Seven little ones join the Body of Christ

By Michele Jurich  Staff writer

Seven of the youngest members of a ranching family, all members of the fifth generation of the Dal Porto family, were baptized during the 10:30 a.m. Oct. 27 Mass at St. Anne Parish in Byron on Oct. 27. She was one of seven children, all members of the fifth generation of the Dal Porto family, to be baptized that morning during Mass.

Siena Dal Porto, in the arms of her mother, Vanessa Dal Porto, with her father AJ Dal Porto behind them, is baptized by Rev. Ronald Schmit, pastor of St. Anne Parish in Byron on Oct. 27. She was one of seven children, all members of the fifth generation of the Dal Porto family, to be baptized that morning during Mass.

Baptisms during Mass are a way of life at the Byron Parish in Byron.

Seven of the youngest members of a ranching family, all members of the fifth generation of the Dal Porto family, were baptized during the 10:30 a.m. Oct. 27 Mass at St. Anne Parish in Byron.

Baptisms during Mass are a way of life at the Byron Parish in Byron.

The children, who range in age from just shy of her first birthday to age 4, are the great-grandchildren of the late Robert Anthony Dal Porto Sr. They represented the first birthday to age 4, are the great-grandchildren of the late Robert Anthony Dal Porto Sr. They represented the fifth generation of the family.

By Michele Jurich  Staff writer

Seven of the youngest members of a ranching family, with deep roots in Eastern Contra Costa County were baptized during the 10:30 a.m. Oct. 27 Mass at St. Anne Parish in Byron.

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Baptisms during Mass are a way of life at the Byron Parish in Byron.

Three of the children — Jennifer, Jessica and Kaycie Dal Porto — were a visible sign of ranching roots. Dressed in white lace dresses, the sisters — 3-year-old twins and their 18-month-old sibling — wore cowboy boots.

The children, who range in age from just shy of her first birthday to age 4, are the great-grandchildren of the late Robert Anthony Dal Porto Sr. They represented the fifth generation of the family.

Baptisms take place at a glass font at the entrance to the parish’s spacious Community Life Center. Seven children is the most Rev. Ronald Schmit, pastor for 24 years, has baptized at one time. The parish baptizes about 50 infants and young children each year.

It’s important for those being baptized, as well as those in the congregation, to baptize at Mass.

"It reminds us we are all members of the Body of Christ," Father Schmit said. Those being baptized are those in the congregation, to baptize at Mass.

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(Continued on Page 14.)
Help for seminarians

Pittsburgh's St. Mary Margaret court 1450 of the Catholic Daughters of America has raised $2,500 (on behalf of all the Catholic Daughters of the world) to support the education of many seminarians in the Oakland diocese, presented a gift of $4,000 to Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, to aid seminarians in the Oakland diocese, and presented a gift of $4,000 to Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, to aid seminarians in the Oakland diocese.

Appreciation reception for Pope Francis Legal Clinic volunteer attorneys

Nov. 21: Office meetings, Chancery, Oakland

Auction reception in support of the Diocesan legal counsel holiday dinner

THE DIOCESE

Clergy assignments

Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, made these appointments/assignments:

Rev. Joseph Tran is appointed chaplain to John Muir Hospital, Concord and Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, Martinez, and will be in residence at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Concord, effective Oct. 9.

Rev. Simon Jin is appointed parochial vicar at St. Leander Parish, San Leandro, and director of the Chinese Pastoral and Cultural Center, effective Oct. 20.

Rev. Oscar Pfojlas is appointed temporary, interim, parochial administrator donic aloric provider (until something else is provided for) at St. Bonaventure Parish in cord, effective Oct. 21.

Rev. Wayne Campbell is appointed temporary, interim, parochial administrator donic aloric provider (until something else is provided for) at St. Anne Parish in Walnut Creek, effective Oct. 24.

THE VATICAN

Church cannot remain indifferent to cry of the poor

VATICAN CITY — After listening to indigenous people and church leaders at the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, the Catholic Church cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of the region’s people, Pope Francis said.

“The cry of the poor, together with that of the earth, came to us from the Amazon,” the pope said during his Sunday Angelus address. “After these three weeks, we cannot pretend that we have not heard it.”

The pope shared his thoughts about the synod Oct. 27 with the small group of pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square; he had just finished celebrating the synod’s final Mass.

The synod, he said, was a time of “a walking together,” engaging in sinners dialogue “without judgmental spirits and experiencing the beauty of going forward united.”

Pope Francis often specifically mentioned the statues of the naked pregnant woman that some synod fathers referred to as Our Lady of the Amazon, which but Vatican officials repeatedly described as an “image sinful.” Others described it as “Pachamama” and condemned it as an idol. Some copies of the statue were thrown in the Tiber River, but recovered by police.

Caring for home

“The unprecedented environmental and social crisis in the Amazon calls for a deep personal, social and structural conversion,” the pope said, “to find new ways of caring for our common home,” according to the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon.

In seeking new forms of development that are just and promote solidarity, the church must learn from the region’s original peoples “in a dialogue of wisdom,” synod members said in their final document, released Oct. 26.

“God has given to all the earth as a gift and as a task, to care for it and to answer for it; we do not own it,” the synod members wrote.

Caring for the earth requires an integral ecology that connects care for nature with the exercise of justice for “our common home,” according to the Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, the pope said during his Sunday Angelus address.

“Let the Catholic voice . . . be spread in every diocese, in every parish, in every association, in every family.” — Pope Paul VI

THE CHURCH

November 11, 2019

Order of Malta, bishop’s residence, Oakland

Nov. 19: Office meetings, Chancery, Oakland, including:

College of Consultants

4:30 p.m., blessing of New Innovation Center Catrededt High School, Concord

Nov. 20: Office meetings, Chancery, Oakland

Appreciation reception for Pope Francis Legal Clinic volunteer attorneys

Nov. 21: Office meetings, Chancery, Oakland

including Presbytal Council

Diocesan legal counsel holiday dinner
Father Mathew Vellankal was one such holy priest. May he rest in peace.

By Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ

Father Vellankal was an example to us of holiness through our life.

FATHER VELANKAL WAS A GREAT EXAMPLE TO THE SPiritual Experiences

It used to be that Catholic developed countries like Ireland, France and the USA sent missionaries to developing continents like Africa and India. Now Africa and India are sending missionaries to us, helping us re-evangelize our country. Father Mat is a good example.

He spent his first 20 years as a Salesian priest working in India. When he came to Oakland in 2001 he said: “I felt it was time for me to move on to another place where I can continue to be a missionary serving the holy people of God.”

What is it to be a priest? To be a Christian? To be a missionary disciple? Paul’s Epistle to the Romans tells us the answer: To be baptized into the Death of Jesus.

More on page 13.

WHAT IF WE COULD PREVENT HOMELESSNESS?

Together, we can! Give.

639 families avoided eviction and will be home for Christmas this year because help was there when they needed it.

Catholic Charities East Bay is a nationally accredited 501(c)(3) non-profit, multi-service agency.

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FATHER VITALE, CAROL JOHNSON both honored by CCHD

By Carrie McClish

Carol Johnson, former executive director of St. Mary’s Center in Oakland, and Rev. Louie Vitale, OFM, were honored with Lifetime Achievement Awards for their community service in the East Bay by the local arm of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

At the same event, CCHD, the anti-poverty arm of the U.S. Catholic bishops, distributed a total of $290,000 in grants to 11 East Bay organizations that help empower residents in low-income communities. The grants were announced during a luncheon Oct. 18 at St. Columba Parish in Oakland.

Johnson was honored for her many years of leadership, advocacy and service to build a more just community for low-income elders in Oakland. Father Vitale, a peace activist and former provincial of the Franciscan Province Parish in Oakland, was honored during a luncheon Oct. 18 at St. Columba Parish in Oakland.

At both events, Barber said, “We are indeed blessed that we receive these grants.”

Seven organizations received a total of $60,000 in local grants: Ashland Community Association, $10,000; Building Blocks for Kids (BBB), $10,000; Contra Costa Interfaith Housing (CCIH), $5,000; East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC), $10,000; Resources for Community Development (RCD), $5,000; Urban Peace Movement, $10,000; and Youth Spirit Artworks, $10,000.

Four organizations received a total of $230,000 in national grants: Congregation Organizing for Renewal, $25,000; Genesis Interfaith Community Organizing, $35,000; Northern California Land Trust Inc. (NCLT), $75,000; and Prospera Community Development, $60,000.

OLG celebrates Respect for Life Month

Special to The Catholic Voice

October has been an eventful month at Our Lady of Guadalupe School in Fremont. The pupils began Respect for Life month with a Queen of the Holy Rosary Mass where they celebrated the feast of the Blessed Mother who said “yes” to giving birth to our Lord and Savior.

Other highlights included a Walk-a-Treat for the HERS Breast Cancer Foundation. The month OLG celebrated the annual Harvest Festival, celebrating all God’s goodness within a fun day, planned and executed by amazing parent volunteers. The Entertainement Committee scheduled a full day of performances, many from the OLG pupils. Everyone was treated to a fabulous variety of food offerings and fun games. The Fall Scholastic Book Fair resulted in enrolling the school library and each classroom with more books, which in turn open our students to the richness of life.

The last week of the month was designated as Red Ribbon Week, with a focus on healthy life choices. The Student Council and all members of the students in the fun-filled week of learning. Halloween is always special. After a costume parade, the pupils spent the day with their Faith Families in various activities. The parents also participated by decorating their car trunks for “Trunk or Treat” and the fifth-graders did their part by planning, designing and creating a “Haunted House” in their classroom for the pupils and staff to experience.

The month concluded with an All Sales celebration with an afternoon of food, music and dancing. Our calling to be holy. The seniors of the fifth grade each made individual and receive a small gift from the fourth- and fifth-graders who planned and served at the special Mass.

APPEAL helps religious communities care for their aging members

Special to The Catholic Voice

The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection Dec. 7-8 in the Diocese of Oakland. The parish-based appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office. Proceeds help hundreds of U.S. religious communities to care for their aging members. Some $290,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious orders have been made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious.

The 2018 appeal raised $27.7 million, and 360 religious congregations across the nation received funding. Distributions are sent to each eligible congregation’s central house. Communities combine this assistance with their own income and savings and apply it toward various retirement expenses, such as medications and nursing care.

“We are humbled and profoundly grateful for the countless Catholics who honor the service and witness of senior religious through their prayers and generosity,” said Presentation Sister Stephanie Still, the NRRO’s executive director.

Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious in 1968 to help address the profound lack of retirement savings among US religious communities. Since the collection’s launch, US Catholics have donated $872 million to the annual appeal.

Despite this generosity, many con- gregations still struggle to provide for aging members. Most older religious served for low wages that did not include retirement ben- efits. Today, numerous communities face a critical shortage in retirement savings. Moreover, retired religious now outnum- ber wage-earning members, resulting in declining income and a rising cost of care.

Proceeds from the annual collection allow the NRRO to offer assessment tools, educational programming, services and resources that enable communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retire- ment needs. The NRRO also coordinates an extensive network of volunteers, consultants, including experts in eldercare and financial planning, to help congregations lower costs while enhancing care.

“Donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious enable our office to provide financial assistance for an array of direct needs,” said Sister Still. “They also under- write the education and formation that help religious communities stretch retirement dollars and plan for the future.”
By Carrie McClish

Despite bad air quality from fires burning miles away, intermittent utility power outages and a wind storm that buffeted many East Bay cities, communities within the Diocese of Oakland have so far weathered through these natural and man-made events.

Parishes that responded to a query from The Catholic Voice reported having not lost power and able to celebrate liturgies as usual over the weekend of Oct. 26-27.

Fortunately, at Holy Spirit/Newman Hall Parish in Berkeley we’ve been unaffected, though many of our parishioners have had their power cut,” wrote Amy LaGoy, the parish’s administrative assistant.

Meanwhile at Oakland’s St. Benedict Parish, Rev. Jayson Landeza, pastor, wrote that many of his parishioners were without electricity, “particularly those above Interstate 580 in the Oakland Hills. Shingles from our church roof were flying across our parking lot during Sunday’s 11 a.m. Mass. On Monday morning we’ve been assessing the damage done on our properties.

At least one high school, Holy Names in the Oakland Hills, was closed Oct. 28 and announced it would remain closed the following day, because of power outages.

While noting that his parish never lost power, Rev. Robert Rien, pastor at St. Ignatius of Antioch Parish in Antioch, wrote that after the Sunday liturgies at his parish he visited area firefighters in his capacity as the fire chaplain for East Contra Costa County.

“At the same time, our firefighters with East Con Fire had been fighting two major fires, one on Bethel Island, which came to be known as the Gateway Fire, and a second blaze at the intersection of East Cypress and Knightsroad Road, which came to be known as the Cypress Complex Fire,” the priest wrote.

“The summer lakes development in which several of our parishioners live, had been evacuated to the newly built Oakley Recreation Center where the Red Cross was assisting them in the early morning hours of Sunday. They had been up since before 3 a.m. responding to the fires and fortunately, no buildings were lost nor were there any human losses, either civilians or firefighters. Five Strike Teams of five each assisted in containment and then extinguishing each fire.”

After the morning liturgies, Father Rien changed into his chaplain uniform and headed to Oakley to Station 33. When I arrived, all our crews, every firefighter in the department was there, having just returned from fighting the two fires. Their eyes were red and blood-shot, their faces blackened from the smoke and ashes, and they were exhausted, sleep-deprived, but preparing for the next callout. Our chief and battalion chiefs were making decisions about which firefighters would go to which station, doubling the normal crews so that they would be prepared for what would come next.

During the afternoon the priest witnessed what he described as “amazing experiences” — a flood of people “coming to the station, ringing the bell and thanking various items to offer support and express their gratitude for all that the firefighters were doing to save them, and their homes.” These grateful residents brought trays of baked ziti, cookies, cases of water and Gatorade, granola bars and more to let the firefighters know how much they were appreciated.

The fire chaplain, who stayed with the firefighters until almost 9 p.m., at one point went out with one of the crews “to respond to several medical incidents as well as return to the site of the Cypress Complex Fire to extinguish a reignition.”

The experience left the Antioch pastor humbled and thankful to be able to accompany these firefighters during such a busy and stress-filled afternoon. “The citizens of East Contra Costa are blessed to have these amazing firefighters working for them,” Father Rien wrote. “Please continue to keep each one of them in your prayers as we move through what we hope is the end of this year’s fire season.”

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The Catholic Voice — 5

JOB OPENING

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St. Callistus Parish in El Sobrante is looking for a Choir Director cum Pianist. We have 4 Masses for the weekends, all in English. (One on Saturday evening and three on Sundays. There is NO Sunday evening Mass). There are also two Masses on Holy Days of Obligation – one at 8:30 a.m. and the other at 7:30 p.m. The Choir Director cum Pianist is a paid part-time position. Someone who is available only on Sundays, and Holy Days of Obligation will also be considered.

Qualified and interested parties: Please apply by email or by postal mail with resume, and at least two references.

Fr. Jimmy Thottappilly, Pastor

Email: stcallistus@sbcglobal.net

Mailing Address: St. Callistus Church

3580 San Pablo Dam Road

El Sobrante, CA 94803
Pilgrimage renews our relationship with God

By Rev. John Prochaska

Special to The Catholic Voice
I have now been ministering in the Prelature of Siuani for 3.5 years and it has been way too long since I have shared a bit of my experience of my missionary work.

Quite often there are articles and advertisements for pilgrimages in The Catholic Voice. I have had the blessing and privilege to lead a number of pilgrimages during my priesthood:

Holy Land; Footsteps of St. Paul; Holy Land and European pilgrimages; Lourdes and Spain; and one year ago to the home of Pope Francis (Buenos Aires), Lima and Cusco.

Spiritual pilgrimages are a blessed opportunity to grow in our relationship with God; to be renewed mind, body and soul; to form a small faith community (even if only for a short time); and to connect with peoples, cultures and histories of other places – those significant and not so significant.

Here in the Andes, spiritual pilgrimages are also very important. The people don’t have the thousands of dollars to go to the Holy Land or Europe, but there are many local pilgrimages that they can make to popular sanctuaries in the area: Señor de Huasna, Señor de Goytortu, La Virgen de Copacabana and La Virgen de Chapi. Thousands of people flock to these sanctuaries for the annual fiestas, or one can visit them when there are very few people and it is much more peaceful to pray. I have done both.

There are no high-end hotels to stay in. We camp or some people will just take their blanket and curl-up for the night in the chapel. Sometimes it can get very cold. When I joined the 10,000 people on the pilgrimage to Qoylloriti a couple of years ago, the moisture from my respiration froze in my one-man tent.

Walking is common in all pilgrimages. In the Andes, most require hiking up mountains. If you have had the blessing of journeying to the top of Mount Sinai during a Holy Land pilgrimage, you will understand.

Another commonality is the importance of mountaintops during pilgrimages. We know Moses encountered God on Mount Sinai/Horeb and received the commandments there. Jesus was transfigured on Mount Tabor, and the Gospels tell us that Jesus went to the mountain to pray. Here the mountains are a spiritual place as well. On the peaks of hills and mountains, people will form an “apacheta,” rocks piled on top of each other. This tradition has a long history going back to the Incas as an offering and/or petition to God.

On Good Friday in one of my parishes, people carry rocks from the riverbed at the base of the hill to its peak as a form of penance as we pray the Stations of the Cross.

(Continued on Page 7.)

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Father John Prochaska is on a 5-year mission to Peru.

Dance is another way the people here offer their praise of thanksgiving to God during their pilgrimages.

At the Señor de Qoylloriti shrine, there are so many groups that want to dance during the fiesta that they have to adhere to a strict schedule. There are groups

(Continued on Page 7.)
Pilgrimage . . .

(Continued from Page 6.)

dancing throughout the cold night at over a dozen designated locations. This is part of the popular religiosity that Pope Francis frequently mentions that needs to be preserved.

In the Prelature of Sicuani where I have my ministry we have an annual two-day, one-night pilgrimage in September to the small community of Huampo, where there is a sanctuary in honor of the Nativity of Mary.

People travel four to five hours in buses, vans and in the back of pick-up trucks or medium-size cargo trucks to Livitaca, the town closest to the sanctuary site. Then we walk for two to three hours up the mountain to the sanctuary, praying and singing along the route.

Every year we have a different activity on the first day: youth groups performing Gospel parables; watching a religious movie; and this year going door-to-door inviting people to journey with us to the sanctuary.

We don’t get to bed until after midnight and then we are up at 5 a.m. to pray the rosary as we climb a hill above the sanctuary. (The only effect on me of living at 13,000 feet has been the need to sleep more than in the Bay Area. So the short night is my biggest sacrifice during the pilgrimage.)

On the second day after the rosary procession and breakfast, there are small-group vocational and catechetical talks, confessions or people just pray silently in the chapel. We conclude the pilgrimage with Mass and a procession in honor of Mary.

I think all pilgrimages have an element of sacrifice, whether it be the long travel, lots of walking, lack of sleep or different foods. Of course, sacrifice is an essential element in our relationship with God, keeping us humble in the spiritual journey of life. In my experience, God surprises us with multiple blessings when we offer a bit of sacrifice.

I hope that you will journey periodical on a spiritual pilgrimage, getting away from our day-to-day activities to renew our relationship with God. The people of the Peruvian mountains show us that we don’t need lots of money. Perhaps a journey to a cathedral or a retreat center or even a long walk in God’s creation will be the pilgrimage to which God is calling you.

(Rew John Prochaska, a priest of the Diocese of Oakland, is on a five-year assignment with The Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle in Peru.)

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Like Sister de Lourdes and Sister Florence Kruczek (right), 91, some 30,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests have spent their lives doing the Lord’s work. Most served for little or no pay, and now their religious communities do not have enough retirement savings.

Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious offers vital support for necessities, such as medications and nursing care. Please be generous.

Roughly 94 percent of donations directly aid senior religious.

To donate:
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Make check payable to Diocese of Oakland/RFR.

Or give at your local parish December 7–8.

retiredreligious.org

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Photo: Jim Judkis

"Live with good humor and just do the Lord’s work," says Franciscan Sister de Lourdes Okoniewski (left), 87.

The annual September pilgrimage to our Blessed Mother of the Nativity takes place in Huampo Huampo, a mountain 14,000 feet tall.

(The annual September pilgrimage to our Blessed Mother of the Nativity takes place in Huampo Huampo, a mountain 14,000 feet tall.)
Holiday Guide

Bees, baking, and belief
Dominican Sisters preparing for annual holiday boutique

By Michele Jurich

The Annual Holiday Boutique present- ed by the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose is part shopping spree, part homecoming.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Nov. 23 and 24, the Sisters open their motherhouse to a shopper’s paradise of goods from their kitchen, their land, such as the olive oil from the 200 mission-era trees on the property.

From the kitchen, the Dominican fruit-garden aide this year. (One Sister is a kinder- gardener aide this year.)

For Sister Barbara, it has been an introduction to a generous community of beekeepers in Alameda County. There are more than 200 hives in the area, tucked away in the meadows and woods and other quiet places. Among the gifts of the season is music .

Among the other homemade gifts are table runners, placemats, pillows, and pet blankets.

Sister Elizabeth Jane’s artistic talents developed early in her life. She took a class in Singer. When she was in the novitiate 25 years ago, she began crocheting baby quilts for the newborns at St. Rose Hospital. From there, she began making some for the boutique, and hasn’t stopped.

“Tittying is on next year,” she said. Multi-talented Sister Rebecca Shinias, OP, will be at the arts booth at the boutique with her Cano, the cd she recorded in 2018 is of songs she wrote in 2017, as well as some of her original art.

She is working on a painting depicting Jesus and Mary Magdalene, which will not be available as a print this year. But there are several new prints, as well as those from previous years. Some prints are 16-by-24-inch canvas prints; others are 11-by-11-inch prints that are minted to 11 by-14 inches.

Sister Rebecca’s vibrant art is created in a studio she shares at the motherhouse with two other Sisters who are artists. Among the edges of shopping with the Sisters is the opportunity to spend time with the Sisters — to tell stories, share memories, and learn more about the Sisters’ other year-round activities, such as the Center for Education and Spirituality, which offers lectures, workshops and days of reflection.

Sister Rebecca Shinias shares her art studio with two other Sisters who are artists.

Sister Lynn Marie Gillanders, OP, is the crew leader. She said the goal is 300 dozen; by the end of October, 78 dozen had been pre-ordered online.

Her crew includes Sister Glenn Ann McPhee, OP, and Sister Mary Louis Seals, OP.

The Sisters use a recipe that Sister Lynn Marie has tweaked over the years. Vanilla wafers, chocolate chips — melted in a double boiler, not a microwave — and bourbon are involved, as is the use of a KitchenAid stand mixer.

The bourbon balls are rolled by hand in funny flowers.

“We found weather has a lot to do with how gooey they are,” Sister Lynn Marie said. The windier the day, the harder the bourbon balls need time to cure.

Sister Lynn Marie, a teacher for 50 years, taught at St. Joseph School in Fremont as well as in schools in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland. Since she started, she has worked at Our Lady of Guadalupe School in Fremont and St. Frans School in Sunnyvale.

But when it comes to boutique season, she said, “They leave me alone.” For some Sisters, preparation for the boutique is a year-round activity.

Sister Elizabeth Jane Wilson, OP, is a talented and prolific craftswoman whose knitted scarves and hats, and baby quilts, booties and sweaters are treasures to give and receive.

She’ll be staffing the baby booth and the knitted goods booth at the boutique. She has made 30 baby quilts and 24 pairs of baby booties, along with sweaters, scarves, ponchos and animals.

“The Sisters support the girls in the bou- tique. Among the other homemade gifts are table runners, placemats, pillows and pet blankets.”

Holiday concerts
sharing the gift of music

Dec. 1
Advent Procession with Lessons & Carols, 5:30 p.m. Come and celebrate the beginning of the new liturgical year with the Advent Procession with Lessons & Carols. Join the Very Rev. Brandon Macascaden, rector of the cathedral, and the Cathedral Choir in a service of readings, choral music and hymns.

Dec. 6
Family Christmas Concert with Michael Russell O’Brien. 7 p.m. at St. Felicitas Church, 4692 Manor Blvd., San Leandro. Sponsored by Catholic Daughters #2490. Tickets: $10 in advance, $12 at the door. Contact: Kim Oliver, 510-940-5949 or kimmyoliver@gmail.com.

Dec. 7
Harmonies of the Season, 6 p.m. The Pacific Bay Area Academy of the Arts, in residence at the Cathedral of Christ the Light, will sing traditional holiday favorites with music of Yo Tomsic, Ani Pano, Urmas Sissak, among others. Audience carols will be accompanied on the cathed- ral’s magnificent Conroy Memorial Organ.

Dec. 13
Messian’s “La Nativité,” 7:30 p.m. Concert organist Jonathan Dimmock returns to the cathedral to perform Olivier Messian’s “La Nativité du Sténiguelain” nine meditations for organ inspired by the birth of Christ.

Dec. 19
A Chanticleer Christmas. 8:15 p.m. Join the popular Chanticleer in its annual Christmas Program. Gregorian chant and Bleil are never far away, but this year they turn also to carols in half-a-dozen differ- ent languages, American hymns, Spanish, Latin, and “1 Wonder as I Wander.”

Staff report

Among the gifts of the season is music.

These events, unless otherwise noted, take place at the Cathedral of Christ the Light, 2121 Harrison St., Oakland:

Dec. 6
Advent Procession with Lessons & Carols, 5:30 p.m. Come and celebrate the beginning of the new liturgical year with the Advent Procession with Lessons & Carols. Join the Very Rev. Brandon Macascaden, rector of the cathedral, and the Cathedral Choir in a service of readings, choral music and hymns.

Dec. 13
Family Christmas Concert with Michael Russell O’Brien. 7 p.m. at St. Felicitas Church, 4692 Manor Blvd., San Leandro. Sponsored by Catholic Daughters #2490. Tickets: $10 in advance, $12 at the door. Contact: Kim Oliver, 510-940-5949 or kimmyoliver@gmail.com.

Dec. 15
Harmonies of the Season, 6 p.m. The Pacific Bay Area Academy of the Arts, in residence at the Cathedral of Christ the Light, will sing traditional holiday favorites with music of Yo Tomsic, Ani Pano, Urmas Sissak, among others. Audience carols will be accompanied on the cathed- ral’s magnificent Conroy Memorial Organ.

Dec. 17
Messian’s “La Nativité,” 7:30 p.m. Concert organist Jonathan Dimmock returns to the cathedral to perform Olivier Messian’s “La Nativité du Sténiguelain” nine meditations for organ inspired by the birth of Christ.

Dec. 20
A Chanticleer Christmas. 8:15 p.m. Join the popular Chanticleer in its annual Christmas Program. Gregorian chant and Bleil are never far away, but this year they turn also to carols in half-a-dozen differ- ent languages, American hymns, Spanish, Latin, and “1 Wonder as I Wander.”

A One Night FAMILY CHRISTMAS CONCERT

with Michael Russell O’Brien

Friday, December 13, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.
St. Felicitas Catholic Church
1662 Manor Blvd. San Leandro, CA 94579
Advance Tickets: $10/ $12 at the Door
Sponsored by Catholic Daughters #2490
Contact: Kim Oliver 510-940-5949
or kimmyoliver@gmail.com

Variety of gifts for your menu.

Handmade gifts, fruitscakes, ale, local rare honey, local honey, gourmet goods, entertainment, face painting and much more

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Contact for holiday parties is Tracy Salvato at 510-792-2000 ext. 19 or tracy@massimos.com
800 runners compete in CYO cross country championship

By Bill Ford
Special to the Catholic Voice

On Friday afternoons in late September and early October, hundreds of young CYO runners hit the trails in a variety of parks in the East Bay for the annual CYO Cross Country season in the Oakland diocese. More than 800 runners competed this year in four weeks of preliminary meets before gathering for the final and final meet of the season, the annual CYO Cross Country Championship Meet at Crown Beach in Alameda.

The runners were Kindergarteners through Eighth Graders, both girls and boys, who began each meet by lining up at the starting lines and then praying together before running their races. Then they ran a mile circuit (Kindergarten through Second Grade run ½-mile) through tree-lined meadows, sometimes steep trails and along a sandy beach, all for the joy of running as well as being with their friends and families who cheered them on. At each meet, there were five grade group races, followed by a “fun run” for small children.

Teams at the meets represented 37 parishes and Catholic schools in the diocese. Meets were held at Crown Beach, Alameda; Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland; Oak Hill Park, Danville; Shadow Cliffs Park, Pleasanton; and Garin Park, Hayward.

The attraction for young runners to CYO Cross Country is not only competitive races, but the fun of running with friends, support by caring coaches and encouragement by family members. Whether runners are fast or not-as-fast, there is the sense of accomplishment by running a mile in a race with the excitement of running with 100 or more other runners in the race. For those who missed the CYO Cross Country season, the “companion sport,” CYO Track and Field will be in the spring.

Individual winners

Times over 1-mile course

3rd–5th Grade Girls: first, Isabella Rogers, St. Joseph, Alameda, 6:46.9; second, Jordynn Hughes, St. Felicitas, 6:47.0; third Jade Estimo, St. Raymond, 7:00.8

3rd–5th Grade Boys: first, Gabriel Heule, St. Michael, 5:38.3; second, Connor Buscho, Assumption, 5:44.3; third, Cooper Snow, St. Joan of Arc, 5:50.0

6th–8th Grade Girls: first, Mia Ruud, St. Joan of Arc, 5:44.3; second, Jenna Barron, St. Michael, 5:47.4; third, Evelyn Ruckmann-Barnes, St. Michael 6:02.1

6th–8th Grade Boys: first, Alex Schade, St. Michael, 5:22.8; second, Horatio Bucio, St. Leo the Great, 5:37.7; third, Daniel Messer, St. Bonaventure, 5:38.4

K-2 winners

Times over ½-mile course

K-2 Grade Girls: first, Lucia Johnson, St. Theresa, 3:14.4; second, Azariah Smith, St. Divine Mercy, 3:38.1; third, Keira Hancock, Corpus Christi, Fremont 3:39.0

K-2 Grade Boys: first, Luke Dulgarian, Corpus Christi, Fremont, 3:16.9; second, Cooper Snow, St. Joan of Arc, 3:23.0; third Nate Rocheford, Assumption, 3:24.4

Team awards

Points are awarded with one point for the first place runner, two points for the second place runner, etc. Teams are scored with the number of points given for their first three runners. As in golf, the low score wins. No team awards are presented for the K-2 race. The top three teams in each division with points were:

3rd–5th Grade Girls: first, St. Joan of Arc (31); second, St. Theresa (44); third, Corpus Christi, Fremont (47)

3rd–5th Grade Boys: first, St. Michael (23); second, Our Lady of Grace (30); third, St. Joan of Arc (39)

6th–8th Grade Girls: first, St. Michael (11); second, St. Patrick, Rodeo (24); third, St. Joan of Arc (39)

6th–8th Grade Boys: first, St. Michael (13); second, St. Bonaventure (17); third, St. Joan of Arc (37)

For complete meet results or for more information on CYO Cross Country, visit the Cross Country page of the CYO Website: www.oaklandcyo.org.

(Bill Ford is the director of the Catholic Youth Organization in the Diocese of Oakland.)
Social activism no mere second act for many seniors

By David Scholz
Special to The Catholic Voice

While some seniors’ retirement is marked by travel and hobbies, for others, social activism is filling their days.

Social scientists, in research published on PopularResistance.org, dubbed the increased interest of seniors in social issues and community causes a “silver revolution.”

This passion among local seniors to work for social causes and back political issues does not represent new hobby-like endeavors to fill idle time in their lives. Rather, social activism was instilled early on by their parents, and it remained an important priority.

“They taught us to have a Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other to reflect on the Gospel message with what was happening in the world,” said Oakland resident Meg Bowerman, 69, recalling her parents’ encouragement.

One of her eight siblings had special need, so her parents were big advocates for mental health. That issue became a special interest to the family.

“We were always civic minded,” said Bowerman, a member of St. Columba Church in Oakland, who worked as a neonatal nurse practitioner, most recently at UCSF Benioff Children’s and UCSF.

In retirement Bowerman hasn’t slowed down, giving time to a variety of causes, including educating voters on legislative issues and registering voters for the League of Women Voters. With Next Step Learning Center, she tutors science for those pursuing their high school diploma via a GED program.

“The students tutor me about life on the margins,” said Bowerman.

Along with ministries like Faith in Action, she serves in a volunteer coordinator role with Just Faith, that works on issues like migration, poverty, racism, prison reform and those tied to Catholic social teaching, and encourages involvement by other parishes. The group’s efforts to counteract hunger happens through its partnership with Bread for the World.

Advocacy has taken on particular significance in her life as she works to encourage others to use their strengths and passions to break from the service-only model.

“I am drawn to advocacy through legislative visits because I am good at it!” she said proudly, citing recent encounters with the staffs of Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and the difference those communications are making to change policy.

Anne Daniele, 83, of Antioch, who attends Christ the King Church in Pleasant Hill and occasionally Holy Rosary Church in Antioch, said her parents were immigrants and they installed a philosophy in her.

“They acknowledged the help of others and taught us to do the same. As they were helped so should we likewise help others,” said Daniele.

Daniele’s history in activism spans more than half a century. The 1980s saw opposition to the Vietnam War and marching alongside Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta for the minimum wage rights of farm workers.

The 1980s saw the focus on homelessness and opposition to the Reagan Administration’s policies. By the 2000s it was protests against Immigration and

(Continued on Page 11.)

How to maximize Social Security survivor’s benefits

By Jeffrey Hall
Special to The Catholic Voice

Social Security survivor’s benefits provide a safety net to widows and widowers. But to get the most out of the benefit, you need to know the right time to claim.

While you can claim survivor’s benefits as early as age 60, if you claim benefits before your full retirement age, your benefits will be permanently reduced. If you claim benefits at your full retirement age, you’ll receive 100 percent of your spouse’s benefit or, if your spouse died before age 60, 100 percent of what your spouse’s benefit would have been at full retirement age.

Unlike with retirement benefits, delaying survivor’s benefits longer than your full retirement age will not increase the benefit. If you delay taking retirement benefits past your full retirement age, depending on when you were born your benefit will increase by 6 percent to 8 percent for every year that you delay up to age 70, in addition to any cost of living increases.

You cannot take both retirement benefits and survivor’s benefits at the same time. When deciding which one to take, you need to compare the benefits to see which is higher. In some cases, the decision is easy — one benefit is clearly much higher than the other. In other situations, the decision can be a little more complicated and you may want to take your survivor’s benefit before switching to your retirement benefit.

To determine the best strategy, you will need to look at your retirement benefit at your full retirement age as well as at age 70 and compare that to your survivor’s benefit. If your retirement benefit at age 70 will be larger than your survivor’s benefit, it may make sense to claim your survivor’s benefit at your full retirement age. You can then let your retirement benefit continue to grow and switch to the retirement benefit at age 70.

Here’s an example: A widow has the option of taking full retirement benefits of $2,000 a month or survivor’s benefits of $2,100 a month. She can take the survivor’s benefits and let her retirement benefit continue to grow. When she reaches age 70, her retirement benefit will be approximately $2,480 a month, and she can switch to her retirement benefits.

Depending on the widow’s life expectancy, this strategy may make sense even if the survivor’s benefit is smaller than the retirement benefit to begin with.

Keep in mind that divorced spouses are also entitled to survivor’s benefits if they were married for at least 10 years. If you remarry before age 60, you are not entitled to survivor’s benefits, but remarriage after age 60 does not affect benefits.

In the case of remarriage, you may need to factor in the new spouse’s spousal benefit when figuring out the best way to maximize benefits.

The calculations are very complicated and there are literally thousands of possible strategies if one considers that for each month after age 62 and 70, either spouse could file a claim for retirement benefits, resulting in a different cumulative benefit amount for each strategy.

It is usually not possible to know what claiming strategy is most advantageous without the aid of benefit claiming software. To find out the strategy that would work best for you, I suggest you access a software program like Max My Social Security or Social Security Timing.

Jeffrey Hall is an elder law and estate planning attorney. See his website at www.HallLawGroup.com or call him at 925-230-9002.
St. Mary’s emergency shelter to open early

Carrie McClish  Staff writer
St. Mary’s Center Emergency Winter Shelter, the East Bay’s only shelter specifically for seniors 55 years of age and over, will open Nov. 18, two weeks early, to address the urgent needs of unsheltered older people in the community. In anticipation of the opening a special “Shelter Work Day” will take place Nov. 14 in which volunteers, including seniors who use the shelter services, will prepare the shelter at Broderick Street and San Pablo Avenue in Oakland.

Last year St. Mary’s Center, which has a reputation for securing housing for its participants, served 119 seniors.

We helped find permanent homes for 20, as well as transitional housing for 17, and shelters for 13,” said Sharon Corru, SMC’s executive director.

Through its comprehensive program St. Mary’s also offers individuals who are homeless clean clothes, wellness classes, case management and housing navigation that leads to permanent housing.

In addition to volunteer assistance, St. Mary’s Center is accepting donations of toiletries (toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, lotion, shampoo), new socks, underwear, tissues and personal hygiene print books. For more information contact the center at 510-923-9600, ext. 223.

The St. Vincent de Paul Shelter offers 100 beds — 35 for women, and 65 for men — at 2272 San Pablo Ave., Oakland. The collaboration of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County and the city of Oakland to open the shelter during the year began a year ago. Those who require shelter may dial 510-638-7650 for more information. They are welcome to be at the shelter by 6 p.m. to see if space is available.

Blaise Brea, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County, said the shelter was operating at 90 percent of capacity on Nov. 5. Service animals are allowed at the shelter, but there is no room for pets. There is a storage area for the guests’ belongings, Brea said. The shelter is open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Guests receive dinner and breakfast, and are welcome to return for lunch, Tuesday through Saturday, in the Free Dining Room.

Volunteers are needed to help prepare dinner and set up, Brea said. Two Oakland parish-based SVDP conferences volunteer to offer movie nights and game nights for the guests.

Meeting at Catholic Relief Services in the Diocese of Oakland to support funding for global nutrition and support of migrants, from left: Michael Wharton, St. Teresa of Avila Parish, Oakland; Mary Bubba, St. James Parish, Saratoga; Sarah Molin, staff member for Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif.; Maxx McKinney, Catholic Relief Services coordinator; and Chiquita Tuttle, St. Benedict Parish, Oakland.

The Point at Rockridge

The Point at Rockridge senior community; independent, assisted-living and memory care.

Consistent 5-star reviews, hard-sought reader’s choice awards — Oakland Magazine 2019 Best of 2019 and 2018 Best by The J. Testimonials trust care, compassionate staff and residents who are “engaged and fully active.”

Care is not only about the physical body but equally social and emotional well-being. Robust activities calendar that follows core components: be inspired, be well, be challenged, be connected. The Elevate Dining Program garners internal reviews for deliciousness, variety and depth. And it all happens in a comfortable, sophisticated, clean environment, Wesley Catholic Community.

Social activism no more . . .

(Continued from Page 10.)

Customs Enforcement and the Contra Costa County Sheriff’s Office, and annual appearances at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory each Good Friday and Aug. 6 to mark the anniversaries of the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to urge the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Daniele, an educator for 50 years before retiring in 2015, focused on students with special needs and required remedial academic help. Starting in 1976, she eventually moved north and continued her work at Mount Diablo Unified School District as well as on the Pittsburg Unified District Student Attendance/Behavior Review Board.

In Danville, Latayette resident Gwen Watson’s professional life was balanced with social activism.

The City the King parishioner also had the opportunity to learn from one of the best, Sister Simone Campbell, one of the Nuns on the Bus that travel the country as advocates for justice. Today, Watson stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Daniele voicing her thoughts on issues mattering today.

Watson, who worked in education for 20 years throughout Contra Costa County in both a top performing school and one with lower graduating rates, is inspired to serve today by those students from long ago.

Both women’s involvement with Faith in Action is putting their focus squarely on the plight of immi-

gants who are seeking a fresh start in the Bay Area.

The Accompaniment Program is a joint effort between the Christ the King parish and the Oakland Catholic Worker to assist immigrants and undocumented families with various needs such as schooling, medical appointments, court appearances and finding jobs and legal assistance.

“We all have gifts to give to each other. As long as you are given gifts, you need to share them,” said Daniele. “I will share what I can, no matter, how small, with others.”

The descriptions of senior services in this section were provided by the service agencies, which are responsible for the accuracy of the content. — The Catholic Voice

Faith, compassion at Mercy Center

Established in 1872, Mercy Retirement & Care Center was founded on a deep sense of faith, dignity and compassion.

Today, this tradition continues through its dedication to caring for every aspect of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of the older adults we serve. Situated on a lush cam-

pus in Oakland, Mercy provides a continuum of services to meet a variety of health care needs, including assisted living, memory care and a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center.

Come in to experience the Mercy differ-

cence. Please visit www.eldercaresafetyleaf.com for more information or dial 510-534-8840 to schedule a complimentary luncheon and personal-

ized visit.

The Point at Rockridge
Doctor urges elders to be proactive as they age

Special to The Catholic Voice

Redefining aging, transforming medi-
Caring for Aging ... those tasks sound
pretty daunting, but they are the subdi-
role of a research tool titled “Eldercare” written by
Dr. Louise Aronson, a practicing geriatri-
cian and a professor at the University of California, San Francisco.

Aronson discussed “Reimagining Your Best Age” on Oct. 8 at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Livermore.

Based on her 25 years as a physician and educator, Aronson shared her vision of how the medical community and we, as individuals, can make aging a time of promise and fulfillment.

Those interested in bettering the well-being of older adults are invited to attend free talks held at part of Life Transitions for Aging Adults, a ministry St. Charles has presented for the past two years.

In its third year of helping older adults by presenting programs on physical, emotional, social and spiritual issues of aging.

Aronson wrote her book based on her experiences as a practicing physician and her subsequent concerns about how the medical community mistakenly views aging. The world is too often an inattentive response that can do more harm than good because responses to and needs for medical treatment vary by age.

What works for a 30-year-old may not be effective for a 70-year-old. To sift through these different needs, she believes it imperative for health providers to recognize life as having three distinct stages: childhood, adulthood and elderhood, each with its own distinct characteristics. She defines elderhood as 60 and older and notes that, unlike the recent past, 60-70 year-olds likely have another 25 or more years to live.

Associated with the longer life span and its different needs comes the need for those years to be as productive and comfortable as possible. This cannot be accomplished if growing older is regarded as a downward spiral rather than a time rich in satisfying experiences that may not even have been possible when younger.

Aronson notes in her book that ensuring a good later life not only requires age-appropriate responses from medical providers but also mandates proactivity to prevent or forestall complications of aging.

As an example, she cites programs, such as fall prevention education as being more effective than dealing with the sur-
geries and rehabilitation required after a fall.

Effective preventive measures can often prohibit the need for costly medical interventions.

Aronson is passionate as well as practi-
cal in her approach to providing medical care for the older population. Her discus-
sion is in the vocabulary of the layperson, so all can grasp the need for applying her wisdom. She speaks with the authority of a scientist and the fervent care of a human being.

Just for Seniors

Events, activities and opportunities for seniors in the Oakland diocese. Events are subject to change. Please contact parishes or organizations to verify.

✦ SPIRITUALITY

Dec. 6, Jan. 3, 2020
First Friday Healing Mass, 6 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church, 5512 High St., Oakland. All seniors, their caregivers or anyone seriously ill or anticipating surgery are invited to attend the Mass and solemn

massing of the Anointing of the Sick. 510-525-0876.

Dec. 7, Jan. 4, 2020
Senior Anointing Mass, 11 a.m. at Divine Mercy Parish, 3120 High St., Oakland. All seniors, their caregivers or anyone seriously ill or anticipating surgery are invited to attend the Mass and solemn

massing of the Anointing of the Sick. 510-520-0711.

Anointing of the Sick in Holy Spirit Church, 1956 Stanyan St., San Francisco. For seniors. Those who are seriously ill or those anticipating surgery are invited.

For seniors, those who are seriously ill or those anticipating surgery are invited. Contact Fr. Peter O’Toole or the parish office for information.

✦ SOCIALS/LUNCHEONS

Thursday, Dec. 8
Senior Luncheon and Social at St. Mary Magdalen Parish, Noon at 2085 Bergamont St., Berkeley. People bring the food and enjoy one

discussion related to coping when caring for loved ones. Information: 510-772-8131.

Fourth Thursdays
Golden Friends at St. Jarlath Church. This is a free and open to all group who want to come together to pray, eat, sing and have a good time with one

other. The group celebrates Mass in St. Jarlath Church each Thursday at 11 a.m. The parish is at 910 3rd St., Berkeley. Information: 510-447-2999.

First Fridays
62 Plus or Minus Club at Church of the Transfiguration. Following the 9:30 a.m. Mass at 4000 E. Castro Valley Blvd., Castro Valley, Mass.

✦ SUPPORT GROUPS

Fourth Wednesdays
Family Caregiver Support Ministry at St. Louis of Marcy Parish, 7 p.m. in Room 150, in the Parish Center. Family caregivers are invited to attend our monthly meetings which include prayer, handouts on caregiving and discussion related to coping when caring for loved ones. Information: Dave Clare, 925-314-5749.

Parish Ministry to Seniors Ministry St. Charles Borromeo Church, 1315 Lomitas Ave, Borromeo Hall, Livermore. The gathering, is open to everyone


Fourth Thursdays
Golden Friends at St. Jarlath Church. This is a free and open to all group who want to come together to pray, eat, sing and have a good time with one

other. The group celebrates Mass in St. Jarlath Church each Thursday at 11 a.m. The parish is at 910 3rd St., Berkeley. Information: 510-447-2999.

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62 Plus or Minus Club at Church of the Transfiguration. Following the 9:30 a.m. Mass at 4000 E. Castro Valley Blvd., Castro Valley, Mass.

✦ FITNESS

Mondays-Wednesdays
Wellness Class. 5 to 7 p.m., in the hall, St. Benedict Church, 2495 80th Ave, Oakland. Come out and

join us and stay healthy and St. led by Dianne Cousineau at 509-332-1747.

Fridays
Line Dancing. 1 to 3 p.m., in the hall, St. Benedict Church, 2245 80th Ave., Oakland. Want to learn new line dances? It’s free. However we do require donations to St. Vincent de Paul Society at 510-532-0876.

✦ VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Drivers for Survivors (DFS). Driver for Survivors provides free transportation service and supportive companionship for ambula-
tory cancer patients, from suspicious findings through completion of treatment. Now in its seventh year DFS has provided more than 18,000 rides to more than 500 clients. Since July 2019 DFS expanded its services to three East Bay Area cities: Oakland, Livermore and Pleasanton. For more information visit www. drivernosurvivors.org, or call volunteer coordinator.

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TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF A NEW ACORN STAIRLIFT!
Father Mathew’s ‘110% devotion’ models ‘calling ourselves’

By David Scholz
Special to The Catholic Voice

Father Matthew Vellankal has taken his final hike, and now he is home.

A faithful and humble servant with a spring in his step to the end, his Oct. 21 funeral Mass was punctuated with a rousing applause as his casket was rolled from the sanctuary of St. Bonaventure Church in Concord.

“Dear Math, you little magician, you have been a faithful servant,” said his friend, Rev. Robert Rien, pastor of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Rev. Rien fought back tears as he broke a magic wand above his head — a tradition when a magician has performed his last trick and died.

Father Vellankal, 61, died Oct. 10 in a car accident in Colusa County. The accident also left Rev. Joseph Pareekst of St. Anne Parish in Walnut Creek with injuries.

A friend traveling with them, Archbishop Dominic Jala of the Shillong archdiocese in India, was killed.

All priests are required to have on file with the chancery their wishes upon their death, and Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, mused that Father Vellankal certainly had that covered with a 100-page autobiography.

Such thoroughness defined the “missionary zeal” Father Vellankal brought to whatever task he was given. He served in 11 parishes, including Queen of All Saints Concord, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Holy Spirit in Fremont.

Whereas priests of a different time spoke of the adventures of life in the likes of Africa or India to pursue their vocations, Bishop Barber noted how Father Vellankal recognized the missionary need here.

“'Down South America are struggling,’” he said, “(Priests) are coming from India to help here.”

The depth of his spirituality made itself known when he wept upon learning of his mother’s passing in 1987. Father Vellankal had stayed at his mother’s bedside as long as he could.

“I already see you as a priest,” she told him once she was more than happy to leave him in her son’s care.

Indeed when he became a priest, Father Vellankal said, “It was the happiest day of my life.”

Prior to arriving to the United States, Bishop Barber recalled: “he had entrusted to my life.”

Archbishop Mathew Vellankal, the bishop of the diocese of Shillong in India, was a humble man who had no pretenses.

“He was a visionary,” said Perry. “He just glowed with something. He wasn’t being sappy or syrupy, his way was genuine. It might sound like a gimmick but it wasn’t”

The Calimlims recalled the priest’s efforts to go incognito — collarless — and buy a meal for one of Concord’s down-and-out.

“Kind of fell flat. Just when he was about to extend the offer, after making the initial contacts at Todos Santos Plaza, either the person was not interested or his would-be guest had disappeared when he turned away for a moment.”

Hardly disappointed, they said Father Mathew just went with it because he acknowledged sometimes it may not work when you want to help out. His message: make the effort.

“It wasn’t just a shirt,” said Mrs. Calimlim. “He really loved people; he worked with them.”

The funeral Mass concluded outside the church with many of the approximately 100 priests in attendance, gathering around the hearse and singing the traditional farewell to a colleague, Salve Regina.

Friends make life better all around

By Rev. Paulson Mundanmani
Special to The Catholic Voice

I was in Fatima, Portugal, when terrible things happened to two of my best friends — Archbishop Dominic Jala and Father Mathew Vellankal. With the grace and strength of my blessed Mother, I was able to receive the worst news in my life and entrust back to God the two best friends I had ever had.

Archbishop Mathew Vellankal was a saintly priest filled with the kind of commitment to community through his efforts as a diocesan and a Salesian priest. Father Vellankal, whose Silver Jubilee year was 2012, embodied a “110 percent devotion to the Church,” said the bishop, lauding the priest’s discipleship.

“Wherever he went, the attendance went up; he conducted, and ‘collections’ too,” Jacob Perry, director of Youth Ministry at St. Bonaventure Church, cited four values that defined the departed leader: hospitality, excellence, compassion and joy.

“He was a visionary,” said Perry. “He saw the potential in people and helped us to see the way.”

Perry also noted how Father Vellankal couldn’t help but lavish praise, always seemingly saying “good job, good job, good job!” to those around him, Perry included, even when he admitted those were not deserving of it.

Joy for Father Vellankal was as close as a dinner with friends, or a good walk, which he documented with pins that covered a world map in his office to reflect all the places he had hiked during his lifetime.

Father Vellankal, couldn’t help reminding him of death especially of a loved one. It brings up our own mortality. When someone close to you dies it is a reminder that we will die and, who knows, it could be soon or it could be later.

I have always said to myself that God has blessed me with good health, success and friends for 55 years, and I consider every day as a gift.

Someone said, “Friends aren’t just icing on the cake of life — they’re the cake. They make life more fun, more fulfilling, and, well, just better all around.”

This means we don’t have to be perfect and we are another person. Sometimes we are not our best, and other times we are at our worst. In a good friendship there is mutual trust. Our friends are the people we let in. They’re the people who can get under our skin, for better or for worse, and they’re the ones in whom we choose to invest.

I have invested everything in these two people over the years. I am grateful Father Joseph Pareekst is alive, and I promised him that he can come to CTX to recuperate among fellow priests.

“A co-worker of God is one who is bound together with God. When God works, he works. When God walks, he walks.”

When God stops, he stops. You may be a diligent person who wants to do more work for God, but God may say, “I do not want you to do more work for Me right now.”

“God wants you to rest with Me, I am resting, so you have to rest with Me.”

And that is how I would like to accept this loss, and I would like to thank you for your goodness to me.

(Rev. Paulson Mundanmani is pastor at Christ the King Parish, Pleasant Hill.)

Holy Spirit Parish in Fremont was the location for Father Mathew Vellankal’s rosary vigil on Oct. 20. Father Vellankal worked there from 2006-2017.

A trio of priests from the Oakland diocese accompanied Father Mathew Vellankal’s body to his home parish.

Father Vellankal laid to rest in India

Three priests of the Oakland diocese were able to attend funeral services for Father Mathew Vellankal in India. Rev. Paulson Mundanmani, pastor at Christ the King in Pleasant Hill, provided this account:

Vincent Pala, a member of Parliament from Shillong, India, came to San Francisco and personally accompanied the body of Archbishop Dominic Jala to Shillong.

After presiding over the vigil service in Fremont for Father Mathew Vellankal, Rev. Johnson Abraham, pastor at St. Agnes in Concord, and I flew to Shillong to take part in the funeral services of the archbishop. Rev. George Alengaden joined us in solemnly saying Mass in Father Vellankal’s home parish of St. Michael, Randaar, Kerala.

More than 100,000 people came to the celebration of life for Archbishop Jala, four archbishops and 12 bishops and more than 500 priests were present during the concelebrated requiem Mass. I was honored to speak on behalf of Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, offering them our prayers and condolences.

Afterward, we attended funeral services for Father Vellankal in his home parish, where he was baptized, confirmed and ordained as a priest. In his homily Bishop George Madathikandathil described Father Mathew as a saintly priest filled with the Holy Spirit whom God anointed with extraordinary gifts reserved only to a few. He was buried on Oct. 26 in the cemetery next to his parish church.
Finding faith and healing at Queen of Heaven Cemetery

By Norma Montenegro Flynn

Special to The Catholic Voice

The ceremony of evening darkness holds a time of spiritual joy as Joseph Witherspoon, coordinator of Landings and director of Queen of Heaven Cemetery and Funeral Center in Lafayette, leads discussions on two Saturdays at Landings, a Paulist small-group ministry for Catholics who want to return to their faith. Held in the cemetery chapel, the living find healing and reconciliation as they pray, tell their spiritual stories and discuss Catholic teachings.

The “positive experience with Landings,” said Allison, a retiree who prefers to share only her first name. She said that although she no longer attended Mass, she never abandoned the cemetery here. 

The Need for Healing

For many who are estranged from their families, being part of the Body leads, eventually, to the need for healing and reconciliation as they reach out to them at such vulnerable times. “To be there, to show our Landings flyers and connect out to people who may be feeling loss, to be able to remind them of the spiritual wealth that is not lost within them could be a wonderful gift to them,” he said.

Freddie Mae Poole, Landings coordinator at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Largo, Maryland, helps others deal with losses and recalls how her ministry helped a young man who distanced himself from God and the Church after his wife died.

Witherspoon recounted, “He felt hurt; he said he couldn’t face God. I told him that I felt his pain.” She continued, “We’re so proud to see him now, believing in God and thanking God. Every Sunday his wife gives me a hug and thanks me because she says he is a different man now that he has come back in God’s grace. That’s what gives me the inspiration to continue doing it, because sometimes we look at people and don’t know what’s wrong.”

Landings helps Poole’s parish and others provide a safe, non-judgmental environment where people can express the reasons that led them to drift away from the Church and to clarify their questions about it. Welcomees and returnees meet two hours for eight to ten weeks during the program.

This is the first time that the ministry program is offered at a cemetery, said Paulist Father Thomas A. Kane, executive director of Landings International.

Seven ...

(Continued from Page 1)

welcomed into the Body of Christ, he said. And being part of the Body leads, eventually, to the Eucharist.

“Baptism calls us to the table,” he said.

In the rite, the priest asks the community if it is ready to help the parents raise their child in the faith.

“We recognize Christ in one another,” he said.

The family members processed into Mass with the presider, and took seats in a row near the altar. After the homily, they walked to the back of the church, to the front of the completion of the rite, including the dip into the baptismal water.

The baptized are Hunter, 4, and Sloane, 1, children of Matt and Alice Sansoe; Colin, 1, son of Mike and Ashley Sansoe; Jennifer, 3; Jessica, 3, and Kaycie, 18 months, daughters of Gabe and Stephanie Dal Porto; and Siena Dal Porto, almost 1, daughter of AJ and Vanessa Dal Porto.

The father of the first cousin.

“The family is very, very close,” said Vanessa Dal Porto, who coordinated the baptism for seven. Five of the eight parents are graduates of De La Salle or Carondelet high schools. One of the grandchildren, Bob Sansoe, taught at De La Salle.

The families live in close proximity, some in Walnut Creek and some in Brentwood. They gathered to celebrate after the baptism. Two other lovely touches of the day: “Queen of heaven cemetery offers a unique setting for the Landings program, providing returning Catholics a safe and contemplative space to ponder coming home to the Church.”

The lay-led program landingsint.org is 40 years old and international in scope, found in parishes, centers and campus ministries in the United States, Canada, Southeast Asia and the United Kingdom.

Bringing ...

(Continued from Page 1)

“Your are not alone, God is here. Pray to change your life. See what you can do after you leave detention,” are some of the messages Martinez said the letters convey.

The letter writers use a pseudonym, and the return address is that of the church.

The inmates need the correspondence, he said, because sometimes they are estranged from their families.

The ministry of about 10 people meets once a month; Javier Martinez corresponds with two people; his wife with four. They hopes, he said, that their correspondence will help the recipient develop spiritually.

Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, expressed his appreciation to all the ministers.

“I thank you very much for helping Christ take care of his brothers and sisters,” he said. “This is a very important time for people to re-evaluate their lives. Witherspoon sees the importance of reaching out to them at such vulnerable times.

“Baptism calls us to the table,” he said. “We recognize Christ in one another,”

“Queen of Heaven cemetery offers a unique setting for the Landings program, providing returning Catholics a safe and contemplative space to ponder coming home to the Church.”

The parish’s grand piano belonged to the little ones’ great-grandmother, Siena Dal Porto, the youngest to be baptized, wore a baptismal garment fashioned from her maternal grandmother’s wedding gown.

Witherspoon expressed his appreciation to all the ministers.

“Heart of Eucharist round dance” was one of the events.

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The lay-led program landingsint.org is 40 years old and international in scope, found in parishes, centers and campus ministries in the United States, Canada, Southeast Asia and the United Kingdom.

The children were baptized.

The bishop told the detention ministers of two guides who inspired him in detention ministry, which he was involved in as a Jesuit priest.

He first mentioned Father Jack O’Neill, who was Catholic chaplain for many years at San Quentin State Prison. “He was legendary,” he said. “He not only took to the inmates, but he trained and supported them, and the inmates.” Everybody was a child of God.”

The second was his brother, Rev. Stephen Barber, SJ, who later served as Catholic chaplain at San Quentin. “He took me in and taught me,” he said. “It was an amazing experience.”
Feast of All Saints
Look for them to intercede

By Michele Jurich
Staff writer

Pray to our saints in heaven to ask God to help us and they will,” Bishop Michel C. Barber, SJ, told noon Mass attendees at the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland on Nov 1, on the Solemnity of All Saints.

In his homily, Bishop Barber spoke his recent trip to Rome, where he was one of 100 bishops concelebrating Mass with Pope Francis at the canonization of five saints, including John Henry Newman, the 19th-century English Anglican priest who later became a Roman Catholic priest and cardinal.

In the 1990s, Bishop Barber was researching the theology of Cardinal Newman, with access to manuscripts, in England. He also gave talks about Newman’s life and “handed out holy cards with a prayer” to laypeople, encouraging them to pray for then-Venerable John Henry Newman’s intercession.

“If you’re sick in the hospital, pray for John Henry Newman’s intercession,” he said he would tell people. “If you get a miracle, let us know.”

Two miracles, which must be medically verified, are required for canonization. Reporting those miracles is the role of the laity, the bishop said.

The bishop said both of the miracles accepted for Newman’s canonization occurred in the United States. One involved the curing of excruciating back pain in Boston. The other involved a pregnant woman in Chicago, whose bleeding could have ended her life and that of her unborn child. She, too, prayed for Newman’s intercession.

At the canonization Mass, she carried the gifts to the altar. She also carried her baby and was accompanied by family members, the bishop said.

All Souls Day, Nov 2, is a day the living pray for the faithful departed to move from purgatory into heaven.

When we die, there are different places we can go, explained Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, in his homily at the Cathedral of Christ the Light. Saints go to heaven. Hell is an option. God forces no one to go to heaven against their will. But for most of us, there’s a place called purgatory, where we await the purification of our sins. On All Souls Day, we pray to help those people in purgatory move into heaven.

For the Mass, the Cathedral Choir of Men & Boys sang David Briggs’ Requiem for choir, organ and orchestra under the direction of Rudy de Vos, the cathedral’s director of music. The boy choristers are members of the Pacific Boychoir Academy, whose artistic director is Andrew Brown.

Briggs’ Requiem had its West Coast premiere in 2017 at the Cathedral of Christ the Light. Briggs is the artist in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York.

The Mass was sung in Latin, a tradition dating back hundreds of years, but not common today.

Weaving up the gifts.

The bishop said both of the miracles accepted for Newman’s canonization occurred in the United States. One involved the curing of excruciating back pain in Boston. The other involved a pregnant woman in Chicago, whose bleeding could have ended her life and that of her unborn child. She, too, prayed for Newman’s intercession.

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After the Mass, Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, prayed before the crypt of Oakland’s first bishop, Floyd Begin.

Afterward, a procession left the cathedral into the Mausoleum, for additional prayer, followed by a reception in the Event Center hosted by Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services. — Albert C. Paccorini

At the end of Mass and the prayer service, visitors were invited to a reception hosted by Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services. See more photos at facebook.com/TheCatholicVoice.
Moreau Catholic celebrates Law Day

Staff report

The Fourth Annual Law Day at Moreau Catholic High School celebrated the Hayward school’s Mock Trial team and recognized alumni and alumni parents for their achievements in law, education, coaching and support for mock trial.

The Oct. 12 event’s master of cer-
emonies, Alameda County Superior Court Judge Paul Delucci, is a 1987 graduate of Moreau Catholic. The Maravilla family accepted the Amicus Curiae (Friend of the Court) Award presented posthumously to Fe Villamonte Maravilla, Class of 1978, and Elyzar Maravilla.

The family has been longtime sup-
porters of the Mock Trial program and coaching. The Maravilla family established the Fe Maravilla Memorial Mock Trial Scholarship in her memory.

Angela C. Backers ’76, the retired senior deputy district attorney of Alameda County; Greg Stewart ’73, retired police chief of Union City; and Doug Uchiyama ’71, retired deputy general director, onshore Europe, for Chevron, were honored.

The Moreau Catholic Mock Trial program has expanded to hundreds of people this year — we thank you for your patient effort to turn this event into a success. We hope to see you all at the auction in February as we continue to celebrate our 70 years with you.

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**NEW EVENTS**

Tuesday, Nov. 12
Informative Talk – Life 2 p.m. in Sun Valley Mall, Concourse, lower level. The educational and spiritual aim is to help the California Fight to Life to Educational Fund. Contact: www.cflife.org. Fee: $10 per person; a table by reserving your chair for an hour or more contact Bob at office@cflife.org or call 925-944-5331.

Thursday, Nov. 14
Black Friday: Profit or Personal Message Does the Black Friday celebrate the Christian mysticism and is there an alternative? By presentation by Maria de La Luz Prieto. Blessed Mary Magdalen Center, 11730. Information: 510-304-0454.

Sunday, Nov. 17
Sunday Afternoon Talk, 2 to 4 p.m. in McCullum Hall, St. Claren Parish, 79201. Presenters: Rev. Jim Sullivan. Discussion will discuss, “The Life of the World to Come.” Light refreshments provided.

Pasta Dinner at San Damian. 6:30 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. Dining Room, University of San Francisco, Lower Level, 2310 Fulton Street, San Francisco. Prices: $12 for adults, $10 for kids 12 and under. Reservations at www.sandelino.ucsf.edu.

Saturday, Nov. 23
St. Leonard’s Meridian’s 35th Annual Sports Auction 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. in O’Connor Hall, St. Leonard Church, 50 W. Cornell Avenue, Martinez. Information: 925-634-8977.

**ADVENT/CHRISTMAS EVENTS**

Thursday, Nov. 14
Grief and the Holidays. 7:30 to 9 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Church, 300 Maple Avenue, Walnut Creek. A non-confrontational discussion about coping when grieving during the holidays. Contact: Carrie McClish, 2121 Harding Avenue, Alameda. Cost: $30 per person, $55 per couple. For information or to register contact Carrie at 925-830-1737 or sunshine_suzy@perrytool.com.

**EVANGELIZATION**

Saturday, Nov. 16
Catholic Daughters of the Americas Memorial Mass. 10:30 a.m. at St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, 2631 Contra Loma Blvd. Audience: Nice for anyone interested. For information: call Carol Mullins at 925-865-8158 or donnamullins1@gmail.com.

**EVENTS**

Saturday, Nov. 26 to Dec. 17
Four Week Advent Series – The Women of St. Alfred the Great Parish. Women are invited to group meeting with Fr. Richard and St. Furthermore, the conversations will center around the Church’s mystical life. Information: 925-851-0830.

**SPIRITUALITY**

Nov., 11, 18, 25
Weekly Support Groups in the John Main, OSB, tradition, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Mondays in the Calhoun Room, 1315 Lomita Ave., Livermore. Claire La Scala, 925-340-8226.

Dec., 12, 19, 26
Men of St. Joseph meeting. 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays in St. Albert the Great Parish, 2614 S. Concord Ave., Concord. Contact: Michael McMahon at 925-333-6492.

**RETREATS**

Nov. 14 to 17
Retreat weekend with Rev. Ron Rohrheiser, OMI. 4:30 p.m. to 10:30 a.m. in St. Charles Borromeo Retreat, 710 Highland Drive, Burlingame. Info: call 650-644-1765 or countyspiritualretreats@gmail.com.

Jan. 9 to 13, 2020

Dec. 6 to 8
Silent Retreat for Men and Women. At St. Al’s Retreat House, 2381 Laurel Glen Road, Sonoma. The silent retreat is open to all Catholic Daughters, their families and friends. The silent meeting will be held from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on the last two Saturdays (Dec. 21 and 28). Register: call 925-939-3700, then 856-8158 or donna.mullins1@gmail.com. St. Al’s: 925-939-3700 www.stals.org.

Second Wednesdays
How God Sees You. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Community Center, 2039 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Walnut Creek.

Saturday, Jan. 19
Catherine of Siena: Mystic and Prophet — A Workshop with Brother Daniel Davis, OFM. 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Mercy Center, 2300 Adeline Drive, Burlingame. Workshop theme: The deeply touching intimates bond between Mother and Child. The retreat fee: $15 per person. Information: 510-350-7474 or mercy-center.org.

**SUPPORT GROUPS**

Through Nov. 12
Divorce Support Workshops. 7 p.m. at St. Francis Parish, 420 Cork Drive, San Ramon. This is a video series by Sojourn. Contact: Rosemarie McKinnon, RMK@msn.com.

Fourth Wednesdays
Family Caregiver Support Group 7 p.m. in rooms 214 and 215 in the Ministry Center at St. Louis de France, 1200 S. Farnham Way, Walnut Creek. Family caregivers are invited to our monthly meeting, to share their experiences, concerns and to find support. Contact: 925-353-4141 or sandalfe@abccatholic.org.

Parent’s Who Have Lost a Child Grief Support Group. At Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 500 Fonda Avenue, Brentwood. Information: 925-353-4142 or sandalfe@abccatholic.org.

**ART/MUSIC**

Friday, Nov. 15
Art is Prayer. 9:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Cunningham Library, Glass Lounge, Holy Names University, 3400 17th Avenue, Oakland. Entry is free. For information or to register contact www.sandamiano.org or 925-837-9141.

Sunday, Nov. 17
I’m Hurting. Does Jesus Care? Silent Retreat for Women and Men. At the Jesuit Retreat Center, 500 Marema Way in Lark. Retreat Leader: Rev. Andrew Rodriguez, SJ. We will explore how our relationship with Jesus can cast us of all our hurts. Cost: $32 per person. Information: 510-747-4000.

Saturday, Nov. 24
Tuesdays from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Alphonsus Parish Hall, 710 Highland Drive, Daly City. The price for the retreat will be $25. For information: call 650-938-4734.

First Wednesdays
Women’s Rosary. 7 a.m. at St. Christ’s Rosary Center, 2701 Redwood City, Palo Alto, 650-341-2505.

Saturday and Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. Taizé Prayer, Mass in Tagalog. At 925-394-6700 or www.sandamiano.org or 925-837-9141.

Saturdays
May 18, 2019
Art in Prayer. 9:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Cunningham Library, Glass Lounge, Holy Names University, 3400 17th Avenue, Oakland. For information or to register contact www.sandamiano.org or 925-837-9141.

Second Saturdays
St. John Vianney Loss of Child Grief Ministry. Taizé Prayer, Mass in Tagalog. 500 Marema Way, Walnut Creek. For information or to register contact www.sandamiano.org or 925-837-9141 or eklavph@abccatholic.org.

**REUNIONS**

St. Mary’s College High School, Berkeley. Class of 2006, late November. Class of 2005, Dec. 21. For reunion details and homecoming information, contact Annalise NDori 109, director, philanthropy and alumni engagement at anmorley@stm.edu or 510-595-6309.

**TALIZÉ**

(An ecumenical, ceremonial service of prayer in Taizé style, Gathering, Silence and Veneration of the cross)

Friday, Nov. 15
8 p.m. at St. Joseph Basilica, 1101 Chalcedon St., Alameda. At 7 p.m. in the Church of the Nativity in Menlo Park (all Mission Tier) Thursday, Nov. 14. www.taize.org.

Friday, Nov. 15
8 p.m. in the chapel, Dominican Sisters of Missionaries of Our Lady of Sorrows, 100 Merced St., Santa Clara. Information: Mary Handy at 925-939-8399 or eklavph@abccatholic.org.
Can a 7-year-old child have a sense of gender?

By Rev. Gerald D. Coleman, PSS

In Austin, Texas, James Younger and his twin brother Jude are now 7 years old, both exhibiting gender abnormalities. Their parents, Jeffrey and Anne (Georgulas), went through a costly case of divorce, leaving both children vulnerable and struggling to adapt to their new situation.

Anne is a pediatrician and was given legal custody of the children even though she is not the biologi- cal or gestational mother of their twin boys. She employed in vitro fertilization by using an egg donor to bear the children.

Due to a court battle over Anne’s strong intention to identify James as transgender, a Texas judge ruled that both parents have “joint managing conservatorship,” meaning that they have equal decision-making in their children’s medical, dental and psychi- atrical/psychiatric treatments.

Since Kindergarten, Anne has enrolled James in school as a girl under the name “Luna,” insisting that “she uses the girl’s bathroom to affirm her female identity. She addresses him as Luna and demands that all authority figures at school do the same. She clothes James in dresses and began telling him he is a girl when he was 3 years old.

She testified in court that she began to believe he was a girl because he liked McDonald’s toys meant for girls, toys in general designed for girls, for example, dolls, and showed affinity for the Disney movie “Frozen” and its female character leads.

James’ pediatric records indicate that Anne wanted to enrol him in the Genecis Clinic in Dallas, a gender affirming care program for youth. This program offers hormones and puberty suppression therapies along with mental health and social services. The clinic does not perform gender affirming surgery (also called sex or gender reassignment surgery). Anne states her desire to begin puberty block- ers and cross-hormone regimen for James when he is 9 years old. She further intends to have James undergo a complete sex transition (called MTF, male to female) at the appropriate time. Genecis stated that it would not begin these processes without James’ father’s consent.

James’ father Jeffrey claims that his son’s “female persona” is the product of his ex-wife’s delusion. He contends that James behaves as a boy in his presence and wants to be treated as one when in his mother’s presence. He may be striving to satisfy and please her considering the trauma caused by the acrimonious divorce. This case is not an isolated one and raises serious ethical concerns regarding the rights of parents and the best interests of their children. A child should not be victimized due to parental desires. This is especially true when the child is 7 years old and incapable of understanding or making a life-altering decision.

Kathleen Zucker, the Canadian child psychologist who had a leading role in helping devise diagnostic and treatment guidelines for gender dysphoria and trans- gender individuals has pointed out that research indicates that the vast majority (as high as 84 percent) of gender dysphoric kids end up identifying with their biological or birth sex.

Parents should not over-react or interpret observations such as preference for toys usually associated with the opposite sex, gender variance such as a tomboy or, cross- dressing, a boy, for example, who dons the clothes of his sister. These types of behavior need careful discernment and analysis and avoid at all cost child abuse, that is, emotional injury to a child that results in an observable impairment of the child’s growth, development or physiological functioning.

Once identified as “gender disorder,” gender incongruence is now understood as a condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a disconnect between his or her biological sex and gender identity. This incongruence usually leads to distressing and uncom- fortable feelings, known as gender dysphoria. While its origins are varied and strongly disputed, the gender incongruence is not a mental illness.

Gender dysphoric persons have a strong, persistent desire to live in accord with their gender identity rather than their birth sex. While some gender dysphoric persons decide to live with their incongru- ence, others seek cosmetic, hormonal and surgical changes that make their bodies align with their perceived gender. Bruce James, an expert in gender dysphoria and through hormonal, cosmetic and trans-surgery, changed his appearance as a man into a woman.

The deep sense of discomfort and the pursuit of these types of alterations demand adult discernment and judgment and should never be imposed on a child (con- sent “Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences.” The Atlantic 50, Fall 2016). I believe that James’ mother’s intentions amount to child abuse on her son who at 7 years old could not have a true sense of gender dysphoria. Such parental behavior amounts to exploitation and cruelty to a child.

(Father Gerald D. Coleman, PSS, is an adjunct professor, Graduate Department of Pastoral Ministries, Santa Clara University.)

Aging: gift that takes us to a deeper place, whether we want to or not

By Rev. Ron Rolheiser, ORJ

For most of my life, I’ve been able to think of myself as young. Because I was born late in the year. October, I was always younger than many of my classmates, graduated from high school at age 17, entered the seminary at that tender age, was ordained to the priest- hood at age 25, got an advanced degree within the next year, and was teaching graduate theology at age 26, the youngest doctorate, I prided myself on being young, as even if years piled up and I began to betray my conception of being young, as even if years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young, even as the years piled up and I began to betray my conception of myself as young.

The Catholic Register

Syrian Christians have been neglected, forgotten and cast aside like ‘the scum of the earth’ by the Church, the patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church said. He was angry, and who could blame him after Islamic forces, emboldened by a U.S.-about-face and backed by Turkey, attacked an area of northeast Syria mainly populated by Christians, Kurds and Yazidis. Some 150,000 civilians, includ- ing 70,000 children, have been driven from their homes, the latest in a string of atrocities committed by the group that now rules Syria and Iraq, known as ISIS or ISIL.

“We Christians of the East are neglected by the Church, the Church is not concerned about us, we are a minority of Christians, the Church is not concerned about us,” Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Yousif said. “This is an issue of justice.”

Syrian Christian minorities face textbook genocide

The methodical cleansing of the East’s Christians, Kurds and Yazidis symbolized religious tolerance in an intolerant part of the world. Now they are fleeing for their lives, refugees, their homes burned and their towns cleared to create what Turkey gallingly calls a “safe zone” for displaced Muslim refugees.

On one side are powerful interests who want to expand the region’s control, on the other is an international community that was once perfected for the survival of Christianity in the Middle East is failing.

One side is powerful interests determined to expand the region’s control, on the other is an international community that was once perfected for the survival of Christianity in the Middle East is failing.

The methodical cleansing of the region’s once-robust Christian population and other religious minorities is a textbook case of genocide. The world should be crying out for justice.

Instead, to its shame, it is mostly silent.

(Continued on Page 19.)
Pro-life issue

I am an active, practicing Catholic and was devastated to see accolades given to Donald Trump for being a staunch pro-life supporter and advocate for abortion rights. This is NOT a pro-life president.

The Washington Post reported Feb. 25, “From October 2017 through August 2018, ICE detained 1,665 pregnant women, according to the most recent data the agency made available. Over that same period, 18 women may have experienced a miscarriage or a stillbirth in ICE custody.” This is NOT a pro-life president.

I am also concerned that the church is being tried again and tried again. I continue to pray because I feel alienated by our Church’s patriarchal hierarchy and its support of custody.” This is NOT a pro-life president.

Many other climate change deniers are on their objection and rebuttals, go to https://www.climtelemails.org/campaign.php. So I’ll still go with the pope.

No other side

I was astonished to see publication of a letter from Catherine Norman (Forum, Oct. 21). As more than 95 percent of climate scientists agree, there is NOT another side in the scientific community regarding the reality and urgency of the climate crisis. The Church’s efforts for Care for Creation are needed now more than ever.

The author includes with signature, her title of a MS degree in Geology, something that 500 scientists, engineers and prides that 500 scientists, engineers and economists implicated in global warming emergency, and if it really about 10 are really climate scientists.

Call 510-893-4711 to make an appointment

This Amazon Synod and the proposed changes discussed were disturbing and unacceptable. The Catholic Church should not change its traditions or beliefs to conform to a pagan society, and I believe this is a small, isolated population and some may question it. But, there, it has reopened a discussion for the changes in the church as a whole, whether it is a man or a woman.

Some misguided souls believe that married men and women should be ordained as priests. This should not be limited to 250 words.

The priest is close to Jesus, as close as one can get, and acting in his role. He selflessly gives his whole devotion to our Lord, and family and takes away his priorities and attention from our Lord’s church. To be ordained is a esteemed and exalted position and should not be taken lightly.

The priest is married to our Lord, to the Church of our Lord. Our Lord is an unmarried young in soul long after the body betrays you. Indeed, and you look silly and out of place when you try to dress, interested in their own kind, which doesn’t include you, married men and women should be included in this. This should not be.

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Ageing

When you’re surprised, stunned, that what you are seeing in the mirror is so different from how you have been imagining yourself and your aging seems too fast. It’s pulled downward along with the body, though aging means something very different from the soul being old. A person of 70 is not 70 years old today you say, to dress, as though you’re no longer in the world’s eyes — or in your own.

Gravity doesn’t just affect your body, pulling things downward too for too many years. And when you turn out of place when you try to dress, act and speak like they do. There comes a day when you have to admit that you’re no longer young in soul long after the body betrays you. Indeed. We’re meant to be young and vital in spirit.

So, in the end, aging is a gift, even if unwanted. Aging takes us to a deeper place, whether we want to go or not. I like most everyone else, I still haven’t made my full peace with this and would still like to think of myself as young or at least that I have enough money.” I was surprised to see your letter to the editor.

The aging process is driven by God and nature to force the soul, whether it wants to or not, to delver deeper into the mystery of life, of community, of God and all our souls don’t lie, like a wine, they mature and so we can always be young in spirit. Our zest, our fire, our enthusiasm, our wit, our brightness and our humor are not meant to dim with age. Indeed, they’re meant to be the very color of a mature soul.

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