

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Divine Mercy of Jesus Council 17249

St. Jerome's Catholic Church 10895 Hamlin Blvd. Largo, FL
May 2021 Volume 3 Issue 2



Senate pro-life chair: Down syndrome abortions are 'eugenics'

Down syndrome abortions are eugenics, the Senate pro-life caucus chair Steve Daines (R-Mont.), told CNA in an interview. Eugenics is the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics. Developed largely by Francis Galton as a method of improving the human race, it fell into disfavor only after the perversion of its doctrines by the Nazis.



Daines has cosponsored the Protecting Individuals with Down Syndrome Act, sponsored by Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), which prohibits a doctor from performing an abortion that is sought because of a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome.

It is unclear exactly how many babies are aborted because of these prenatal diagnoses, but an estimated 67% of unborn babies with Down syndrome are aborted in the U.S. In some countries such as Iceland, the abortion rate for these cases is estimated to be close to 100%.

Daines called the abortion of babies with Down syndrome "the most lethal kind of discrimination imaginable."

He said, "It made me think about where this goes if you are selectively aborting children based on their chromosomes. Where does that go next? This is a moral question for our country that is basing life on capacity and potential, instead of the dignity the life should have—and that is that all babies, all humans, are created in God's image."

Daines founded the Senate Pro-Life Caucus in 2019.

OUR MISSION

Knights are Catholic men who build a bridge back to faith. There is much good and necessary work to be done in this world, and that's what Knights do every day.



FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF INTEREST TO CATHOLICS

Bill requiring burial or cremation of aborted babies advances in Tennessee

Alabama lets voters opt out of 'so help me God' on registration forms

Federal court upholds Ohio's Down syndrome abortion ban

California's limit on home religious gatherings too strict, US Supreme Court says

Pope to advance sainthood cause of EU 'founding father' Robert Schuman

Permitting mail-order abortion pills places women's health 'in serious jeopardy'

Benedict XVI turns 94 years old

St. Faustina relic given to Catholic basilica hit by Croatia earthquake

Planned Parenthood can't just wish away Margaret Sanger's racism, eugenics

FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND KNIGHT



Pete Grasso

Brothers:

We are coming to the end of our calendar year with the Knights' Council, and at the same time about to come out of this dreadful pandemic. It has certainly been a challenging year, but we have stuck together to accomplish many tasks. So much to be proud of. I believe that the programs will continue as they are built solidly in honoring God, assisting our Priests, Deacon; and Sister Lucia in achieving their mission and providing for our church family. I look forward to being a part of this team for years to come.

We have two very important missions to accomplish in the next couple of months. First, we will select the next team of

council officers to continue on this journey and provide the necessary leadership as we come out of the pandemic. To this point, we have worked closely with our pastor in providing him what he needed at an unprecedented time. We have a lot to be thankful for with Fr. Tom and his leadership. He has kept the church together. People received the sacraments and are starting to safely come back thanks in part to our weekly efforts.

The second mission is to continue with Mary's Grotto and the Spiritual Garden. We did not start out the year with this idea, but we believe that the Holy Spirit and Mary led us all the way. We will be kicking off a program of placing bricks in this sacred area where we will be able to honor ourselves and others by placing our names in front of Blessed Mary. At the same time, we will be raising funds to continue to provide a sanctuary on our church grounds. I know many people are using the Grotto for Rosary Rallies, meetings, and on May 4th our youth at the parish will be having the first Crowning of Mary. What an amazing tribute. It would not have happened without our amazing council.

Let us all continue to pray for health and security for our church family and ourselves. Vivat Jesus. Pete

WORDS OF WISDOM

Faith is not about everything turning out ok. It's about being ok, no matter how things turn out.

There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible

Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.

Faith is not belief without proof but trust without reservation.

Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.

FROM THE DESK OF OUR PASTOR FR. TOM MORGAN



Fr. Tom Morgan

Dear Brother Knights:

We recently completed our 2021 Lenten journey. We focused on "Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving." St. Paul reminds us in 1 Cor. 9:25 that, "Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one." Lent sharpens the saw of our spiritual life which should lead us to an ongoing practice of the "three disciplines of Lent." I posed three questions at the beginning

of Lent: Prayer: How might I make myself more available to God to hear what He has to say? Fasting: What intentions and who might be on my list to offer up the sacrifices that I will make during Lent? Almsgiving: How might I make the loving heart of our God visible and present to a hurting world? I suggest that we continue to ask these questions as we continue to "pray, fast, and give."

Let's consider our next great step in our relationship with Jesus and His call to discipleship. Hebrews 12:1 & 2, guides us to, "...persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith." We look to Jesus:

He prayed: Mark 1:35, "Rising very early before dawn, [Jesus] left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed." & Luke 6:12, "In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and [Jesus] spent the night in prayer to God."

He fasted: Matthew 4:2, "[Jesus] fasted for forty days and forty nights..."

He gave: Jesus' entire life was one of giving but we see Him feeding the hungry in Matthew 14:21.

Yes, Lent is over and we have just started the Easter season but let's not stop now. Perhaps, our song needs to be, "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." What's your plan?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Morgan





MAY BIRTHDAYS



Jim Sander
May 4



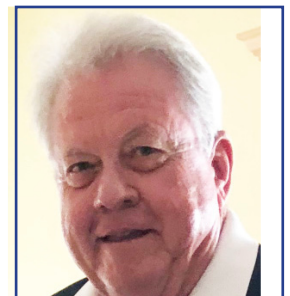
Greg Musick
May 6



Peter McCabe
May 10



Bill Leary
May 11



Bill Spires
May 14

‘Going to Get Worse Before It Gets Better’ Religious Membership Decline Prompts Sober Reflection

Church membership in the U.S. fell below 50% for the first time ever. What are the factors in play, and what does it mean for the Church going forward?

In one sense, the latest numbers from Gallup on religious membership in the U.S. are hardly newsworthy. The rate of membership has been dropping steadily since the turn of the 21st century, and the 3% decrease between 2018 and 2021 is simply par for the course. But while the incremental drop isn't especially significant, the threshold crossed in the process is.

For the first time ever, fewer than half of Americans say they belong to a church or other religious community. The rate, which hovered around 70% for decades before beginning its gradual decline in 2000, is now only 47%. Stephen Bullivant, a professor of theology and sociology at St. Mary's University in the United Kingdom, described the sub-50% figure as a "symbolic marker." "This is one more little data point alongside a great many that are all, for the most part, pointing in a single direction," said Bullivant. He added that, "Although the rate of church membership began its noticeable decline around the year 2000, the factors that set those trends into play were generations in the making." Previous drop-offs in rates of attendance at religious services or adherence to the moral teachings of one's faith contrib-



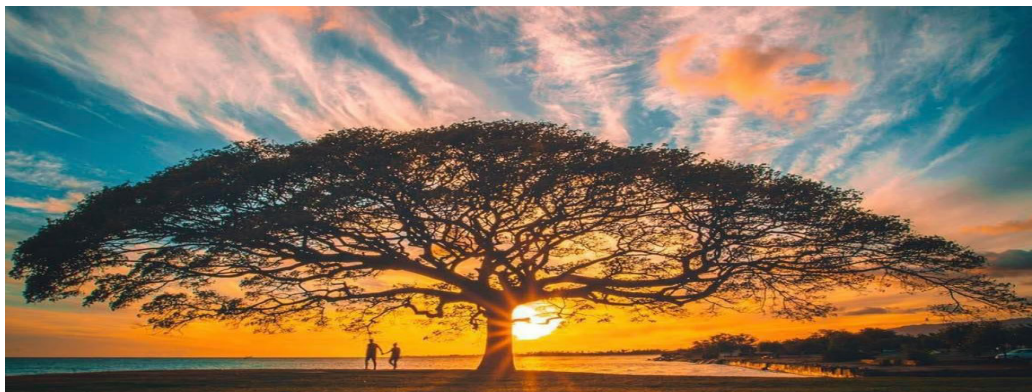
ute to an overall weakening in religiosity, which grows in its transmission from one generation to the next. "Therefore," he continued, "it's unsurprising that the decline in church membership is largely manifested by a simple generational shift, as the less-religious younger generations gradually replace their more-religious elders. The Gallup study, for instance, found that only 36% of millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996) belonged to a church, compared to 66% of those born before 1947."

The overall trends illustrated by the study seem especially exacerbated in Catholic circles.

Since 2000, the rate of church membership has dropped twice as quickly among self-identified Catholics than it has among Protestants (nine points, down to 64%). And although the sense of "membership" employed in this study differs from that used in Catholic theology, which emphasizes baptismal status, those figures are still sobering realities for Church leaders.

While the rate of church membership is now below 50%, the level of religious affiliation still remains above 70%. In fact, the steady 20-year decline in church membership among the religiously affiliated (13 points, from 73% to 60%) indicates a significant gap between "believing" and "belonging," what Bullivant called a "non-practicing hinterland."

THE
HEAVENS
DECLARE
THE
GLORY
OF
GOD



THE
TREE
OF
LIFE

Grotto and Mary's Garden Continue to Change with Improvements



Joe Ghezzi and team are still hard at work adding to the grotto and Mary's Garden. As can be seen in the pictures, he has put an Irish cross on the front edge and an epoxy finish on the top. We are so fortunate to have a man like Joe Ghezzi at our parish, as well as his wonderful band of workers.



This is an expanded view of the rock with a Jerusalem cross in it.



This image sits on the top of the altar, front and center. It can be seen from the above altar image.

The Image of The Divine Mercy originated from a vision St. Faustina had on Feb. 22, 1931. She recorded the event in her Diary, which she kept at the Lord's request. She wrote:

"In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing; the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, "Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then] throughout the world." (Diary, 47).

So what does the image mean? The Image of The Divine Mercy represents the risen Christ whose hands and feet bear the marks of the Crucifixion. When asked about the meaning of the rays from His pierced Heart, In her vision Jesus explained, *"The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross"* (Diary, 299).

Lithuanian Catholic Archbishop: We Must Carry the Banner of Divine Mercy out to the World

Archbishop Gintaras Grušas believes that Lithuania has a “big message” for the world.

The archbishop of the country’s capital, Vilnius, points out that the city witnessed one of the most momentous events in 20th-century Catholic history.

It was there that the Polish nun St. Faustina Kowalska experienced many of the visions of Jesus that she recorded in her Diary.

The city contains the original Divine Mercy image, the only one that St. Faustina saw before her death in 1938 at the age of 33.

“We have the shrine to Divine Mercy, which is growing,” Grušas told CNA in an interview.

The convent where St. Faustina lived and saw the revelations is still open. It’s a convent, but it’s also a pilgrimage site.”

He continued: “The four cities that are associated with St. Faustina -- Warsaw,

Kraków, Płock, and Vilnius -- were given the mandate during her canonization by St. John Paul II to carry the banner of Divine Mercy out to the world. So, as the bishop of Vilnius, I have that mandate as well.”

“This is a time with the pandemic. Praying for God’s mercy is ever so much important. Also works of mercy towards our neighbors: that is a message that Pope Francis repeats very often and reminds us of.”

Grušas (pronounced “Grushas”) was born in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 23, 1961, to a family of Lithuanian origin. He spent the first half of his life in the United States, becoming heavily involved in Lithuanian Catholic organizations.

According to his official biography, he was active at the Lithuanian parish of St. Casimir in Los Angeles and with the Catholic Ateitis Federation, as well as serving as head of the World Lithuanian Youth Association from 1983 to 1987.



Our Knights proudly attend the Divine Mercy of Jesus Holy Hour on Sunday, April 11, 3 pm.

A white lie is an untrue statement, but it is usually considered unimportant because it does not cover up a serious wrongdoing. A white lie is deceptive, but it may also be polite or diplomatic at the same time. It could be a “tactful” lie told to keep the peace in a relationship; it could be a “helpful” lie to ostensibly benefit someone else. Some white lies are common: lying about one’s age, for example, or the size of the fish that got away. The secretary “covers” for the boss who doesn’t want to be disturbed; the salesman exaggerates the qualities of his product; the job applicant pads his résumé. The reasoning is, as long as no one is hurt or the result is good, little lies are fine. Telling a white lie to be “tactful” or to

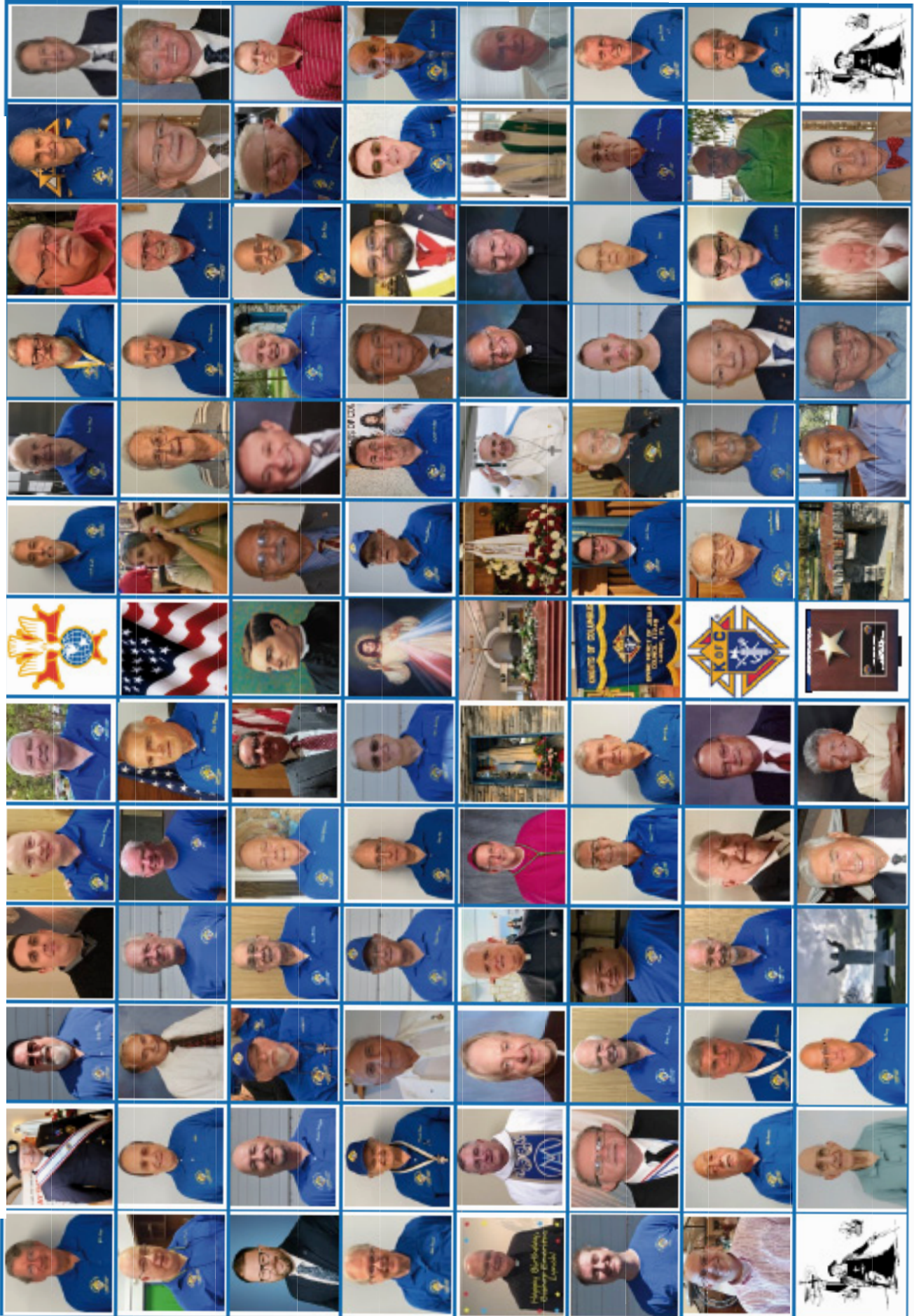
spare someone’s feelings is also a foolish thing to do. A person who consistently lies to make people feel good will eventually be seen for what he is: a liar. Those who traffic in white lies will damage their credibility.

Telling a white lie to benefit oneself is nothing but selfishness. When our words are motivated by the pride of life, we are falling into temptation.

Sometimes telling the truth is not easy; in fact, it can be downright unpleasant. But we are called to be truth-tellers. Being truthful is precious to God; it demonstrates the fear of Lord. Furthermore, to tell the truth is not a suggestion, it is a command.



KofC Council 17249 The Divine Mercy of Jesus St. Jerome Catholic Parish Larao Florida



THESE KNIGHTS WILL BE IDENTIFIED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Identification of Knights on Previous Page

1st Row: Knight (Jim) James Allen; Sir Knight (Bob) Robert J Anderson FVN PSD; Worthy Advocate Sir Knight Gregg P Appel PGK. Knight (Don) Donald Appel, Worthy Deputy Grand Sir Knight Dr. Billy Baldwin Jr; Sir Knight (Bill) Willis Bannon; Knight Manny Barros; Sir Knight (Fred) Frederick Belzel, Financial Secretary Knight (Jim) James Blackwell; Sir Knight (Ray) Raymond Boduch; Sir Knight (Rick) Richard H Boivin; Knight Jack Bordeaux Sr.

2nd Row: Worthy Treasurer Sir Knight Boone Bowen III; Knight (Nick) Nicholas Cambardella; Sir Knight Frank Carotenuto; Knight (Tom) Thomas Christy; Sir Knight (Jim) James Cullinan; Knight (Tom) Thomas Deeks; Knight Larry Dolan; Knight (Jim) James Dolan; Knight (Bob) Robert Dougherty; Knight (Danny) Daniel Elliott; Knight (Jack) John Fitzgerald; Knight John Francks.

3rd Row: KoC Ins. Field Agent Knight Francesco Franzese; Knight Ralph Frizzle; Sir Knight (Ed) Edward Garnier; Sir Knight (Joe) Joseph Ghezzi; Knight Mark Godcharles; Knight Paul Grant; Worthy Grand Sir Knight Pete Grasso Jr; Knight (Rick) Richard Gregorio; Knight (Mike) Michael Guarino; Worthy Recorder Knight Jim Hand; Sir Knight (Rick) Richard Hendrickson; Knight (Rich) Richard Jennings.

4th Row: Knight (Bob) Robert Kimsel; Worthy Chancellor Sir Knight (Chuck) Charles Lake; Knight (Bill) William Leary; Sir Knight Edgar Lecuyer; Knight Paul Lee; Sir Knight (Pete) Peter McCabe; Sir Knight (Danny) Daniel McConnell PGK; Knight (Andy) Andrew McLane; Knight (Fred) Frederich Melchiorri; Sir Knight District Deputy Jorge Mercado; Knight (Bob) Robert Mills; Sir Knight (Pat) Patrick Minucci.

5th Row: Bishop Emeritus Sir Knight Rev Robert Lynch; Deacon Knight Fred Kunder; Pastor Emeritus Knight Msgr. Brendan Muldoon; Worthy Chaplain Sir Knight-Pastor Fr. Tom Morgan; Most Rev. Sir Knight Bishop Gregory L Parkes; His Holiness Pope Francis; Parochial Vicar Fr. Rob Cadrecha; Asst. Priest Knight Very Rev Fr. Joe Walters; Our Shepherds Pastors Fr. Tom & Fr. Rob; Parish Business Mgr. Knight Deacon Cris Stout.

6th Row: Knight (Phil) Philip Monnig II; Worthy Outside Guard Sir Knight Joe Moore; Sir Knight (Greg) Gregory Musick; Knight Thuy Nguyen; Knight (Pat) Patrick O'Leary; Sir Knight (Jim) James Patton; Knight Jason Peterson; Sir Knight (Jim) James Prevatt; Knight Jeff Puskaric; Knight Linus Rautenstrauch; Knight Henry Rodriguez; Knight John Ronnlof III.

7th Row: Knight Scott Sacchi; Sir Knight (Jim) James Sander; Worthy Warden Gene Sanders; Knight Charlie Scott; Knight (Bill) William Spires; Atty. Sir Knight (Wes) Wesley Stacknik; Knight (Rich) Richard Tomaino; Knight (Pete) Peter Velazquez; Worthy Trustee Sir Knight (Dave) David Wilson; Knight (Ed) Edward Wirth Jr.; Knight Mark Wisner; Knight (Chet) Chester Wojciechowski.

8th Row: Knight Emblem; Knight (Mel) Melvin Wrubel; Knight (Joe) Joseph Zanga; (in Memoriam) Dr. Sir Knight (Tony) Anthony Cottone; Sir Knight (Bill) William DeVarti; Knight Mayor (Bob) Robert DiNicola; Sir Knight Carl Hawkins; Cmdr. Sir Knight (Charlie) Charles Stuart O'Toole & Knight (Fonzee) Alfonso Ramos; Knight Emblem KoC COUNCIL #17249 THE DIVINE MERCY of JESUS, ST JEROME CATHOLIC PARISH LARGO, FLORIDA

(Knights not pictured)

Knight (Ron) Ronald Bozzuto; Knight (Dave) David Bright; (Vic) Victor Carro; Alphonso Castagnini; Knight (Art) Arthur Corby.

Knight Paul Craig; Knight (Jim) James Donelan; Sir Knight Bill McClelland; Knight Wayne Nunez; Knight Paul Partridge

...and the Mission Continues.

Mother's Day, Sunday, May 9, 2021

During the 19th century, women's peace groups in the United States tried to establish holidays and regular activities in favor of peace and against war. A common early activity was the meeting of groups of mothers whose sons had fought or died on opposite sides of the American Civil War.

In 1868, a woman by the name of Ann Jarvis organized a committee to establish a "Mother's Friendship Day," the purpose of which was "...to reunite families that had been divided during the Civil War." She had previously organized Mother's Day Work Clubs to improve sanitation and health for both Union and Confederate encampments undergoing a typhoid outbreak and wanted to expand these into an annual memorial for mothers, but she died in 1905 before the annual celebration was established.

Several years later a Mother's Day observance on May 13, 1877, was held in Albion, Michigan, over a dispute related to the temperance movement. According to local legend, Albion pioneer Juliet Calhoun Blakeley stepped up to complete the sermon of the Rev. Myron Daugherty who was distraught because an anti-temperance group had forced his son and two other temperance ad-

vocates at gunpoint to spend the night in a saloon and become publicly drunk. From the pulpit Blakeley called on other mothers to join her. Blakeley's two sons, both traveling salesmen, were so moved that they vowed to return each year to pay tribute to her and embarked on a campaign to urge

their business contacts to do likewise. At their urging, in the early 1880s, the Methodist Episcopal Church in Albion set aside the second Sunday in May to recognize the special contributions of mothers.

Frank E. Hering, alumnus and administrator at the University of Notre Dame and President of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, made a plea for setting aside one day in the year as a nationwide memorial to the memories of mothers and motherhood in 1904. After observing a class of Notre Dame students sending home penny postcards to their mothers, Hering went on to be a vocal advocate for a national Mother's Day for the next decade. As Hering stated in a 1941 issue of Scholastic: "Throughout history the great men of the world have given their credit for their achievements to their mothers. [The] Holy Church recognizes this, as does Notre Dame especially, and Our

Lady who watches over our great institution."

In its present form, Mother's Day was established by Anna Jarvis with the help of Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker following the death of her mother, Ann Jarvis, on May 9, 1905. Jarvis never mentioned Howe or Mothering Sunday, and she never mentioned any connection to the Protestant school celebrations, always claiming that the creation of Mother's Day was hers alone.

On May 10, 1913, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution calling on all federal government officials to wear a white carnation the following day in observance of Mother's Day. On May 8, 1914, the U.S. Congress passed a law designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day and requesting a proclamation. The next day, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation declaring the first national Mother's Day as a day for American citizens to show the flag in honor of those mothers whose sons had died in war. In 1934, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved a stamp commemorating the holiday.

In May 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives voted twice on a resolution commemorating Mother's Day, the first one being passed without a dissenting vote. The Grafton church, where the first celebration was held, is now the International Mother's Day Shrine and is a National Historic Landmark.



PENTECOST SUNDAY IS MAY 23 THIS YEAR

Pentecost always occurs 50 days after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and ten days after his ascension into heaven. Because Easter is a moveable feast without a fixed date, and Pentecost depends on the timing of Easter, Pentecost can fall anywhere between May 10 and June 13.

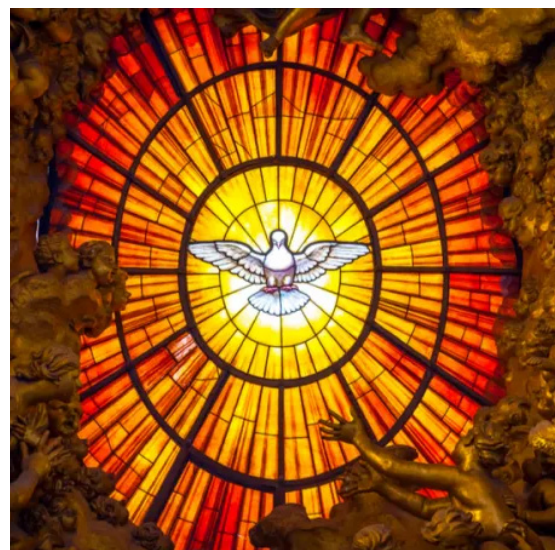
The timing of these feasts is also where Catholics get the concept of the Novena - nine days of prayer - because in Acts 1, Mary and the Apostles prayed together "continuously" for nine days after the Ascension leading up to Pentecost. Traditionally, the Church prays the Novena to the Holy Spirit in the days before Pentecost.

In the Christian tradition, Pentecost is the celebration of the person of the Holy Spirit coming upon the Apostles, Mary, and the first followers of Jesus, who were gathered together in the Upper Room.

A "strong, driving" wind filled the room where they were gathered, and tongues of fire came to rest on their heads, allowing them to speak in different languages so that they could understand each other. It was such a strange

phenomenon that some people thought the Christians were just drunk - but Peter pointed out that it was only the morning, and said the phenomenon was caused by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also gave the apostles the other gifts and fruits necessary to fulfill the great commission - to go out and preach the Gospel to all nations. It fulfills the New Testament promise from Christ (Luke 24:46-49) that the Apostles would be "clothed with power" before they would be sent out to spread the Gospel.

It was right after Pentecost that Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, preached his



first homily to Jews and other non-believers, in which he opened the scriptures of the Old Testament, showing how the prophet Joel prophesied events and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. He also told the people that the Jesus they crucified is the Lord and was

raised from the dead, which "cut them to the heart." When they asked what they should do, Peter exhorted them to repent of their sins and to be baptised.

According to the account in Acts, about 3,000 people were baptised following Peter's sermon.

Fake Corpus Christi Film Still Causes Concern

A "film" called Corpus Christi has provoked the ire of some for its alleged portrayal of a gay Jesus: the only issue is the Censor's Office says this film does not exist. Although there is no Corpus Christi film about homosexual Apostles, the complainants are almost accurate as Corpus Christi is a real theatre production. It was written in 1969 by Pulitzer winning American screenwriter Terrence McNally. His play retells the story of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, with the point of difference being they are gay. When his play toured the US almost 30 years after it was written, The New York Times reported religious protesters tried to stop the performances. A performance was cancelled after bomb threats were made, the paper said. Decades later, the play still elicits fury. A university performance was cancelled in Texas after the state intervened. And in 2012, another performance of the controversial play was cancelled in Greece when protests turned violent, The Guardian reported.

In New Zealand, Talbot says, even if it wanted to the Classifications Office couldn't ban the play because it has no power over live performances.

Just this week, someone sent the Censor a complaint about the "film." "This was the first for a few years. There were seven complaints during 2013 and 2014," Talbot says.

If the play is filmed, then he says it could be classified but is unlikely to be banned. "We can't ban something simply for being offensive – even if it offends



people in relation to their deeply held religious belief," he says. If, however, the film includes sex scenes it could earn itself an age restriction.

In case you were wondering, Talbot says it's unusual to receive complaints about fake films. "The complaints about Corpus Christi seem to be the result of a long-running hoax."

Should Suffering Shake Our Faith?

Premier Christian Radio in the UK recently investigated how the COVID crisis has affected religious beliefs and attitudes. There were three major findings: 67% of those who characterize themselves as religious found their belief in God challenged, almost a quarter of all those questioned said that



the pandemic made them more fearful of death, and that a third of those surveyed said that their prayer life had been affected by the crisis.

Justin Brierley, who hosts the popular program Unbelievable, commented that he was especially impressed by the substantial number of those who, due to COVID, have experienced difficulty believing in a loving God.

An altogether standard objection to belief in God is human suffering, especially when it is visited upon the innocent. Atheists ask the believer, "How could you possibly assert the existence of a loving God given the Holocaust, school shootings, and tsunamis that kill hundreds of thousands of people, pandemics, etc.?" This argument is utterly unconvincing. Anyone who reads the Scriptures carefully could never conclude that belief in a loving God is somehow incompatible with suffering. There is no question that God loved Noah, and yet He put Noah through the

enslaved, exiled, and brutalized by her enemies. Finally, God delivered his only-begotten Son to be tortured to death on a cross.

The biblical authors saw no contradiction whatsoever between affirming the existence of a loving God and the fact of human suffering. Rather, they appreciated it as the plan of God.

Sometimes, scholars have speculated, suffering is visited upon us as punishment for sin. Other times, it might be a means by which God effects a spiritual purification in his people. Still other times, it might be the only way that, given the conditions of a finite universe, God could bring about certain goods. But they also acknowledged that, more often than not, we just don't know how suffering fits into God's designs. Practically the entire burden of the book of Job is to show this. When Job protests against what he takes to be the massive injustice of his sufferings, God responds with a lengthy speech, in fact

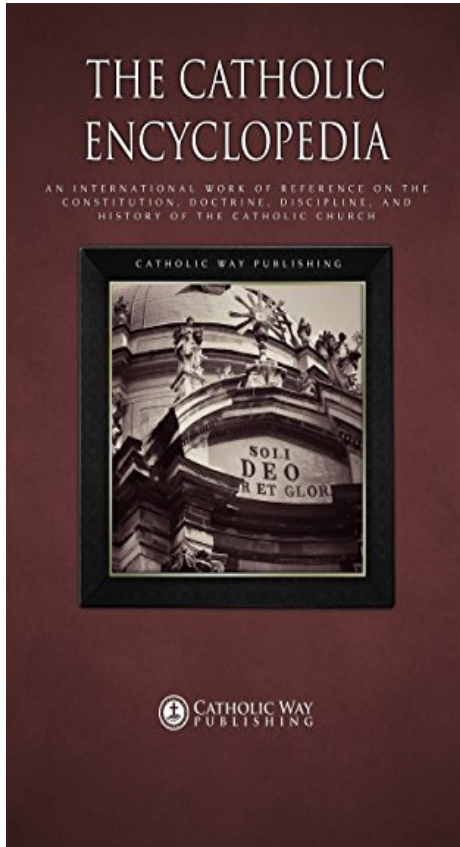
his longest oration in the Bible, reminding Job of how much of God's purposes his humble human servant does not know: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth . . ."

Once again, whether they half-understood the purpose of human suffering or understood it not at all, no biblical author was tempted to say that said evil is incompatible with the existence of a loving God. To be sure, they lamented and complained, but the recipient of the lamentation and complaint was none other than the God who, they firmly believed, loved them. Many of us feel today that suffering poses an insurmountable obstacle to belief in God, but this feeling is a function of the fact that religious leaders have been rather inept at teaching the biblical doctrine of God. For if human suffering undermines your belief in God, then, quite simply, you were not believing in the God presented by the Bible.

None of the above is meant to make light of the awful experience of suffering or cavalierly to dismiss the intellectual tensions that it produces. It is to invite people into a deeper encounter with the mystery of God. Like Jacob who wrestled all night with the angel, we must not give up on God but rather struggle with him. Our suffering shouldn't lead us to dismiss the divine love, but rather to appreciate it as stranger than we ever imagined. It is perfectly understandable that, like Job, we might shout our protest against God, but then, like that great spiritual hero, we must be willing to hear the Voice that answers us from the whirlwind.

by Bishop Robert Barron (edited)

What Does the Catholic Encyclopedia Say about Relics?



The teaching of the Catholic Church with regard to the veneration of relics is summed up in a decree of the Council of Trent which enjoins bishops and other pastors to instruct their flocks that "The holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these [bodies] many benefits are bestowed by God on men. Further, the council insists that "In the invocation of saints the veneration of relics and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed and all filthy lucre abolished."

The justification of Catholic practice is further developed in the authoritative "Roman Catechism" drawn up at the instance of the same council. Recalling the marvels witnessed at the tombs of the martyrs, where "The blind and cripples are restored to health, the dead recalled to life, and devils expelled from the bodies of men" the Catechism points out that these are facts which "St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, most unexceptionable witnesses, declare in their writings that they have not merely heard and read about, as many did but have seen with their own eyes.' And from thence, turning to Scriptural analogies, the compilers further argue: "If the clothes, the kerchiefs, if the shadow of the saints (Acts, v, 15), before they departed from this life banished diseases and restored strength, who will have the hardihood to deny that God wonderfully works the same by the sacred ashes, the bones, and other relics of the saints? This is the lesson we have to learn from that dead body which, having been accidentally let down into the sepulcher of Eliseus, "when it had touched the bones of the Prophet, instantly came to life" (4 Kings xiii, 21. We may add that this miracle as well as the veneration shown to the bones of Moses only gain additional force.

While we love and venerate the saints who were so dear to God, we also venerate all that belonged to them, and particularly their bodies, which were once the temples of the Holy Spirit, and which are some day to be conformed to the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 19: 11, 12, "And God wrought by the hand of Paul more than common miracles. So that even there were brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out from them" there can be no inexactitude in saying that these also were the things by which God wrought the cure.

(Continued in the next issue)