mailto:cjwood013@gmail.com).*

Without a doubt, few stories in the Bible can compare to what the Maccabean Mother and her seven sons endured in their martyrdom for refusing the king's command to violate God's law (2 Mc 7:1-42). This is more than a story of martyrdom, and the Maccabean Mother is not just any mother. While she was never given a history or even a name, it is this powerful and simple title, "the Mother," that she receives more than a history. Through words spoken about her and through her own words, she is the prefigurement of another mother, the Mother of God, the one who stood at the foot of the cross — Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

As we acknowledge what both mothers suffered, we also see their fortitude, faith, utter trust in God and obedience to his will. While Mary was not martyred in the true sense of the word as the Maccabean Mother was, Mary did share in her son Jesus Christ's death through a spiritual martyrdom. Simeon even prophesied this when Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant saying to Mary "... and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:35).

There is no detailed scriptural account of how Mary felt or what she may have said at the foot of the cross. While art and movies have helped to depict the depth of her sorrow, the words used to describe

the Maccabean Mother seem to echo from the Old Testament, fulfilling the new, describing in absolute exactness, Mary standing at the foot of the cross:

"Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother who, seeing her seven sons perish in a single day, bore it courageously because of her hope in the Lord. Filled with a noble spirit that stirred her womanly reason with manly emotion ..." (2 Mc 7:20-21).

Yet, courageous as the Maccabean Mother was, she would not be worthy of human understanding if we did not believe that she felt an incredible sorrow as she was forced to watch seven of her sons tortured and killed. It may be true that she exhibited "manly" emotion, but that was needed to provide her sons the fortitude and courage to withstand the pain and death for the justness of the cause. However, we must not overlook the noble spirit that stirred in her *womanly* heart.

That is, we must never forget that the Maccabean Mother and Our Blessed Mother were, first and foremost, *mothers*. Overlooking this human connection leaves truth and hearts unrevealed. This is solace for all mothers who must be courageous for their children especially in times of religious persecution.

The words spoken by the Maccabean Mother to her youngest son

urging him to stay true to God is the epitome of the perfect mother:

"Therefore, since it is the Creator of the universe who shaped the beginning of humankind and brought about the origin of everything, he, in his mercy, will give you back both breath and life, because you now disregard yourselves for the sake of his law. ... Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with your brothers" (2 Mc 7:23, 28).

These passages are a testimony of pure faith, hope and love in God and his plan for mankind. And yet, this passage by the Maccabean Mother is only a faint foreshadowing of the intense declaration of faith spoken in the Canticum of Mary (Lk 1:46-55) and ultimately at the foot of the cross where Jesus gives his mother to us as our heavenly Mother.

It is not by a mere coincidence that the number seven appears in both the Second Book of Maccabees passage and as one of the titles of Mary, "Our Lady of Seven Sorrows." The number carries scriptural significance as meaning perfection. The Maccabean Mother exemplifies the perfect martyrdom; her perfection as a mother lies in her prefigurement of the perfect mother — Blessed Mary, Mother of God. †

### Victim Assistance

The Catholic Church is committed to respect for the dignity of each human person. Acts of sexual exploitation or abuse, particularly against children or the vulnerable, will not be tolerated by the Diocese of Charleston.

If you have been abused by a member of the clergy or any other representative of the church, we encourage you to call the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Louisa Storett, at 800-925-8122 or 843-856-0748.

Additionally, if you are reporting abuse by a sitting bishop, you can make a report online at [reportthisbishop.org](http://reportthisbishop.org) or at 800-276-1562 after contacting law enforcement.

Office of Child and Youth Protection

[CHARLESTONDIOCESE.ORG/CHILD-AND-YOUTH-PROTECTION](http://CHARLESTONDIOCESE.ORG/CHILD-AND-YOUTH-PROTECTION)

### Asistencia a las víctimas

La Iglesia Católica está comprometida con el respeto a la dignidad de cada persona humana. La Diócesis de Charleston no tolerará los actos de explotación o abuso sexual, en particular contra los niños o las personas vulnerables.

Si usted ha sido abusado por un miembro del clero o cualquier otro representante de la Iglesia, le animamos a llamar a la Coordinadora de Asistencia a las Víctimas, Louisa Storett, al 800-925-8122 o 843-856-0748.

Además, si está denunciando un abuso por parte de un obispo en funciones, puede hacer una denuncia en línea en [reportthisbishop.org](http://reportthisbishop.org) o en el 800-276-1562 después de ponerse en contacto con las fuerzas del orden.

Oficina de Protección de la Infancia y la Juventud

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# HEALING VETERANS USING OUR LOVE OF DOGS

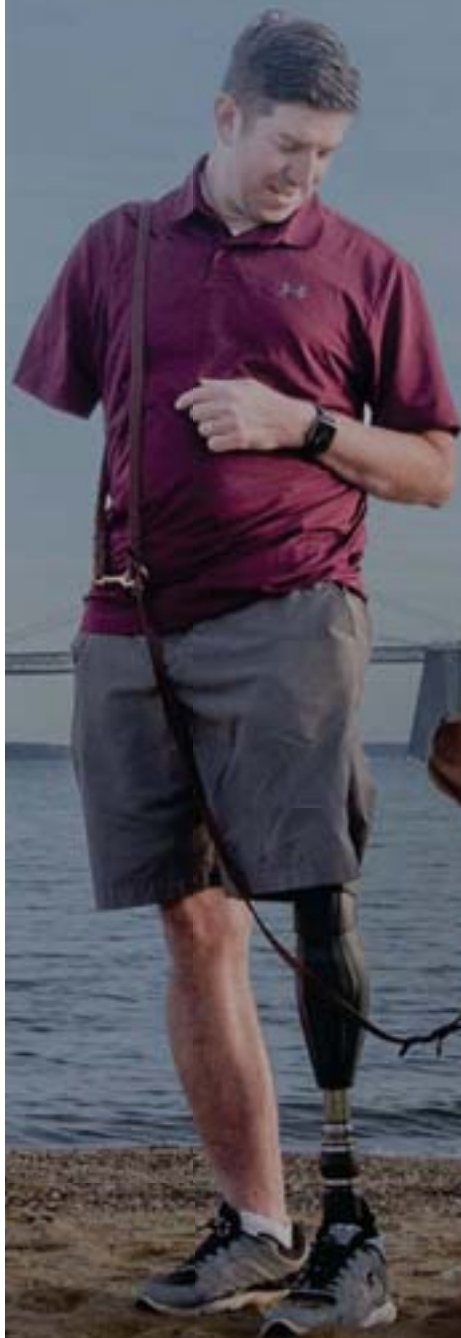
*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

**1 Peter 4:10**

Project 2 Heal is a nonprofit founded to fix a major problem—most service dog organizations have no breeding program. Instead, they rely on dogs taken from shelters. Research shows that only 1 out of 12 shelter dogs become successful service dogs. Project 2 Heal breeds, nurtures, and donates Labrador Retriever puppies to become service dogs, with a success rate of 75%.

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# LLEGAN LOS SOMASCOS A LA

Luego de 18 horas de vuelo entre Manila y Nueva York, los sacerdotes Manuel Lobo, Raynier Q. Dabu y Angeles Javier P. San José, miembros de la comunidad de los Somascos, aterrizaron en el aeropuerto John F. Kennedy. Tras concluir los trámites de inmigración, buscaron una de las puertas nacionales y de nuevo abordaron, esta vez con destino a Charleston, Carolina del Sur. Una diócesis a la que fueron asignados acatando uno de los tres votos de todo miembro de comunidad religiosa, el de obediencia.

## ARTÍCULO Y FOTOS POR EDGAR ÁNGEL

*Edgar G. Ángel, periodista y productor de vídeo, es coordinador del ministerio hispano en la iglesia de Santo Tomás Apóstol. Envíale un correo electrónico a [eangel@charlestondiocese.org](mailto:eangel@charlestondiocese.org).*

En Roma a mediados de 2020, el vicario general de los Somascos habló con el superior general de los padres Adornos, quien había servido en la diócesis de Charleston y sabía de la necesidad de sacerdotes. Él le enfatizó sobre cómo se habían fortalecido los Adornos al brindar servicios a la comunidad latina y le sugirió que contactara al obispo Robert Guglielmone, al que conoció durante su servicio en Inmaculada Concepción. Luego de idas y venidas, pandemia incluida, los padres Somascos cruzaron la puerta del aeropuerto de Charleston el lunes, 8 de noviembre de 2021, y aun cuando sabían de la vibrante comunidad filipina, fue reparador escuchar la bienvenida en Tagalo, el idioma de mayor uso en el archipiélago.

El diacono Jeffrey Mevissen, coordinador del personal sacerdotal, se encargó de los trámites de inmigración, pasando por los permisos de trabajo, las consecuentes citas en embajadas que estaban cerradas debido a la pandemia actual; y todo esto lo coordinó dentro de la diferencia de trece horas entre Manila y Charleston. Para él, concluían 17 meses de trabajo; para ellos, apenas comenzaba su servicio.

A la mañana siguiente, concelebraron su primera eucaristía en Santo Tomás Apóstol, parroquia a la que fue asignado el padre Manuel Lobo donde *The Miscellany* lo entrevistó.

El padre Manuel Lobo tiene 28 años de vida religiosa, 19 como ministro ordenado, y ha ocupado diversas funciones dentro de la congregación y en su vida como misionero.

El padre Manuel nos cuenta que, “A comienzos de los 80 llegó una nueva orden religiosa al área donde vivía, Pampanga, estaba a punto de concluir mi bachillerato y decidí asistir a un retiro de búsqueda de tres días, me atrajo la espiritualidad del fundador San Jerónimo Emiliani, presenté el examen de admisión y comencé mi formación en el seminario menor”.

Pasado 8 años, en 1992, profesó sus primeros votos de:



■ El padre somascano Manuel M. Lobo es el administrador de la iglesia St. Thomas the Apostle en North Charleston.

# DIÓCESIS DE CHARLESTON

castidad, pobreza y obediencia. Regresó a las aulas por un par de años a estudiar filosofía y al concluir fue asignado a su primer *Practicum*, o servicio a la comunidad, que vivió entre el seminario y el orfanato adyacente durante dos años.

De nuevo en las aulas, esta vez por cuatro años, estudió teología y, al concluir, profesó los votos solemnes que lo vinculan de por vida con los Somascos en su espiritualidad, carisma, apostolado y vida en comunidad, y finalmente se ordenó en 2002. Ha sido director de orfanato, profesor del seminario, vicario parroquial, párroco y su primer servicio misionero lo realizó en Indonesia donde estuvo cinco años.

A comienzo de 2021, le informaron de su segundo servicio misionero.

“No estaba en mis planes”, dijo. “El superior me dijo que sería asignado a la Diócesis de Charleston y comencé a orar y a prepararme espiritual y psicológicamente para esta nueva asignación” dijo a *The Miscellany*.

Cuando le preguntamos cuál es su mayor fortaleza, respondió, “La música es mi fortaleza. La uso como un instrumento para evangelizar, y a través, de ella me acerco a las diferentes comunidades”.

Finalmente, *The Miscellany* le preguntó sobre los retos de esta nueva asignación. “No ha habido consejo pastoral por cinco años. Se deben fortalecer los diferentes ministerios, actualizar los miembros del consejo financiero y, en obras materiales, renovar el salón comunal”.

Los Somascos, como cada orden religiosa, tiene los siguientes carismas: trabajar con huérfanos, educar a jóvenes, y trabajar con comunidades menos favorecidas. El párroco del Divino Redentor, el padre Raynier Dabu, tiene adicionalmente a su cargo una escuela que atiende a 125 estudiantes, muchos de ellos latinos becados, entre kínder y el grado 8. Un letrado inmenso frente a la puerta diciendo que la oficina estaba cerrada los miércoles, día de nuestra cita, me permitió saber que tendríamos tiempo para hablar.

Cuando el padre Dabu comenzó a hablar de su vocación, nos dijo que, “Ya estaba inscrito para iniciar ingeniería de computadores ... pero por alguna razón no podía dormir y, dos semanas antes de iniciar clases, les comenté a mi familia y amigos la decisión de hacerme seminarista. Les pedí un año... en 1998”.

En 2011, durante su segundo año de teología, hizo sus votos perpetuos y se ordenó en mayo de 2013.

Sus nombramientos han estado vinculados a la formación de jóvenes en orfanatos y seminarios. Acababa de regresar de su misión en Indonesia, en 2021, cuando el superior le comunicó que iría a la Diócesis de Charleston.

“Siempre he servido en el tercer mundo, me puse



■ El Padre Raynier Q. Dabu, CRS, es el administrador de la Iglesia del Divine Redeemer en Hanahan.

nervioso... son muchos retos... servir en el primer mundo, comunicarme en inglés y adicionalmente aprender español”.

En su agenda, priorizó dos temas: servir mejor a la comunidad de habla hispana y la renovación del templo: “El Señor va a proveer. La escuela comenzó el año con 105 niños, y en estos meses se han inscrito 20 más”.

Con respecto al templo: “Sé que la comunidad latina me va a ayudar”. Me extendió la mano y regresó a su oficina con paso lento: “Estoy evaluando hasta ahora, habrá un momento de actuar”. Y para evaluar mejor, se debe andar sin prisa, pero sin pausa. †

## Una breve historia de los Somascos

“Orar y obrar” con tres palabras se puede definir a la orden religiosa de los Somascos, que nació en Italia en el siglo XVI, como parte de un gran movimiento de renovación cristiana.

San Jerónimo Emiliani (1486-1537), fundó la orden dos años después de establecer su primer orfanato en la provincia italiana de Somasca, cerca de Milán. El cólera de 1531 había dejado cientos de huérfanos y él los acogió en la casa que compró luego de vender todos los bienes que recibió como herencia. Construyó un segundo edificio, en el primero acogió niños y en el segundo niñas, que estaban siendo víctimas de la prostitución.

Cuando apenas tenía 56 años de edad, murió santamente el 8 de febrero de 1537. Después de su muerte, se le atribuyeron numerosos milagros y el Papa Clemente XIII lo declaró santo en 1767. Después, en 1928, el Pontífice Pío XI lo declaró patrono de los niños huérfanos.

Entre los carismas de la orden están: trabajar con los huérfanos, jóvenes abandonados, y pobres, y también la educación humana y cristiana de los jóvenes. †



# Los beneficios de una educación católica

**No existen suficientes elogios para lo que ha logrado la Santa Iglesia Católica cuando se trata de educación. Mientras los medios de comunicación y los enemigos de la Iglesia se concentran en los dolorosos escándalos, hay un gran vacío en reconocer los logros milagrosos.**

**POR JORGE GOMEZ**

*Jorge Gomez es profesor de ciencias sociales e Inglés para 6 al 8 grado en Divine Redeemer School, en Hanahan. Envíele un correo electrónico a [jgomez@drcs.co](mailto:jgomez@drcs.co).*



La historia de la humanidad se transforma en el momento que la Iglesia toma sobre sí la iluminación de la mente humana. Fue la Iglesia la que trajo al mundo el escolasticismo y el sistema universitario moderno. Estos sistemas fueron, en gran parte, responsables de traer al mundo la revolución científica y la ilustración, es decir, fueron responsables de construir el mundo moderno.

El legado de la Iglesia en la educación se sigue construyendo hoy. Alrededor del mundo hay 68.8 millones de personas estudiando en colegios o universidades católicas. En los Estados Unidos, los colegios católicos ofrecen la mejor garantía de éxito: la probabilidad de que los estudiantes que van a colegios católicos se gradúen de la universidad es 13% mayor, en comparación a estudiantes de colegios públicos. Para los hispanos este número es aún más asombroso: los estudiantes hispanos que van a colegios católicos tienen una probabilidad 2.5 veces mayor de graduarse de la universidad.

Adicionalmente, los estudiantes de colegios católicos constantemente obtienen mejores resultados en exámenes que los estudiantes de colegios públicos... a pesar de que cuentan con menos recursos. Educar a un estudiante en un colegio público le cuesta al gobierno \$12,000 anuales por alumno. Mientras tanto, el promedio del costo para la educación en un colegio católico es de \$5,847 anuales. Con menos de la mitad de los recursos invertidos en educación en colegios públicos, los colegios católicos tienen mejores resultados.

No es un gran misterio lo que respalda el éxito del estudiante católico. En primer lugar, en los colegios católicos se le puede hablar a los estudiantes con franqueza y verdad. Al permitir el lenguaje bíblico dentro del salón de clases, surgen verdades profundas que van tallando su efecto en las almas de los estudiantes. También se debe considerar la visión antropológica del hombre. Al contemplar al estudiante en la totalidad e integralidad de su ser —voluntad, inteligencia, corazón y alma— los colegios católicos ayudan al estudiante a formarse en todo su ser.

Tristemente, en los colegios públicos puede pasar que la formación del estudiante se limite a su inteligencia. Esta limitación en el sistema público puede dejar a los estudiantes sin norte para

guiar sus vidas con relación a las verdades más profundas de la existencia humana. Por último, y tal vez lo más importante, es que los Sacramentos y Gracia Divina son parte esencial de la educación católica. A través de un contacto permanente con Dios, los estudiantes se vuelven hombres y mujeres nuevos, libres de las enfermedades espirituales que azotan el mundo.

Habiendo estudiado y trabajado en nuestros colegios católicos, he podido observar que en cada época los colegios católicos deben ir ajustándose a las nuevas realidades del mundo. Cada generación trae consigo nuevos desafíos y necesidades. Sin embargo, Cristo, que conoce a perfección el corazón del hombre, sigue guiando la misión de los colegios católicos para que logren ofrecer a los jóvenes el poder del Amor verdadero. El colegio católico de hoy no se va a parecer al de ayer, ni al de mañana. La generación actual, más que reglas, necesita explicaciones. Más que verse como niños y niñas perfectos, los estudiantes necesitan entender que la Iglesia los acoge en la variedad y belleza de sus diferencias. A las mentiras que el Demonio usa para atraerlos, se le debe hacer frente con verdades que los llenen de confianza y fe sobre el Amor de Dios.

En conclusión, los colegios católicos siempre han sido una luz poderosa contra las fuerzas de oscuridad. Fue la Iglesia la que transformó el mundo del ignorante en uno de iluminados. Hoy en día, la Iglesia sigue transmitiendo el Espíritu de Dios, la sabiduría bíblica, y el conocimiento humano para traer Su reino a la tierra a través de nuevas generaciones de líderes católicos. Hay muchas formas en que los católicos pueden unirse a esta misión. Sin embargo, la mejor forma es permitiendo que nuestros hijos se beneficien de este gran legado de la Iglesia al ser parte de un colegio católico. †

“**Los estudiantes hispanos que van a colegios católicos tienen una probabilidad 2.5 veces mayor de graduarse de la universidad**”.



## Mis queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

*Este mes, me convertí en su nuevo obispo, asumiendo un nuevo rol en mi vida y en la vida de la Iglesia en Carolina del Sur. La fecha de mi ordenación, el 13 de mayo, fue elegida porque es la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Fátima. Desde mis primeros días he tenido una devoción especial a la Virgen, ya que mi madre me dedicó a su cuidado.*



La Iglesia celebra a María en mayo, centrándose en nuestra Madre amantísima. Por su gozoso consentimiento al Espíritu Santo, dio a luz y resucitó a Cristo Jesús, el Verbo Encarnado. A través de Él, se nos da una segunda oportunidad de unidad con el Padre en la gracia.

María, preservada del pecado original, fue favorecida por Dios para ser la nueva Eva, una madre en la que encontramos una abogada compasiva. Por su intercesión, nuestros sacrificios y oraciones se convierten en una oblación más dulce y purificada al Rey de Reyes: Jesucristo, su hijo y Señor nuestro.

Se nos ha recordado la perfecta misericordia de Dios a través de la celebración de la resurrección victoriosa de Cristo en la Pascua, además de la fiesta de la Divina Misericordia este mes. Así como Él transformó la muerte con su resurrección, corramos hacia Jesús y ofrezcamos nuestros propios dolores y luchas a Él para ser transformados, por intercesión de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores. Entonces, actuemos en la misericordia con todos nuestros prójimos y familiares que sufren, e imitemos a María en nuestro amor.

Esta edición presenta historias sobre cómo superar el duelo (en inglés) y sobre nuestra nueva orden religiosa, los somascanos, que han venido a trabajar con las comunidades de habla hispana. También nos enfocamos en la educación católica y por qué es importante y vale la pena invertir en nuestros niños.

Dedicamos nuestra diócesis y este estado a restaurar todas las cosas en Cristo, guiados de la mano de nuestra Reina y Madre. Ruego que su manto nos cubra y proteja de las asechanzas del enemigo, y que su fuerte ejemplo nos dé la valentía para evangelizar con la palabra y la obra a todos aquellos a quienes toca nuestra vida.

Que Dios los bendiga y los guarde a todos. †

En la paz del Señor,

Reverendísimo Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS  
Obispo de Charleston



■ Nuestras Hermanas del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús sirven en Aiken en la Iglesia St. Mary Help of Christians.

# La Vida Consagrada: *Madre Espiritual*

**En la historia de la Iglesia siempre ha existido la vida religiosa que fue y es un pilar que ayuda a sostener y mantener una fe viva en Cristo en todas las creyentes. El Papa Francisco, desde su inicio en su pontificado, nos invita a todas las religiosas a vivir el voto de la castidad fecunda, engendrando hijos e hijas espirituales dentro de la Iglesia. Puesto que la maternidad no es solamente un asunto biológico, sino que también es espiritual.**

**POR HNA. GUADALUPE FLORES**

*La hermana Guadalupe Flores, OLVN, es la coordinadora de Formación de Fe de Adultos para la oficina del Ministerio Hispano. Envíele un correo electrónico a [gflores@charlestondiocese.org](mailto:gflores@charlestondiocese.org).*

**FOTO POR JEFF BLAKE**

La maternidad espiritual tiene una relación muy profunda con nuestra consagración. Desde el inicio de nuestra llamada a la vida consagrada, estamos llamados a acoger, servir y acompañar a todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas en Cristo. Damos vida a nuestra feminidad por aquel quien nos ha llamado a amar sin medida y entregarnos con un corazón abierto en todas las situaciones que nuestros hermanos y hermanas nos necesiten. Cuando las personas vienen a nosotras y nos comparten sus preocupaciones y aflicciones, nosotras los escuchamos con empatía y hacemos nuestros todos sus problemas y con muy pocas palabras les hacemos sentir que ellos nos importan. Les damos paz y esperanza y, al mismo tiempo, nos convertimos en madres espirituales.

En nuestro caminar, encontramos muchas personas que vienen a nosotras por ayuda. Dios es quien nos está llamando por este medio a desarrollar nuestra maternidad. A partir de este llamado, somos capaces de amar a los más necesitados, desprotegidos, desconsolados y abandonados, por lo que llegamos a ser madres espirituales.

Ser madre biológica es estar abierta a recibir y ver

crecer una vida en su seno y para acogerlo y amarlo. Toda mujer que sabe dar vida cuida responsablemente al ser que se va formando en su vientre. Nuestra maternidad espiritual está abierta a acoger a todas aquellas personas que el Señor pone en nuestro camino porque nosotras somos capaces de acompañar a cada hijo o hija que el Señor nos ha dado. Por lo tanto, para que nosotras sepamos abrazarlos en todo momento y porque los hemos acogido en nuestro corazón, sufrimos con su dolor, gozamos con sus alegrías y estamos presentes para caminar junto con ellos, como una madre lo hace con el hijo de sus entrañas.

Toda mujer sufre cambios físicos en su cuerpo durante el embarazo y esto lo experimenta con alegría y esperanza porque dará a luz una nueva vida. En cambio, la mujer consagrada experimenta el gozo en la castidad consagrada, que no es falta de amor, sino la plenitud del mismo que da frutos en abundancia. Las mujeres consagradas manifestamos nuestra fecundidad espiritual, escuchando la voz de Dios en la oración contemplativa, para acompañar y colaborar en la formación de una nueva humanidad que sea capaz de comprometerse en la construcción del reino de Dios.

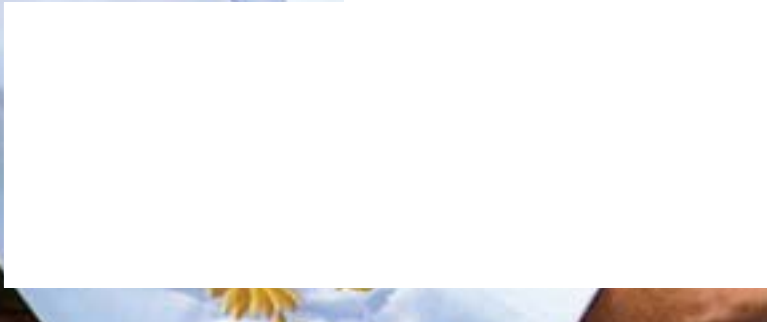
Ser madre espiritual es entregarse incondicionalmente al crecimiento espiritual de las personas. Sabiéndonos amadas por Dios, somos capaces de transmitir este amor a todos. Nuestro vivir desde Dios, con Dios y en Dios, nos hace capaces de amar libremente a nuestro prójimo. Nuestra entrega a Cristo nos exige a trabajar en la conversión y salvación de nuestros hermanos y hermanas. Este es el misterio de la maternidad espiritual: dar vida para la salvación eterna. Que María, nuestra madre que acogió el verbo eterno en su seno, nos ayude e interesada por cada una de nosotras para que seamos verdaderas madres espirituales en este mundo dividido y roto por falta de amor y esperanza. †

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