

Christ's Descent from the Cross



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Divine Mercy of Jesus Council 17249

St. Jerome's Catholic Church 10895 Hamlin Blvd. Largo, FL
April 2024 Volume 5 Issue 1



FROM AROUND THE WORLD
OF INTEREST TO CATHOLICS

New Wilderness Program for Seminarians Promises to Strengthen Faith and Brotherhood

Argentine Nun Remembered for Her Smile Considered for Saint-hood

Pope Francis 'Very Much in Favor' of Women's Diaconate

Medical Journal Withdraws Studies That Document Abortion-Pill Harm

Almost All Catholic Women's Colleges Admit Men Who Identify as Women

Diocese of Sacramento to seek bankruptcy protection after over 250 lawsuits claim sexual abuse

Group seeks to clear names of all accused, convicted or executed for witchcraft in Massachusetts

Texas death row inmate to be executed in days as Catholics call for clemency

McDonald's franchise restaurants across Tennessee have put religious symbols on their windows, particularly illustrations of the empty tomb, crosses, and the proclamation of Jesus Christ being risen from the dead. You can almost hear all the God-haters screaming in agony at a public establishment like McDonald's featuring Christian symbols, which once upon a time were the foundation of values and culture in our nation.

The initiative, spearheaded by franchise owners Tony and Gina Wolfe, has sparked surprise and admiration within the local community. The move was first brought to public attention by Burton S. Staggs, the news director of *GM Tennessee River Valley News*, who shared a photo of one of the decorated restaurant windows on his Facebook page.

The franchise owners also understand the true meaning of Christmas, as during the holiday season they displayed the phrase "His name is Je-

sus," at their restaurant locations. Some probably wonder why people just can't keep their religious beliefs to themselves and out of the public spotlight. However, Jesus commanded those who follow Him to be open about their faith, sharing it with all they come into contact with, in order to see others come to repent of their sins and trust Jesus as their savior. And that's what the Wolfe family is doing.

Surprisingly, many comments on social media about the displays have been positive.

"I've been to this McDonald's and they're really kind in there too," one user penned.

Another user went on to say, "That's what I love about the South. Whenever we travel South, the people are so friendly and there are so many people that love the Lord and weren't afraid to say so. As soon as we came North over the Mason Dixon line, it was a whole different story."

FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND KNIGHT



Pete McCabe

Brothers:
Lent is over and Easter is March 31 when we will celebrate Christ's resurrection. Alleluia!

There is a reason the Easter season is the longest in the

liturgical year. We have much so much to be thankful for and celebrate.

We will start with the gathering of the 10:45 mass on Sunday, April 7, Divine Mercy Sunday. As you know, this is the name of our council, and it's appropriate that we should gather for a corporate communion, along with the Columbiettes. Wearing your blue polo shirts and sitting together (near the choir) is encouraged.

The month of April will be busy with lots of opportunities to volunteer. As always, you can attend the general meeting on the second Wednesday of the month, April 10. We will be taking nominations for officer positions for the upcoming fraternal year, 2024-2025. Please consider stepping up to help lead our council.

Each Thursday at 11 am, bingo is al-

ways in need of helpers who can learn various positions. Even though our snowbirds will soon be going home, we will still need help to make our bingo games the best in the area.

This month is also our council's membership drive (April 13 and 14). We need your help at all the masses that weekend. To sign up, please reach out to Gregg Appel at karokeya1@gmail.com.

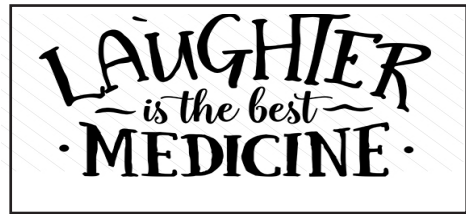
Another event in April in the spaghetti dinner fundraiser. It will be held April 13. We will be working with the emergency responders of Indian Rocks Beach. We will need a few Knights to help with set up, cooking, and serving. To sign up, please reach out to Pete Ganio at pganio@hotmail.com.

Finally, this month would not be complete without our council-run breakfast on the third Sunday of the month, April 21. We always need help! The fun starts at 5 am when the Baconator begins cooking the bacon at 5 am, but don't worry: you don't need to get there that early. Help is needed all morning and especially after noon when we start to clean up.

We look forward to seeing you at one or all of the events. We love to see our brother Knights.

Thanks for all you do.

Pete



If at first you don't succeed, keep trying. Then stop. There's no sense being a fool about it.

Insanity is hereditary. You get it from your children.

Education is learning what it is that you don't know.

I dream of a better tomorrow where chickens can cross a road and not be questioned about their motive.

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.

The quickest way for a parent to get a child's attention is to sit down and look comfortable.

I didn't fall down—the floor needed a hug.

Why, yes, I had a nice trip. I'll see you next fall.

Everyone has a right to be stupid, but some (including me) abuse that privilege.

I'm really good at stuff until somebody watches me do that stuff.

I used to think I was indecisive. But now I'm not so sure.

Sure, alcohol doesn't solve any problems. But neither does milk.

Friend: I ran into my ex-husband yesterday.

Other Friend: What did he say?

First friend: I don't know; I just kept driving.

Good dental hygiene is good for the who family, but flossing the cat is probably a bad idea.

If you buy a watch from Amazon, be aware that that implies you can already swim without it.

It's so hot that hens are picking up worms with potholders.

A day without sunshine is like, you know, night.



FUN *St. Jerome's Columbiettes Divine Mercy of Jesus*
TRIVIA NIGHT
 FUNDRAISER

Compete for prizes, have some fun, and show off your smarts! Bring your friends and your brain power for an unforgettable night of trivia!

*For ages 13 and up!

Sat. April 20th
 REGISTER BY APRIL 6TH!

PRIZES FOR TOP 3 WINNING TABLES

PICNIC BOX MEAL AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE (\$7)

BASKET RAFFLES

50/50 RAFFLE



6:00-8:00PM
 DOORS OPEN AT 5:00PM
 TRIVIA BEGINS AT 6:00PM

Parish Hall \$15/ person

Sat, Apr 20th
 6-8pm
 Doors open at 5pm
 Parish Hall

FUN *Columbiettes Divine Mercy of Jesus*
TRIVIA NIGHT

RETURN FORM & MONEY TO THE PARISH OFFICE FOR THE COLUMBIETTES OR MAIL TO:
 JO-ELLEN ABOU NADER
 1660 GULF BLVD. #406
 CLEARWATER FL 33767

\$15/ person

PAYMENT DUE BY APRIL 6!

Prizes for top 3 tables!
 Basket and 50/50 raffles!

Names in Party: _____

Number of People in Party: _____ Contact Phone Number: _____

Contact Email: _____ Fill in Number of Pre-pay Picnic Box Dinners: (\$7 each) ___ Chicken Salad ___ Egg Salad

Total Amount Paid: (Registration & Dinner) _____

Any questions? Please contact Jo-Ellen Abou Nader at (407) 810- 6502 or rolandabounader@yahoo.com!

St. John Paul II Could Have Lost His Life to Abortion



Baby John Paul Wojtyla and his mother Emilia

A woman by the name of Tatarowa, who was a Polish midwife, and her two friends revealed that Emilia Wo-

jtyla was depressed by the insistence of her first doctor, Dr. Jan Moskała, that she have an abortion.

Dr. Jan Moskała was a well-known gynecologist and obstetrician.

It wasn't a matter of the unborn child, St. John Paul II, but the life of his mother, Emilia.

The baby's parents, Emilia and Karol, decided that regardless of everything-including the first doctor's recommendation-their child would be born.

Emilia "had to choose between her own life and that of the baby she was carrying, but her deep faith did not allow Emilia to choose abortion.

They sought a second opinion instead of ending the life of the future saint.

the second doctor confirmed the

existing risks of complications during childbirth potentially resulting in Emilia's death, he did not suggest abortion.

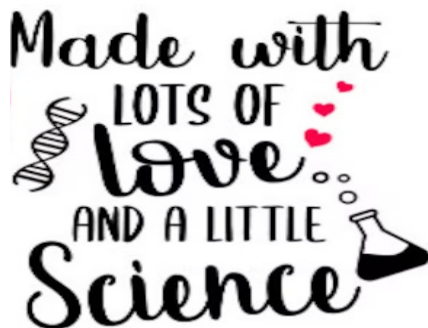
Emilia experienced a very rough pregnancy but survived childbirth, nonetheless.

She gave birth to the future Pope (and saint!) on May 18, 1920, around 5 p.m.

It is said that the first sound the newborn heard was a parish across the street singing The Litany of Loreto.

If you are reading this, you were not aborted. Call your mother now and thank her.

More Human Embryos Destroyed Through IVF Than Abortion Every Year



An Alabama Supreme Court ruling that recognized the personhood of embryonic life sparked a nationwide debate about in vitro fertilization (IVF), but some people might be unaware that the industry's death toll for preborn life is likely higher than that of abortion.

IVF is a fertility treatment in which doctors extract eggs from the woman and fertilize the eggs with sperm

to create human embryos in a laboratory without a sexual act. IVF can cost the couple between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for a single treatment. Because IVF treatments have a low success rate — about 50% for women under the age of 35 but significantly lower as women get older — clinics create far more human embryos than they intend to bring to term. Although this is meant to maximize the chance of the woman bearing one healthy child, it has also resulted in killing or indefinitely freezing millions of excess embryos.

IVF clinics do not report the exact number of embryos that are killed in their care, but clinics normally extract between 10 and 15 eggs for one treatment. According to the IVF clinic chain Illume Fertility, if the clinic extracts 12 eggs, about 80% — nine or 10 eggs — will be viable and

about 80% of viable eggs will successfully fertilize to create embryos — making about seven or eight embryos per patient.

The CDC estimates that more than 238,000 patients attempted IVF in 2021. If clinics created between seven and eight embryos for every patient, that would yield about 1.6 million to 1.9 million over a year. Despite these high numbers, fewer than 100,000 embryos were brought to term, which suggests that somewhere between 1.5 million and 1.8 million embryos created through IVF were never born.

Alternatively, the abortion industry claimed about 985,000 lives from July 2022 through June 2023 — suggesting that the IVF industry could be ending nearly twice as many human lives every year.

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

for the remainder of 2024

Thursday, May 9 - The Ascension of Jesus.

Thursday, August 15 - The Assumption of Mary.

Friday, November 1, - All Saints' Day.

Sunday, December 8, - The Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Wednesday, December 25, - The Birth of Our Lord, Christmas.

Statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Remains Untouched after Devastating Forest Fire

A recent forest fire destroyed nearly 500 acres of vegetation in North Santander in Colombia. Amid the fire's destruction, a completely intact statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was found in a village in the municipality of Pamplona, Colombia. Volunteers administering aid and donations found the statue. "It made quite an impression on us. We were going to the village to deliver aid, and on the edge of the road was the little Virgin in perfect condition in the middle of what was the fire. I consider this a miracle," one person said. The Mayor's office of Pamplona

shared the site of the fire and noted that the fire passed along the road without touching it. "We are next to the grotto of the Virgin of Carmel which has become famous because incredibly--and I am not given to these speculations--the fire passed from one side of the road towards the other hills, and don't ask me why, but nowhere in the grotto, not even in the back, is there any damage," said Klaus Faber Mogollón, the mayor of Pamplona. "I hope that the faith we all have in our creator serves for the good of the city of Pamplona, for the good of all of us, and for the good of humanity," he concluded.



Investigation into DC's Five Late-Term Aborted Babies Called For



Pro-life House members are calling for autopsies and a full investigation into whether federal laws were broken in the late-term abortions of five babies whose remains were discovered by pro-life activists in Washington, D.C. Several members of Congress and pro-life leaders said that the five babies' remains suggest they may have been killed via an abortion method known as "partial-birth abortion," which is banned nationally under federal law. Partial-birth abortion is a procedure in which a doctor partially delivers a baby only to kill him or her by either crushing the skull or removing the brain by suction. The leaders at the press conference demanded action from the federal government to determine whether the babies, often referred to as the "D.C. Five," were

killed in this manner. "We're talking about precious life that was just callously disregarded, discarded, just thrown away like refuse, that's just unconscionable," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas. The five babies, all of whom were in late stages of gestation, were discovered with major lacerations, torn limbs, and crushed skulls, all consistent with methods used in partial-birth abortions. Their discovery has sparked outrage and has become known as "The Five." Calls for a federal investigation have come from pro-life groups and citizens. The D.C. medical examiner's office has since reportedly postponed plans to cremate the babies' remains; however, no plans have been announced for an autopsy and the babies' bodies remain uncertain.

Bingo News!

Brothers,
Great news. On February 27, we moved the new bingo equipment into the parish center. Thanks to Ralph (once again for the use of his truck) and for the Knights who helped move the equipment (Dan T., Bill B., Tim C., Rich P.). No one hurt themselves which is a win!

We spent the afternoon setting up the new equipment and after a few hiccups, everything is working and it looks great as well.

Pete McCabe GK



When a flashlight grows dim or quits working, you don't throw it away, you change the batteries.

When a person messes up and finds themselves in a dark place, do you cast them aside? Of course not, you help them change their batteries! Some need AA.. Attention and Affection; Some need AAA... Attention, affection and acceptance; some need C.. compassion; some need D.. direction. And if they still don't seem to shine.. simply sit with them quietly and share your light.

The Supernatural Power of Jesus' Holy Name: An Incredible True Story

Father Roger was just over five feet tall. A very spiritual priest, he was much involved in the healing ministry, exorcism, and visiting prisons and mental hospitals. He told me that one day he was walking down the corridor of a mental hospital when around the corner came a huge man—well over six feet tall and three hundred pounds. He was bellowing out blasphemies and was rushing straight for Fr. Roger

brandishing a kitchen knife. Fr. Roger stopped and said, "In the name of Jesus, drop the knife!"

The man halted, dropped the knife, and turned and walked away as meek as a lamb.

It's a reminder that the name of Jesus has power in the spiritual realm. We repeat the Holy Name at the center of our rosary prayer and should do so with a pause and a

bowed head.

The holy name should be used for every kind of deliverance prayers. When you are tempted, invoke the holy name. When you are under a cloud, invoke the holy name. When you are being attacked, invoke the holy name.

Remember that the name Jesus means Savior so call on him when you need His help.

Astonishing Mysteries About the Shroud of Turin Revealed by a Medical Expert

Is the Shroud of Turin mere cloth or a compelling chronicle of Christ's Crucifixion?

Ryan Scheel, Ryan Dellacrosse, and Fr. Rich Pagano join medical expert and Shroud researcher Dr. Gilbert R. Lavoie to share three astonishing mysteries about this sacred cloth!

1) Ancient and Unique Stitching Patterns

Dr. Lavoie sheds light on a fascinating detail - the Shroud's unique stitching pattern, a pattern only mirrored in certain ancient textiles.

"The unique stitch [on the Shroud] was found only in one other place, and that's Masada in Israel," Dr. Lavoie explains. He says this singular thread not only strengthens the historical authenticity of the Shroud but intriguingly ties it to Jewish heritage, suggesting a narrative far deeper than previously imagined.

2) What The 2022 X-Ray Diffraction study really Shows

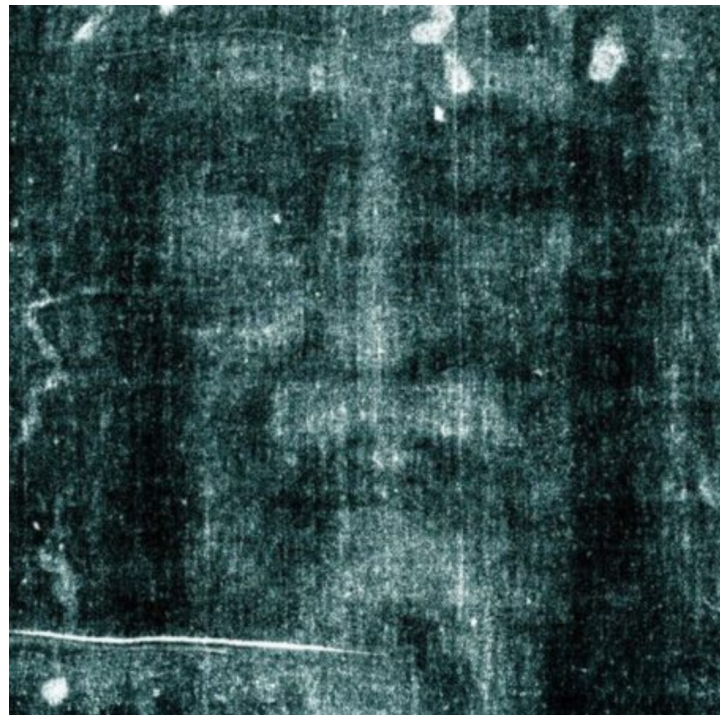
Dr. Lavoie discusses the groundbreaking 2022 X-ray diffraction study that aligns the Shroud with cloths from Masada, suggesting a similar age and origin. "The 2022 X-ray diffraction study... matched [the Shroud] with cloth from Masada." He says the study also suggests its later tapestry of travels, weaving through France, Constantinople, and finally, Jerusalem.

3) Microscopic Marvels Beyond the Bounds of Science

Science has its limits, and the Shroud of Turin seems to exist beyond them.

"The yellowing of the fibers on the Shroud of Turin is the base of why the image is there," Dr. Lavoie explains. "It's a dehydrate of oxidation—a degeneration of cellulose that hasn't been reproduced at that microscopic level."

This unique phenomenon, coupled with the Shroud's image resembling a photographic negative centuries before the invention of photography, presents a puzzle that modern science still struggles to solve.



*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen
but on what is unseen.*

*For what is seen is temporary, but
what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:18)*



St. Patrick's Cathedral Holds Blasphemous LGBTQ Funeral Service for 'Trans' Activist

St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City held a funeral service for an LGBTQ activist this week and the event's organizer said she kept the transgender identity of the deceased "under wraps" while planning the gathering with church administrators.

On February 15 a crowd of LGBTQ activists held a funeral for Cecilia Gentili at the historic St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, New York. Gentili was a transgender activist and actress, former sex worker and self-professed atheist.

The funeral service did not include a Mass. Fr. Edward Dougherty officiated at the funeral service and reportedly did not mention anything of Gentili's background while presiding. Dougherty joked at the beginning of the service, "Except on Easter Sunday, we don't have a crowd that is this well turned out," to which the crowd of trans activists cheered and clapped.

Several comments about the funeral stated that the funeral was a mockery of the Christian faith and of St. Cecilia, who is honored in the Roman Catholic Church as a patroness of chastity.

The mob staged a supposed funeral service for Cecilia Gentili, a transgender, atheist prostitute they eulo-



gized as a whore. This great whore. St. Cecilia, Mother of all whores!" Over 1,000 mourners, several hundred of whom were transgender, arrived in daring outfits — glittery miniskirts and halter tops, fishnet stockings, sumptuous fur stoles and at least one boa sewed from what appeared to be \$100 bills.

Mass cards and a picture near the altar showed a haloed Ms. Gentili surrounded by the words "whore," "blessed" and "mother." The Archdiocese of New York did not respond to questions on whether the church had been aware of Ms. Gentili's background when it agreed to host her funeral.

St. Patrick's Cathedral Holds Blasphemous Funeral for 'Trans' Activist (Part 2)

The pastor of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City said the church has offered a Mass of Reparation after a controversial irreverent funeral service was held there for a well-known transgender advocate.

The Manhattan cathedral hosted the funeral service for Cecilia Gentili, an activist who helped to decriminalize sex work in New York, lobbied for "gender identity" to be added as a protected class to human rights laws, and was a major fundraiser for transgender causes. Gentili was a man who identified as a woman.

Throughout the liturgy, the presider, Father Edward Dougherty, referred to Gentili with feminine pronouns and described the trans-identifying man as "our sister." Additionally, dur-

ing the prayers of the faithful, the reader prayed for so-called gender-affirming health care, while attendees frequently and approvingly referred to Gentili as the "mother of whores."

Father Enrique Salvo, the pastor of St. Patrick's, said that Church officials shared in the "outrage over the scandalous behavior at a funeral here at St. Patrick's Cathedral."

"The cathedral only knew that family and friends were requesting a funeral Mass for a Catholic and had no idea our welcome and prayer would be degraded in such a sacrilegious and deceptive way," Salvo said.

"That such a scandal occurred at 'America's Parish Church' makes it worse; that it took place as Lent was

beginning, the annual 40-day struggle with the forces of sin and darkness, is a potent reminder of how much we need the prayer, reparation, repentance, grace, and mercy to which this holy season invites us," the priest wrote. "At archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan's directive, we have offered an appropriate Mass of Reparation," Salvo said.

Time magazine described the fact that a funeral service for a trans activist was held in a Catholic cathedral as "no small feat," while The New York Times described the service as "a piece of political theater."

Organizers reportedly did not disclose to the cathedral that Gentili, who died Feb. 6 at age 52, was a biological man who identified as a woman.

Once a village decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer only one boy came with a umbrella. That is faith.

When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is trust.

Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but we still set an alarm to wake us up. That is hope.

We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future. That is confidence.

We see the world suffering but still we get married and have children. That is love.

On an old man's shirt was written, "I am not 80 years old. I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience."

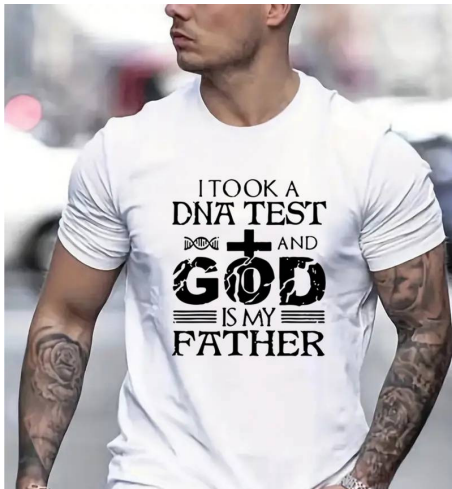
Does Watching a Mass on Live-Streaming Provide Spiritual Nourishment?



No doubt many of you reading this chose to stay at home during the pandemic to avoid groups of people who go to mass. Is staying home appropriate? Can Catholics receive the Eucharist symbolically? It's not an easy question to answer. It goes without saying that receiving the Eucharist symbolically is certainly not the same as receiving it in

person. In many parishes, a prayer is said before the body and blood is distributed. Here is the prayer: My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. At first glance, that seems like an appropriate prayer, full of meaning and heart-filling adornment. In addition, most catholic are aware that we are supposed to attend mass each Sunday and designated Holy Days (or a vigil mass on Saturday evening) and are reluctant to violate that principle. As Canon Law 1247 states, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation catholics are obliged to attend

mass. That said, the church intends for all of our obligations to be rooted in common sense. Therefore, if you are truly unable to go to mass, you are released from that obligation. Canon 242 says, "If participation in the holy mass because of some grave situation, it is recommended that the faithful take part in the liturgy of the word and keep the first day of the week as holy as possible or that they devote themselves to prayer and build up the family unit. Finally, I think it is fair to say that God understands our hearts and sees right through us when we choose to watch an NFL game rather than a live-streamed mass. "Never permit me to be separated from you." If watching a mass on TV, aren't we throwing the baby out with the bath water by ignoring the benefits of live streaming? That question you must answer for yourself.



An unborn baby's body is still a separate life from its mother. Two lives, not just one life or body anymore. Let us love them both.



Why we need best friends.

Because they laugh at the same stupid things we do. Because they give us honest advice. Because they will be there for us, even if they're thousands of miles away. Because they celebrate with us when we're at our best, but still love us at our worst.

Life is short; live it.
Love is rare; grab it.
Anger is bad; dump it.
Fear is awful; face it.
Memories are sweet;
cherish them.

In 100 years we will all be buried with our relatives and friends. Strangers will live in our homes we fought so hard to build, and they will own everything we have today. All our possessions will be unknown and unborn, including the car we spent a fortune on, and will probably be

scrap, preferably in the hands of an unknown collector.

Our descendants will hardly know who we were, nor will they remember us. How many of us know our grandfather's father?

After we die, we will be remembered for a few more years; then we are just a portrait on someone's bookshelf, and a few years later our history, photos and deeds disappear in history's oblivion. We won't even be memories.

If we paused one day to analyze these questions, perhaps we would understand how ignorant and weak the dream to achieve it all was.

If we could only think about this, surely our approaches, our thoughts

would change, and we would be different people.

Always wanting more things, no time for what's really valuable in this life. I'd change all this to live and enjoy the walks I've never taken, the hugs I didn't give, the kisses for our children and our loved ones, those jokes we didn't have time for. Those would certainly be the most beautiful moments to remember; after all; they would fill our lives with joy.

And some of us waste it day after day with greed, selfishness, and intolerance.

Every minute of life is priceless and will never be repeated, so take time to enjoy, be grateful for, and celebrate your existence.

More Abortions Last Year Were Committed by Abortion Pill



A c -
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performed in the United States in 2023 were chemical abortions conducted using drugs such as and mifepristone.

The report from a pro-abortion institute found that the proportions of total abortions in the country that are chemical abortions rose 10% in the past three years.

Reuters noted that the report was based on data collected from abor-

tion facilities across the country. The survey found over 1 million total abortions were provided through the U.S. healthcare system in 2023, the first time that number exceeded a million since 2012.

Furthermore, there was a dramatic decline in surgical abortion access following the Dobbs decision, Reuters acknowledged. The ruling allowed more than a dozen states to ban abortion with limited exceptions and close clinics, restricting access to surgical abortion procedures, the news outlet added. That in turn led to a growing reliance on a two-pill regimen to terminate pregnancies.

ONE WOMAN'S STORY

Activist Abby Johnson shared that she chose to have a chemical abortion shortly after she began volunteer-

ing at Planned Parenthood. Johnson stated that although doctors told her the experience would resemble having a heavy period, she began to hemorrhage and pass clots within 30 minutes of taking the pill.

"I experienced intense cramping. I had never experienced pain so severe. Now that I have had children, I realized that I was experiencing labor-like contractions. I began to vomit from the pain. I was passing clots the size of lemons," she said.

"I remember passing my baby. I scooped my baby up in my hands and for a moment, wasn't sure what to do. No one had prepared me for that moment. I didn't expect to recognize my baby. It felt wrong to flush my baby down the toilet, but I didn't know what else to do. In the end, I dropped my child in the toilet, closed my eyes, and flushed."

RIP, Father Walter Ciszek

Jesuit Father Walter Ciszek (1904-1984) was an American priest who traveled to the Soviet Union as a missionary, was arrested and imprisoned for 15 years in solitary confinement and labor camps. He experienced harsh conditions in Siberia and the brutality of prison life, including the constant threat of starvation.



He was returned to the United States in 1963 as part of a prisoner exchange and wrote two books about his experiences. *With God in Russia* was a book of his experiences he wrote in 1964. *He Leadeth Me* was his book of spiritual insights from his time in Russia.

He was the seventh of 13 children and believed he had to "make his mark" in the world. As a youngster, he led a street gang, was a fighter and excelled in sports. In his writings later in life, he expressed regret at his youthful indiscretions.

However, it was this pugnacious attitude that made him the rare individual who could survive the harsh conditions of the gulag. Father Ciszek learned to rely on God, and it gave him the ability to withstand many things and develop a sense of self, opening him up to deep spiritual insights.

He believed that the persons, places and things God puts in front of

us each day have a special purpose, a special love, a special providence for all those He created. The circumstances of each day of our lives, of every moment of every day, are provided for us by Him. His rigorous seminary training also helped him survive the gulag. Father Ciszek's temperament led him to ask his superiors to give him the hardest assignment possible: being a missionary in the Soviet Union. He entered the Soviet Union under an assumed identity in 1940, just before it began its life-or-death struggle with Nazi Germany. He was arrested in 1941 and was sent to the notorious Lubyanka prison in Moscow. This began a period of pronounced suffering in his life, but it was also a "second seminary" through which he was able to develop his spiritual insights.

Among his worst experiences was solitary confinement for five years in Lubyanka, being placed on starvation rations combined with the psychological torture of being alone for long periods of time. He ordered his day as he did in the seminary, with prayer and work, such as polishing the floor. He was beaten by the guards there and repeatedly interrogated. He was then sent to Siberia, where he had to endure bitter cold, slave labor and physical exhaustion. After five years of no activity, he was forced to do back-breaking labor; every sinew of his body was wracked with pain day after day.

He learned to be a good priest while in prison. His experiences helped him come to view a priest as a witness and martyr and all that comes with it.

Father Ciszek was well educated. He

benefited from a traditional Jesuit formation. He studied philosophy and theology in Rome, as well as liturgy and Russian history. He had a knack for languages and was fluent in many. He grew up speaking both English and Polish.

He had little opportunity to read during his time in the gulag, however, and did not keep up on theological trends. He did object, however, when fundamental Catholic teachings were called into question after the Second Vatican Council and believed those who justified such heterodoxy were misinterpreting the teachings of the Council.

After his return from the Soviet Union, he'd take every meal with a piece of bread as a remembrance of his time imprisoned.

It was his practice of giving God thanks for seeing him through prison life and in memory of all the times when he had no bread.

Father Ciszek loved the Russian people, even his captors. He strived to see people as God sees them. He realized that even those who mistreated him were part of an unjust system and often didn't think clearly. He could be harsh with those who knew better, but was very understanding to the "Regular Joe" he encountered. He was known for his pithy sayings.

His most commonly cited advice was "Give God your lousy best." He also liked to joke that he was an "old milk cow" and that everyone who came to him wanted "a full bucket."

He died peacefully, rosary in hand. In his diary, his last written words were: "I have given all for you, my Lord."

St. Januarius' Blood Miraculously Liquefies Again in Naples



The Archdiocese of Naples, Italy, announced that the miracle of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius was repeated Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023, at the end of a Mass honoring him as the patron saint of the city.

The Italian archdiocese reported, "The announcement of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius was made" at the end of the Eucharist celebrated in the Royal Chapel of the Treasure of St. Januarius in the Naples cathedra

The Mass was celebrated by Monsignor Vincenzo De Gregorio on the occasion of the feast of the patronage of St. Januarius, which is traditionally accompanied by the hope of the prodigious liquefaction of the blood of the patron saint. The miracle of liquefaction traditionally occurs three times a year: in commemoration of the transfer of his remains to Naples (the Saturday before the first Sunday in May), on his liturgical feast (Sept. 19), and on the anniversary of the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius in 1631 when his intercession was invoked and the city was spared from the effects of the eruption (Dec. 16).

However, on Nov. 23, the miracle also reportedly occurred unexpectedly after Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I held the relic on a visit to the Naples cathedral. The event was confirmed in an email to the National Catholic Register from the general vicar of the Orthodox dioceses of Italy, Father Vissarion Vakaros.

"We can assure as ocular witnesses the miracle that you mentioned," Vakaros said. "Indeed when our patriarch took the relic of the blood of our father Januarius in his hands [it] was liquified."

Meet the Catholic Man Walking Across America to Pray for the Country with No Money - Just a Backpack!



Joe Domina, a 30-year-old Catholic man from Indiana, made headlines when he revealed his plan to walk across America as a pilgrimage, visiting Catholic shrines and praying for the country.

Domina started at the Statue of Liberty and has been to seven states thus far: Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

He said he is praying for the country to rely more on God and less on money. "Today my son turns 30! Happy Birthday, Joey!" his mother said. "Few people know that he is on a pilgrimage. This has been a calling for many years and he said 'Mom, it's time.' "I am at peace with it and know he is answering God's call. He left late August from the Statue of Liberty

and as of today is nearing Shreveport, La. The stories, kindness, and faith he has had are overwhelming. He journals every day, so we will have stories forever. "When he left, he had his 50-pound backpack and no money. I begged him to take a flip phone and a few days' supply of food. Sharing the Gospel, praying with people, and atoning for his sins and those of America is his mission. He has many destinations, but moving from one Catholic Church to the next has been his plan. "I could list 40 people who have sent me pictures of him and shared their experiences about meeting him. Truly amazing, kind, loving, and generous people, priests, store owners, hotel operators, park rangers. One day in Louisiana, more than 50 People stopped him to talk and pray with him. "Thank you to all the amazingly generous and loving people he has met. He probably has another year to go and hopes to end up in California. Thank you for your prayers, and God Bless America!"

"I feel like God has something for me in the midst of it," he continues. "If it comes up to preach or to share the Good News, I'm happy to do that, but I think that the most important thing (at least what God is calling me to) is praying for the country."

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Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London Hangs Over 500 Paper Angels for Children Who Died in War



"When God created man, war was never part of his plan. We place our trust in the Lord."



Is It Okay to Applaud at Mass? What Popes Have Said About It

Oftentimes, we see or hear about people applauding others during or at the end of Mass.

Whether it be for the priest after a homily, for a cantor, or even for the choir after the liturgy concludes—is this okay?

Many have opinions regarding this, but over the years, various popes provided their thoughts on the matter.

Before he became Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger wrote this in the 2000 publication of "The Spirit of the Liturgy": "Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment. Such attraction

fades quickly - it cannot compete in the market of leisure pursuits, incorporating as it increasingly does various forms of religious titillation."

Other popes have also added their input on the subject, including Pope Saint John XXIII and Pope Saint Pius X.

As the faithful waited for Pope Saint John XXIII's arrival at a church outside Rome, he said, "I am very glad to have come here. But if I must express a wish, it is that in church you not shout out, that you not clap your hands, and that you not greet even the Pope, because "The temple of God is the temple of God."

Pope Saint Pius X said, "It is not fitting that the servant should be applauded in his Master's house."

Finally, former *Catholic Answers* chaplain Father Vincent Serpa, O.P., also provided his opinion: "Absolutely not. It's most inappropriate and it's the responsibility of the pastor to make sure that the congregation understands this. The choir is not singing as a matter of entertaining anybody. They're singing to worship God. We don't clap for prayer. We pray."

"That is not an option. If we were someplace else it would be a different matter," he continued. "But liturgy is liturgy. It's the worship of God, and it needs to be done in an appropriate way as the Church sees fit. It's good that they appreciate the choir, but they can thank them outside. Applause is not appropriate at that time."

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris Continues Its Restoration Process



formidable image of hope and of a France that has rebuilt itself," Macron said. "This is an important and emotional moment."

The historic spire, which stood 315 feet tall, crashed through the centuries-old roof in a devastating fire that broke out on April 15, 2019. After several years, the spire once again made its reappearance in the skyline in November 2023.

Nearly 500 workers are on site daily working to complete the reconstruction. Beginning this year, they will start waterproofing the oak with lead. The cathedral's furnishings, statues, and artwork, as well as the organ, which was taken out for a complete restoration, will be brought back in throughout the year.

While renovation work on the exterior will continue for several more years, it is expected that Notre Dame will be able to welcome religious services and visitors on Dec. 8 of this year.

"It will be done," said Macron.

French President Emmanuel Macron, accompanied by Paris Archbishop Laurent Ulrich, visited the newly-built spire of Notre Dame on Dec. 8,

2023, and pledged that the reconstruction would be completed on schedule.

"Deadlines will be met. It is a



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