WASHINGTON (CNS) — Vanessa Urbina understands how young people in Central America, not seeing an opportunity for work or a good education, could be attracted to make the dangerous trip north in the hope of a better future in the United States.

"Some live in neighborhoods dominated with guns, violence and drug trafficking," she said. "It discourages them from wanting to go to school. It closes the door for them."

As coordinator of Fe y Alegria (Faith and joy), a training and support program for teenagers and young adults in El Progreso, Honduras, Urbina is working to overcome such negative influences and engender a belief that emigration is not the only option.

The operation partners with Catholic Relief Service’s YouthBuild program, which helps unemployed and out-of-school young people, ages 16 to 24, return to school, find work or start their own business.

Fe y Alegria enrolls 400 to 600 young people in each session, said Urbina, 37, who has been coordinator for more than six years after completing her master’s degree in Taiwan.

The program’s goal is to keep people in local communities so that they can help build a stronger economy in one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere. Students learn various skills in automotive and motorcycle repair, graphic arts, website development, baking and agriculture.

About 20 similar YouthBuild programs exist in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, said Rick Jones, senior technical adviser in Latin American and the Caribbean for CRS, the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency.

The program is adapted from a model of the same name developed in the United States in the 1970s. Coursework is based on demands of the local labor markets.

Beyond skill development, the programs help students develop interpersonal and life skills, including self-esteem, conflict resolution and teamwork.

Despite Fe y Alegria’s efforts, some students are enticed to leave because their families decide to head north, Urbina told Catholic News Service. Last winter about 20 students — of 467 enrollees — decided to emigrate.
Court allows Trump administration to bar asylum-seekers for now

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court issued an unsigned order late Sept. 11 that will temporarily allow the Trump administration to enforce its new rule preventing many Central American migrants from seeking asylum in the United States, while the legal battle over this issue continues to work its way through the courts.

The U.S. Supreme Court building is seen in Washington Nov. 13. The Supreme Court issued an unsigned order late Sept. 11 that will temporarily allow the Trump administration to enforce its new rule preventing many Central American migrants from seeking asylum in the United States, while the legal battle over this issue continues to work its way through the courts.

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Dorian recovery work shows ‘we are your brother’s keeper,’ says volunteer

BY TOM TRACY

MIAMI (CNS) — As catastrophic as Hurricane Dorian was, the characteristic optimism of Bahamians will help soften the painful recovery to come, according to a hurricane-preparedness volunteer in Nassau.

“There was nothing we could have done to prepare (for Hurricane Dorian), but when you talk to me again five years from now, I will be happy to tell you we will be back on our feet again because we are very resilient people,” said Basil Christie, a former religious education director for the Archdiocese of Nassau in the Bahamas.

Now a retired insurance executive, he said he regularly assists the Catholic Church with hurricane preparedness and recovery. He spoke by phone Sept. 10 with Florida Catholic, Miami’s archdiocesan newspaper.

Christie is a native of the Bahamas and for the past 15 years in his retirement, he has traveled to the country’s many islands to coordinate and promote volunteer hurricane preparedness programs and follow-up recovery efforts after many lesser hurricanes touched parts of the nation.

He estimates that each year at least some part of the Bahamas has suffered hurricane damage and that although the country has high building code standards, Dorian’s 200-mph wind gusts and considerable storm surge means those building codes will have to be revisited.

“Normally the maximum wind is 110 mph and restricted to the southern islands,” he said.

Also, in previous years, hurricane winds blew off roofs, but Dorian blew homes off their foundations on the Abaco and Grand Bahama islands, “so it is a different situation,” he added.

“There are lessons to be learned from this: Our building code needs to be augmented, and we will need better shelters,” Christie said, adding that so many families have stories of watching family members get washed out to sea in the storm.

In the days since Hurricane Dorian, he has been helping coordinate volunteer efforts from Nassau, where cellphone communications are working, and he planned to travel soon to Grand Bahama Island.

He said evacuated families arriving in Nassau are being placed in ad hoc housing situations including gymnasiums, orphanages, convents, hostels and hotel rooms with sometimes four and five people to a room.

“We are having to create as we go,” he said, noting that many evacuees have families in Nassau, but those who don’t are staying in local Catholic and public schools.

Christie echoed concerns that many facilities in the Bahamas are already overcrowded and that material and financial support follow.

“I have learned from this: Our building codes will have to be revisited, and an astonishing and overwhelming thing is that all these people are coming to Nassau and they are finding them a place to stay,” he said.

Editor’s Note: Donations for recovery efforts in the Bahamas can be sent to Catholic Relief Services here: https://support.crs.org/donate/hurricane-dorian and to Catholic Charities USA here: https://app.mobliecause.com/form/RTKRXq?tid=1.

Tom Tracy writes for the Florida Catholic, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Miami.
Indian Days brings together diverse tribes to celebrate customs, faith

BY ELIZABETH BOO NEUBERGER

BROWNING, Mont. (CNS) — For nearly 70 years, the Blackfeet Nation has hosted its annual Indian Days in Browning in the northwestern corner of Montana. Every July, the four-day powwow attracts 10,000 participants who stay in teepees and tents on the campgrounds of the Blackfeet Reservation.

Among the largest Indian gatherings nationwide, visitors are welcome to attend this cultural event, which took place July 11–14 this year.

One of the biggest highlights for Catholics participating in Indian Days is the Sunday morning Mass, which about 400 people attend. Steeped in Church teachings and rituals but sparkling with Indian customs and symbolism — sage burning, drummers and headdresses — the outdoor Mass highlights the unique expression of being Native American Catholic.

The bishop of Helena, the diocese where the Blackfeet Reservation is located, concelebrates the Mass with several priests.

Attending the festival are Native Americans from every region of the United States and Canada, representing some 50 tribes. Young and old come together and the interaction between generations is joyful to witness. Most are dressed in elegant and intricately decorated native attire, which brings a hint of the outdoors to the Mass with several priests.

This year’s Mass begins with a dramatization of a traditional Native American wedding ceremony. The priest, Father Ed Kohler, portrays a Blackfeet chief as he speaks with the Indian woman, played by a Crow actress, and the priest.

The couple are married as drums and drums are played. The ceremony is followed by dancing and singing.

“The only way to bring hope and solace to a community is to be there for them,” said Father Kohler, a parish priest of Little Flower Parish in Browning.

He made the comments in an interview with Extension, the magazine of Catholic Extension, about the work of Catholic Extension.

Catholic Extension has been in existence for nearly 70 years, the Blackfeet Nation said, “Father Ed is a tree rooted in the community. His fruit feeds us.”

Father Kohler is helping to uplift the community. At Little Flower Parish, he initiated the Cursillo movement, a series of retreats and workshops, to help strengthen the faith of parishioners. Across from the church, he helped establish the grade school, De La Salle Blackfeet, which serves 70 students in grades four to eight. Father Kohler is particularly focused on engaging the youth as they are few facilities for them to enjoy social activities and the Blackfeet Reservation has one of the highest high school dropout rates in the U.S.

As Father Kohler says Masses for young victims of suicide.

Indian Days Mass, and he agrees with Barnes.

As the only Catholic priest within 30 miles of Browning, he sees the Indians’ struggles on the reservation — poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, despair and tensions around cultural identity. Unemployment hovers around 80%. He often says Masses for young victims of suicide.

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His mission is to give them a brighter future.

Chief Earl Old Person of the Blackfeet Nation said, “Father Ed is a tree rooted in the community. His fruit feeds us.”

Catholic Extension has been supporting the Diocese of Helena since its first church building grant there in 1911, granting more than $20 million to the diocese. Seventy-seven of these grants have been related to Native American ministries, with half going to Little Flower Parish.

Father Kohler received Catholic Extension’s Lumen Christi Award in 2010, an annual award given to missionaries who courageously and compassionately shine the light of Christ, for his devotion to Native American Catholics.

In the past five years, throughout the country, Catholic Extension has funded $4.1 million to support Native Americans and the Alaskan Native population in 23 dioceses.

As seen during the Mass at Indian Days in Browning, Native Americans have inspiring faith traditions and many gifts to bring to the Church. In turn, the Catholic Church is a beacon of hope and solace as they face their daily hardships.

Elizabeth Boo Neuberger is the editor of Extension, the magazine of Catholic Extension.
Africa trip planted new seeds of hope, pope says at audience

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Having gone to Africa as a pilgrim of peace and hope, Pope Francis said he hoped the seeds planted there by his visit would bear abundant fruit for everyone.

Following in the footsteps of evangelizing saints before him, the pope said he sought to bring with him “the leaven of Christ” and his Gospel, which is “the most powerful leaven of fraternity, justice and peace for all people.”

Speaking to some 12,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 11, the pope recalled his fourth apostolic journey to Africa. He dedicated his general audience talk to a review of some of the highlights from his visit to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius Sept. 4-10.

The pope said he wanted to “sow the seeds of hope, peace and reconciliation” in Mozambique, which had experienced two devastating cyclones recently and 15 years of civil war.

While the Church continues to guide the nation along the path of peace, the pope made special mention of the Rome-based Community of Sant’Egidio, which had facilitated the mediation process that resulted in the nation’s 1992 peace agreement.

Speaking off-the-cuff, the pope said, “I would like to take a moment to thank” the lay community for their hard work in this peace process.

He said he also encouraged Mozambique’s leaders to keep working together for the common good, and he noted how he saw that kind of cooperation in action at a hospital he visited that helps people, especially mothers and children, with HIV and AIDS.

“I saw that the patients were the most important thing” at the Sant’Egidio-run center, which was staffed by people of different religious beliefs, including the director of the hospital, who was Muslim, he said.

Everyone worked together, “united, like brothers and sisters,” he said.

Reflecting on Madagascar, the pope noted how beautiful and rich in natural resources the country is, but that it is still marked by tremendous poverty.

He said he asked that the obstacles they face and foster development that respect both the environment and social justice.

In fact, “one cannot build a city worthy of human dignity without faith and prayer,” he said when he spoke to contemplative religious women.

Pilgrims from Senegal wait for Pope Francis to arrive for his general audience at St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Sept. 11.

Pope Francis said he wanted to visit Mauritius because it has become “a place of integration between different ethnicities and cultures.”

Not only was interreligious dialogue well-established there, he said, there were strong bonds of friendship among the leaders of different religions.

“It would seem strange to us, but they have this friendship that is so natural,” he said, explaining how touched he was to find a large bouquet of flowers sent to him by the grand imam of Friendship among the leaders of different religions.

“He said he encouraged government leaders to stay committed to fostering harmony and to protecting democracy.

In his audience talk, the pope also explained why — before and after every trip — he always visits Rome’s Basilica of St. Mary Major to pray before the basilica’s Marian icon “Salus Populi Romani” (health of the Roman people).

He said he prays that she “accompany me on the trip, like a mother, tell me what I must do” and help “safeguard” everything he says and does.
News Briefs

Blue Masses for law enforcement, first responders, fallen

Chief Richard V. Tantalo of the Irondequoit, N.Y., Police Department prays alongside other officers at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, N.Y., during the annual Blue Mass Sept. 8. The Mass recognizes the work of all members of law enforcement and honors those who have died while serving in the line of duty. In the United States, the Blue Mass tradition began in September 1934, when Father Thomas Dade of the Archdiocese of Baltimore formed the Catholic Police and Fireman’s Society. The name comes from the traditional uniform color associated with law enforcement. Since then, the Blue Mass has been celebrated in many dioceses across the country and is often tied to the anniversary of 9/11 to honor first responders who risked their lives and died in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.

Catholic leaders from Tennessee to Texas among Lumen Christi finalists

CHICAGO (CNS) — Catholic Extension announced the 11 finalists for its 2019-20 Lumen Christi Award Sept. 10, saying they include a “cowboy priest” who became “an unlikely national icon at the nation’s southern border” and a “visionary” who is leading a community transformation in the toughest part of his hometown in Louisiana.

Pope wanted apostles’ relics united to encourage Christian unity

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis said the challenges facing humanity and the Earth are so intertwined and important that he has invited world leaders, educators and young people to come to the Vatican next spring to launch a global initiative devoted to building a more humane future. “Never before has there been such need to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity,” he said.

Church must seek new paths in Amazon, synod secretaries say

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Synod of Bishops for the Amazon will help the Catholic Church make its presence felt and voice heard in a region that is dangerously approaching “a point of no return,” said the special secretaries of the synod. “It is a great and continuing challenge for the Catholic Church to make the original Amazonian peoples feel part of it and contribute to it with the light of Christ and the spiritual richness that shines in their cultures,” Cardinal-designate Michael Czerny and Bishop David Martinez De Aguirre Guinea wrote in an article published Sept. 12 in La Civilta Cattolica, the Jesuit journal. Cardinal-designate Czerny, undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugee Section of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Bishop Martinez, apostolic vicar of Puerto Maldonado, Peru, said the synod will take place at a time when “both human and natural life are suffering serious and perhaps irreversible destruction.” The synod, scheduled for Oct. 6-27, will focus on “Amazonia: New paths for the church and for an integral ecology.”

Vatican to launch global alliance to better educate young people

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Cruise ship to deliver aid to Bahamas, bring evacuees to Florida

MIAMI (CNS) — A second Florida-to-Bahamas round-trip humanitarian cruise was set to sail the weekend of Sept. 14, weather-permitting, carrying supplies, transport specialty personnel, power generators and volunteers. The previous week, the Grand Bahama cruise ship arrived at its home port in West Palm Beach with some 1,100 Bahamian storm evacuees. That ship was met by workers from Catholic Charities USA, along with members of the United Way, American Red Cross and Discover the Palm Beaches, which acts as a convention and visitors bureau. The ship’s parent company, Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line, said it is canceling four upcoming tourism trips to accommodate one or more additional humanitarian cruises this month, according to a spokesman. If the humanitarian mission isn’t postponed because of a pending tropical depression, it is expected to take up to 350 skilled volunteers, large scale generators for several areas in the Bahamas, supplies and 30 to 50 licensed electricians. Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line has raised $542,280 of its $1 million goal to offset the humanitarian transport costs and loss of regular tourism business.

Central American, Mexican bishops urge more help for migrants

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — Bishops from Central America and southern Mexico called on Catholics to better accompany migrants heading north, at a time when immigration enforcement has increased in Mexico. “As pastors of our people, we bishops are close to our brothers who suffer, and we know the suffering of migrants, the risks and dangers confronted by those leaving the security of home and the coming apart of families, particularly when children are separated from their families,” the bishops said. They issued the statement after a Sept. 9-11 meeting of church leaders from Central America and southern Mexico in the Mexican city of Tapachula. The bishops also called on people to “overcome the fear that migration can generate, because it is about treating our brothers well,” and urged people to “work in a coordinated and organized way to create just migration policies.” Their statement came as the Mexican government — bowing to U.S. pressure — steps up immigration enforcement along its southern and northern borders to stem the flow of migrants traveling through the country. In the United States, meanwhile, a Sept. 11 Supreme Court decision allowed the U.S. government to fully implement a policy of denying asylum to anyone who traveled through another country while on their way to the United States without first seeking asylum in that country. The ruling takes effect while the government policy is being appealed in the court system.

States without first seeking asylum in that country. The ruling takes effect while the government policy is being appealed in the court system.

Patriarch Athenagoras gave to St. Paul VI — an icon depicting the brothers Peter and Andrew embracing, united in faith and in love of their common Lord.”

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USF celebrates St. Francis of Assisi with three events

FORT WAYNE — The University of Saint Francis will celebrate its patron saint, Francis of Assisi, with three upcoming events at the campus, 2701 Spring St.

These events are free and open to the public, but attendees are asked to bring personal care items for a collection to benefit Vincent Village.

A blessing of pets will take place at 6:15 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 29, at Brookside.

Pets and their owners are welcome to meet near the St. Francis statue outside the mansion for a brief service commemorating St. Francis’ love for animals and all creation. Father Patrick Hake will bless each pet at the end of the service.

Through readings, hymns and prayer, participants at the Transitus, 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 3, will recall the night of Francis’ passage with “Sister Death” into eternal life. Fellowship and refreshments will follow in the Doerner Family Center for Health Sciences Education. The Transitus will be celebrate in St. Francis Chapel.

People are also invited to join in a celebration of St. Francis’ life and birth into heaven in word, song and sacrament. A Mass will be said Friday, Oct. 4, at 11:30 a.m. in the St. Francis Chapel. Father Robert Showers, OFM Conventual, will be the celebrant for the Mass.

Born in 1182, Francis Bernardone’s dramatic reversion to the Christian faith, his life of poverty and his service to the needy in imitation of Christ sparked a spiritual movement that continues to impact society and the Church today through the three religious orders he founded.

For more information, call Assistant Vice President for Mission Integration Sister Anita Holzmer at 260-399-7700, ext. 6705, or email aholzmer@sf.edu.

Matthew Cathedral, South Bend, said she looks forward to the Rejoice Women’s Retreats. She’s grateful for the opportunity to enrich her faith life.

“I’ve been struck by the exuberance of the speakers calling us to a deeper relationship with God, and as Mary, to surrender to His will in our lives. Many of the Scriptures and words of encouragement still resonate with me today as I live out my daily life.

Several moments from past retreats remain at the forefront of her faith and inform her daily living.

“(They) encouraged us to allow God to capture our heart, to let Him exercise His love through us. Debbie Herbeck encouraged us to be Christ bearers in our own life whether at the kitchen table, neighborhood, work and so forth. She reminded us of the hope we have in God who is always present to us, encouraging us to grow more in faith.” Herbeck led the retreat in 2016.

“We were led to model Mary even more as Mary Healy (keynote speaker, 2018) unpacked the Scriptures. We, too, are empowered by His Holy Spirit. We were encouraged that God is always with us, and nothing is impossible with God.”

She learned that “We should know that God is with us no matter what He asks of us. Mary’s response to bearing our Savior was one of joy. We have a good reason to rejoice. We have received God’s grace and can be changed by God’s grace.”

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White Mass scheduled for South Bend-area health care professionals

MISHAWAKA — An annual White Mass for health care professionals in the greater South Bend area will be celebrated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades Oct. 11 at 7 a.m., at Our Lady of Fatima Chapel, St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, Mishawaka. For the faithful serving in health care professions, it is an opportunity to ask for the Holy Spirit’s presence in their life-giving service, in a special way.

In the 1930s, the idea for the White Mass stemmed from the traditional Red Mass for those in the legal profession, which also asks for the guidance of the Holy Spirit at the start of their judicial year. From the feast of St. Luke, patron saint of physicians, a corresponding White Mass developed. White is the liturgical color for the celebration, but the color also reflects the white work garments of doctors and nurses.

A uniquely American idea, the White Mass is celebrated with health care professionals of all specialties, and their spiritual care chaplains. A Blue Mass is also sometimes celebrated in the fall for police officers and those involved in public safety.

The Catholic Medical Association explains: “From its inception, the medical profession has been understood as an healing profession, a way in which Christ’s work continues upon the earth. Moreover, since the apparitions at Lourdes in the late 19th century, the plight of the infirm — and those who care for them — have taken on renewed appreciation in participating in the mysteries of Christ’s own life.”

The gifts of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, are vital to the work of doctors, nurses and those in health care, as many of their decisions are made at a moment’s notice. Those gifts are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, fear of the Lord and piety. The fruits of the Spirit, such as joy, also can transform the day of an ill patient with grace.

A breakfast reception will follow in the education rooms of St. Joseph Regional Medical Center. To RSVP contact Silvia Talich at Silvia.Talich@sjrmc.com.
BY BARB SIEMINSKI

Going back to the year 1251, tradition holds that in Aylesford, England, Our Lady appeared to St. Simon Stock, a prior of the Carmelite religious order. She gave him the Carmelite habit, known as the brown scapular, saying, “This shall be a privilege for you and all Carmelites, that anyone dying in this habit shall not suffer eternal fire.”

Later, the Church extended the privilege to all the laity who were willing to be invested in the brown scapular of the Carmelites and who perpetually wore it. The scapular represents the wearer’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This devotion is comprised of a trio of actions: veneration, confidence and love.

By wearing or carrying the scapular, a person’s commitment to her is with them every moment of every day.

The scapular is also a silent prayer. A plea to wear the scapular is how Mary draws God’s children to her divine Son.

When I think of putting on the brown scapular, I think of how the Carmelites and other Catholic religious orders put on their habits every day to witness the good news of Jesus Christ,” said Father Andrew Curry, the pastor of St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in North Manchester.

“The scapular is to be seen as a miniature habit for lay people to wear.”

“We, as Catholics, don’t wear the scapular as if we can wear it and be saved no matter what kind of life we live. We put on the scapular as a daily habit and reminder to trust in Jesus for salvation and be assured that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus and the Church, will pray and intercede for us at the moment of death as she brings us to Jesus.”

At one time, the scapular was chestwide piece of fabric draped over the head and cut to the same length piece down the back. Over the years its appearance changed to two small pieces of cloth, usually made of wool and joined together by two strings. It is worn underneath other garments.

Though this scapular had its beginnings in the Carmelites, more formally known as the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, it came to be accepted worldwide by the laity and religious orders.

It appears today that not as many of the Catholic faithful wear a scapular as did in years past. In earlier years scapulars often were made with wool that was very scratchy, but they also can be made of other cloth or crafted as a medallion that can also be worn around the neck.

The square wool fabric, if used, must be pure, 100% wool and worn over the head without a plastic case enclosure; and if there is minor irritation wool, it serves as a reminder of the suffering of Christ’s agony on the cross.

Father Phillip A. Widmann, pastor of St. Mary, Mother of God Church, Fort Wayne, said that while he used to wear the brown scapular years ago, he now wears a scapular medal instead.

“I’m just kind of allergic to that kind of cloth against my skin,” said Father Widmann. As the years passed scapulars came to be made in different colors, highlighting certain prayers. To date the Church has approved 18 different scapulars that are significant in color, symbolism and devotion.

Sacramentals like the scapular were an important part of Christy Gunkel’s family life growing up. As a result, they’ve had a special place in the devotions with which the Fort Wayne, St. Aloysius parishioner has raised her own family.

Traditions, carried out across generations, are of great importance to her, she said in an email. “They serve as a witness to others, and most importantly aid us in contemplating faith, hope, and charity.”

“I have fond memories of my grandparents wearing brown scapulars. Upon my grandfather’s death I was given his scapular, which I keep as a reminder of his faith he held closely till he died at the age of 93. Scapulars have been a reminder to me of the love and protection we seek from the Father through the intercession of our Blessed Mother.”

Years ago, Gunkel said she was fortunate to be able to attend an investiture ceremony where she received an Our Lady of Guadalupe brown scapular.

“It was an occasion of Grace for me that I remember fondly. It provided a tangible recognition of Mary as my mother that she will always guide and protect me. Each day since that time, I secure the brown scapular under my own garments and proceed to say, ‘Mary has my back.’ As she rests on my shoulder blades, she serves as my constant companion and brings a sense of calm to my day knowing she is always there. This most precious of sacramentals brings my faith to life.”

Carmelite sacramental embraced by laity worldwide
Volunteer Time Off puts PHJC hands to work

BY BARB SIEMINSKI

It was Erma Bombeck, a convert to Catholicism, who made an observation that, “Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation’s compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another.”

The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ of Donaldson might have put a smile on Bombeck’s face with their selfless volunteering in their local community and taking their assistance above and beyond the motherhouse.

Plymouth was devastated by flooding last year, and the sisters opened the convent to visitors who came to town to help the city regain its balance. The volunteers were put up free of charge so that each day they could go back to mitigating the damage.

It was that disaster that gave birth to a regular program of volunteer time off for the sisters. According to Erin Clark-Lupo, PHJC mission affirmation director, there are actually two different types of volunteer programs.

“Sister Connie leads a program to bring in long-term volunteers who spend several weeks a year volunteering with the sisters at ministries of the Poor Handmaids,” said Clark-Lupo.

“The Volunteer Time Off program is for co-workers at ministries of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. This allows them to volunteer for up to 96 hours a year and still get paid for their time away from work.”

“Many departments are involved to cover costs and provide necessary services, such as our transportation department providing transportation for our volunteers to get to and from the site for an organized VTO trip,” said Clark-Lupo.

Velda Habaj, director of human resources of PHJC Ministries, said the VTO policy allows his co-workers to volunteer for a wide array of activities around the Donaldson and Plymouth communities, or perhaps their own community.

“Co-workers are also invited to participate in Poor Handmaid-sponsored events as a volunteer,” said Habaj, “and if the event is not local the Poor Handmaids may provide housing and meal assistance.”

For one volunteer, the emphasis on service has been an eye-opener. “I always felt I had a heart to serve, yet as I witnessed people coming through Casa Catalina’s food pantry I was surprised at my own expectations of their demeanor. I found I learned more about myself and how off-base my expectations were,” said Libby Riggs.

“We had bagged clear bags full of Panera bread. I expected (the recipients) to be as excited as I would be to receive this wonderful bread. Many, however, wanted to look through (and) choose (a certain) bread. What I later learned was that they mostly want white, sliced, 99-cent loaves of bread, because that’s what they could normally afford and therefore were accustomed to. As I was helping pass it out, a man asked for sliced bread again, and mentally I was thinking ‘Why are you so picky?’ But as I bent over to look through the bags, he said to me, ‘I don’t own a knife.’ I looked deeply into his eyes and wondered to myself what else he might not own. Powerful experience! I learned so much about myself in the process.”

According to Julie Dowd, director of PHJC communications, one of the four core values of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ is dignity and respect for all. It’s a value they promote among all of their co-workers and residents.

“There are a lot of people in our community who are in need of assistance. By volunteering in our communities, this is a way for us to promote the dignity of an individual,” said Dowd.

“In Catholic social teaching there’s a theme called the (preferential) option for the poor. It’s the idea that we can measure the morality of a decision based on how those least well-off in our community are faring, and it calls us to put the needs of the poor and most vulnerable first. One of the ways we can do this is by helping with community efforts that try to meet the needs of those individuals.”

Clark-Lupo has had the opportunity to volunteer at the Marshall County Neighborhood Center and at Sojourner Truth House.

“I do a lot of behind-the-scenes work in our ministries, and it can be easy to lose sight of how that helps our ministries serve people in need. But being able to go out into the community to volunteer gives me the opportunity to reconnect with my own work and the important work that our ministries do every day,” she said.

Sister Connie Bach, director of the PHJC volunteer program and the community’s vocations director, went to El Paso, Texas, earlier this summer.

“I worked on the border in El Paso for two weeks at the end of June — beginning of July. Several co-workers heard about the experience and wanted to be a part of it.” She recently received permission to have them use their VTO and paid time off to go down and serve at the border with her in December.

Clark-Lupo said that the local volunteer opportunities are open to co-workers, Maria Center residents, the sisters and PHJC Associate Community members.

“We have had them do all kinds of things, but when they volunteer at the Marshall County Neighborhood Center, Sojourner Truth House and Casa Catalina, they are often doing more manual labor,” said Clark-Lupo. “Often they help with cleaning, sorting donations, stocking food and clothing pantries and sometimes helping to distribute these things to people in need.”
Hope to Healing: mental health services from a Catholic perspective

BY NICOLE KURUT

Catholic Charities launched the Hope to Healing Initiative in 2016 after a diocesanwide study of parish priests, Catholic schools personnel and other Catholic community partners. The surveys and interviews revealed the Catholic community was in need of mental health services, particularly those aligned with the faith.

“We estimate 12% of our Catholic brothers and sisters in the diocese will be in need of some form of mental health counseling in their lifetime,” said Gloria Whitcraft, CEO of Catholic Charities. “In response, we created Hope to Healing to highlight the need and prayerfully raise the philanthropic support necessary to tackle this urgent need.”

The scope of need is sobering. There are 160,317 Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, which means that at any given time nearly 20,000 are in need of mental health services.

The conditions that give rise to the need are many: depression, anxiety, addictions, challenges to marriage and family, bullying, peer pressure and more.

Whitcraft stressed that Catholic Charities counseling services are not meant to take the place of school counselors, but rather augment the valuable services they, and parish priests, already provide.

“When priests and school counselors run into situations that require a more intensive, long-term mental health response than they have the time and/or training to address, Catholic Charities is a trusted source to which to warmly hand off,” she said.

Father Jacob Meyer, pastor of St. Monica Parish in Mishawaka, said mental health counseling for parishioners is at the top of his list of needs because he sees many people with conditions he is not trained to address.

“We are trained to take care of spiritual needs and I don’t know what’s best for many of the conditions my parishioners face,” said Father Meyer. “The great blessing is that counseling can address the barriers they have to God’s grace in their lives.”

Father Meyer emphasized that many parishioners are looking for a trustworthy Catholic resource to provide professional counseling. This observation is consistent with the data from the study of the diocese.

Because Catholic Charities is the principle service organization of the Church, Catholic Charities is uniquely qualified to develop and provide these services to our sister parishes and schools throughout the diocese.

“The stigma that attaches to mental health issues is still very real, but moving in a more positive direction,” said Hope to Healing Initiative committee co-chairman Helen Nill. “Fortunately, we are changing that perception every day in the schools where our counselors work.”

Nill added that, “Many of our family members, friends, or colleagues will encounter mental health challenges at some point in their lives. As a result, we need a sustainable counseling program so we can create a more mentally healthy diocese.”

At present, Catholic Charities employs two counselors: one in Fort Wayne and the other in South Bend. The organization also offers workshops on a variety of emotional and mental health topics for diocesan parishes and Catholic schools upon request.

While the Hope to Healing Initiative is in progress toward its ultimate goal, Catholic Charities is also engaged in finding unique and efficient ways to respond to the immediate needs of parishes and schools in our diocese, including co-sponsoring the Second Annual Teens and Screens event Oct. 2 at Parkview Mirro Center, Fort Wayne, which will focus on teenagers, their mental health and how to keep them safe with technology. Scheduled speakers will address cyberbullying, gaming and general addiction in the teen brain. Teens and Screens is one of several presentations and workshops offered by Catholic Charities on a variety of emotional and mental health topics for diocesan parishes and Catholic schools.

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Provided by Catholic Charities
**The emigrant’s brave farewell**

We talk a great deal in this country about immigration, too often in language that is hostile or fearful. What we don’t talk about is emigration, the act of leaving one’s home.

A year ago, I stood on the farm my great-grandfather left in southern Sweden. Barely a man, he left parents and siblings and struck out with blind courage. He never returned to whom and what he had left behind.

My father-in-law left poverty in postwar France to find his fortune in America. He returned to France only once, unable to attend the funeral of his mother and siblings. In his later years, he looked back with some pain on the implications of his decision, at times questioning its cost and the toll it took on him, even as he saw his children flourish in his adopted land.

All of us are the heirs of bravery, men and women who took great risks to come to this country, men and women who tody, others to seek their fortune, even as he saw his children there, one unaware that she has been called God’s beloved sons and daughters of God. An identity that returns us to live in our divine family, giving us the grace of fearless freedom, but also to a certain fearlessness.

In John 4:18 we read that “perfect love casts out fear.” What does this perfect love look like? Quintessentially, the only truly perfect love is that which exists between Father and Son. We call that love the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who constantly returns us to live in our divine filiation. Just the same, it is the Holy Spirit who roots us in our primary identity as the sons and daughters of God.

To put it in more human terms, think about little children. They are the most fearless people on planet Earth. They are constantly climbing on unstable structures, putting filthy things in their mouths and regarding clothing as optional. Why are they so unashamed and free? It seems to me because they are most perfectly children; that is, they live in the full reception of the love of their mother and father.

In the Holy Spirit, the very same is offered to us on the supernatural level. God readily gives us the grace of fearless-ness. In view of future anxieties and uncertainties, there is one thing that doesn’t change — our identity as the very sons and daughters of God. An identity which lasts even past the grave.

So, let’s go forth in this freed dom. Let’s fearlessly climb over any instability about the future, while we place the spotless Body of Christ on our tongues; and forever live in our baptismal gar ments, in which we were first called God’s beloved sons and daughters.

**Being a fearless son**

Brian Isenbarger is a seminarian of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. He is studying at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

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**God asks that we give ourselves to Him rather than to money**

**THE SUNDAY GOSPEL**

**Msgr. Owen F. Campion**

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Luke 16:1-13**

The first reading for this weekend is from the Book of Amos. This prophet, regarded as one of the Minor Prophets, was from Tekoa, a rural area of Judea. It was about 10 miles from Jerusalem.

Amos was a shepherd, and obviously he knew well the religious traditions of his ancestors. He also had a sense of events occurring beyond his own environment, even events happening in other lands.

His pastoral occupation and keen knowledge, not only of tradition but also of life far beyond his own situation, gives his book of only nine chapters a special quality.

The reading for this weekend is the Third Reading in the Mass. It speaks of ancient units of currency such as the shekel. It also is highly critical of any quest to gather great sums of money, insisting that a higher standard, a higher reward, exist in life.

For its second reading, the Church presents the First Letter to Timothy. Early Christian history, including that of the Apostolic era, includes the names of deeply committed, pioneer converts to Christianity.

Timothy was one of these converts. He was so close to the Apostle Paul that Paul referred to him as “beloved son,” although of course nothing suggests that Timothy literally was the Apostle’s biological child. Son of a Greek father and a devout Jewish mother, and therefore Jewish under the laws of Judaism, Timothy became a Christian through Paul’s influ ence. Tradition is that Timothy was the first bishop of the Christian community in Ephesus.

In this weekend’s reading, Timothy is asked to pray especial ly for rulers and for other persons in authority. Such officials espe cially are vulnerable to the temptations of greed and ambition.

Saint Luke’s Gospel supplies the last reading. It is a parable. An irresponsible manager fears the results if his employer discov ers the manager’s mishandling of his duty. So, the manager called his employer’s debtors and ordered them to reduce the amount owed. In fact, he can celed his own commission, but obviously the commission was excessive.

This arrangement would have been unacceptable then as it would be now. The employer would have had every right to repudiate the manager’s bold dis counting of the amounts owed. If the manager had trusted the original figures, he would have been upholding the outrageous commission, but he would have lost the regard of the community and appeared to be out of control of his own business.

In the end, for him, saving honor was more important than collecting the money owed as debts.

The message is clear. The frenzy of doing the world’s business can create confusion and dishonesty.

**Reflection**

Money is a fact of life, inter woven with necessity. The Gospel reading informs us that any of us, now as in ancient times, can be consumed by acquiring money, but also obsessed with accumulating more than we need.

In this striving to accumulate more, and then more, we can veer away from the straight and narrow in many ways.

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**READINGS**

Sunday: Am 8:4-7 Pss 113:1-2, 4 1 Tm 2:1-8 Lk 16:13-15

Monday: Ezr 1:1-6 Ps 126:1b-6 Lk 8:16-18

Tuesday: Ezr 6:7-8, 12-14 Ps 122:1-5 Lk 8:19-21

Wednesday: Ezr 9:5-9 (Ps) Tb 13:2-4, 7-8 Lk 9:1-9

Thursday: Hg 1:8-9 Ps 149:1b-6a, 9b Lk 9:7-9

Friday: Hg 2:1-3 Pss 43:1-4 Lk 9:18-22

Saturday: Zec 5:1-9, 14-15a (Ps) Jer 31:10-13 Lk 9:33b-45
Commentary

September 22, 2019

Call it a crisis

My next few columns will cover the outcomes of the Vatican’s second dialogue on “The Energy Transition and Care of Our Common Home.” In this essay, I will first pause for a pulse check.

“Nearly 70% of Americans, including a majority of Republicans, want the United States to take ‘aggressive’ action to combat climate change — but only a third would support an extra tax of $100 per ton to help.” This lead from a Reuters’ story questions how seriously we really comprehend the climate crisis. This Reuters’ Ipsos poll of 3,000 people offers support for renewables and notes that green energy can contribute to net job growth. Yet the majority of respondents are unwilling to pay a fraction of a new iPhone or annual internet connection fees, or to carpool, use public transportation or to drive an electric car.

These responses reveal a chilling absence of urgency.

At 415 parts per million, carbon dioxide levels are the highest they have been in the past 800,000 years. July 2019 is on the record, probably not for long, as the hottest month for the planet. What took 217 years (1751 to 1967), to place 400 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, takes now only just over a decade (2007 to 2018).

Carbon and other greenhouse gases act as a blanket that keeps heat trapped in our atmosphere. According to NASA, “The average global temperature on Earth has increased by about 0.8 degrees Celsius (1.4 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1880. ... A one-degree global change is significant because it takes a vast amount of heat to warm all the oceans, atmosphere and land by that much.”

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s October 2018 report indicated that to maintain global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) would require emissions to be cut by nearly half from 2010 levels by 2050, and totally by 2080. The sensitivity of our earth to this warming is akin to our bodies running at 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit higher as the new normal.

Moneymeric, what we are unwilling to invest for prevention and mitigation will bite us in the costs of damage, replacement, recovery and adaptation. In 2018 alone, disaster events cost the U.S. an estimated $91 billion. In the first half of this year, the U.S. has already experienced six climate disasters — each exceeding a billion dollar loss. These responses do not incorporate other warming consequences on health, spread of diseases, food safety, food supply, land degradation, loss of natural habitats, etc.

The British publication The Guardian has revised its official language from “climate change” to “climate crisis.” We may be wise to do the same with our own calibration.

To acknowledge a crisis when we are in one is the surest trigger for attention and, if we so choose, action. It can be a moment of moral commitment expressed through our ingenuity and discipline in spiritual connection with the author of all creation.

About Earth, Hildegard of Bingen wrote: “Yet it forms not only the basic raw material for humankind, but also the substance of the incarnation of God’s Son.”

Carolyn Woo is the distinguished president’s fellow for global development at Purdue University and served as the CEO and president of Catholic Relief Services from 2012 to 2016.

Contradictory suicide messaging

In July 2014, police found the body of 18-year-old Conrad Roy inside his truck in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, hav- ing died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

As the case unfolded, it became apparent that a friend of his, 17-year-old Michelle Carter, had encouraged him toward suicide. In a series of texts, she repeatedly pressured him to go through with it by sending messages like, “You keep pushing it off and say you’ll do it but u never do. It’s always gonna be you.”

As he sat in a remote spot in the Kmart parking lot, the truck’s cab filling up with fumes, he got cold feet and stepped out of his makeshift death chamber, seemingly confounded about what he was doing. He then spoke with Michelle by phone, who coached him to continue the suicide.

The call was not recorded, but months after his death, she texted another friend and recounted how Conrad had grown scared at the last moment, climbing out of the truck, and that she had told him to get back in. She then listened over the phone as he suc- cumbed to the fumes 47 minutes later.

Following a high profile trial that received extensive media coverage, Michelle was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to 2 1/2-years behind bars, of which she has served just 15 months. Prosecutors claimed that her motive may have been to gain attention and sympathy as the “grieving girlfriend.”

As Michelle was led away in September 2019, to place 400 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, takes now only just over a decade (2007 to 2018), it is the distinguished president’s fellow for global development at Purdue University and served as the CEO and president of Catholic Relief Services from 2012 to 2016.

SCIENTIFIC SEARCH®
Gospel for September 22, 2019

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C: about serving this world or the next. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

RICH MAN
I HEAR ASHAMED
HOMES
SIT DOWN
CHILDREN
ETERNAL

SQUANDERING
STRONG
PROPERTY
TO DIG
HUNDRED
WHEAT
GENERATION
SERVE
HATE ONE

WORLDLY PLANS
I K N O I T A R E N E G
S H A N A H A T E O N E
I E E I G H T Y G I E T
T L R A F W T N R I R E
D W K V R R O E D R
O H C D E R D N U H L N
W C H P T I H K I I A
N A O S A G G C O I H L
K R R U E N A H M C O
P Q Q B K A S H A M E D
S S O L I V E O I L A S
H T L A E W H E A T K N

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September 22, 2019

Scripture Search

CALLING

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

absent when it comes to “physici- an-assisted suicide.” Michelle’s text messages embraced the same key ideas that lawmakers in nine states have now enacted through legislation, namely, that it’s sometimes allowable to encourage and participate in suicide.

This requirement seems quite arbitrary, of course, if the real goal is to alleviate suffering by eliminating the sufferer. After all, Michelle was convinced she was acting compassionately by assisting Conrad to escape from what she claimed was his misery, depression and intense emo- tional and psychological suffering. Who is to say that Michelle was wrong if the white lab coats are right? If it were deplorable for Michelle Carter to facilitate Conrad Roy’s suicide, how can it be good for physicians and other health care workers to facilitate the suicides of their ail- ing patients who are at least as fragile and vulnerable as Conrad was?

This remarkable moral schizophrenia may soon be enshrined in a new law of legislation that claims to outlaw par- ticipation in a person’s suicide. Massachusetts state lawmakers and Conrad’s family gathered in July at the Statehouse to intro- duc e Conrad’s Law, a bill making it a crime to encourage or assist a person in taking his or her life. On the face of it, the law obvi- ously seems like a sensible piece of legislation, but even as lawmakers were trying to stop peo- ple from assisting at suicides like Conrad Roy’s, they were simultane- ously seeking to protect medi- cal personnel who might assist at the suicide of their patients.

The double standard was impos- sible to miss, with Conrad’s Law including an explicit subsection exempting those involved in physi- cian-assisted suicide from pro- secution. Even though physician-assisted suicide is not yet legal in the Massachusetts common- wealth, another bill promoting it is under active consideration by the legislature.

Society really can’t have it both ways, glamorizing the act of suicide in some cases and demonizing it in others. By yielding to the proposition that suicide is not an evil to be repudiated, but a form of “relief” to be conferred on those who suffer, we effectively abandon the suici- ders and countless others, in their moment of greatest need.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www. ncbcenter.org
Abuse crisis, leadership failure impacts Church giving

By Brian Fraga

The Catholic Church in the United States has spent a staggering amount of money — close to $4 billion in the past 20 years — to investigate, adjudicate and prevent clergy sex abuse, and to compensate victims for the harm they’ve suffered.

And as those expenses have prompted dioceses to lay off staff, sell property and liquidate sales assets, there’s growing evidence that more Catholics across the country are deciding not to contribute to their bishops’ diocesan appeals because of the scandals.

“Clearly the leadership failures related to the abuse crisis are a major factor in some of the Church’s financial problems,” said Kim Smolik, CEO of the Leadership Roundtable, a national Catholic organization.

At least 20 dioceses since 2004 have filed for bankruptcy protection to pay their bills and provide financial compensation for clergy sex abuse survivors. On Sept. 12, the Diocese of Rochester in New York became the latest to petition the federal courts for Chapter 11 reorganization.

“This is a very difficult and painful decision,” Bishop Salvatore R. Matano of Rochester said during a Sept. 12 news conference. “We believe that this diocesan bankruptcy process will be a service to all people who are the bulk of our flock, as well as to our Church and the diocese itself.”

On Sept. 12, the Diocese of Rochester in New York became the latest to petition the federal courts for Chapter 11 reorganization.

“The bishop’s appeal, it could be because of the abuse crisis but that’s a lot more difficult to make that cause and effect connection,” Markey told CNS.

A Pew Research Center survey released this past summer indicated that 26% of U.S. Catholics reported giving less money to the Church as a result of the recent reports of sexual abuse and misconduct by priests and bishops.

“The report urged Church officials to ‘carry out the works of evangelization and ministry,’ ” Markey told CNS.

“There is nothing that aggregates all those figures and then releases it publicly,” Gray said. “It’s always been a bit of a blind spot for the Church. There is just no way to connect all the dots and fill in all the information. One diocese may report one set of financials that may not match what is publicly reported by another diocese.”

Matt Manion, faculty director of the Center for Church Management at Villanova University’s School of Business, identified three major financial impacts from the clergy sex abuse scandals: Chapter 11 filings and settlements for sex abuse survivors, the potential losses in donations and collections, as well as the expenses of litigation and other related administrative responses to the crisis.

“The time that could have been spent on other parts of the Church’s mission,” Manion told CNS.

“We could see where this was all leading and the trajectory wasn’t changing. We just don’t have any money. If we’re not here, we can’t help anybody,” Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe said during a November 2018 news conference in New Mexico, the Albuquerque Journal reported.

Noting the recent Pew Research Center survey, Smolik, of the Leadership Roundtable, said the apparent drop in giving appears to be connected to the twin crises of clergy sexual abuse and the failure of Church leadership.

“More and more Catholics are concerned about how their contributions are being used, and it’s important that dioceses move toward greater accountability, transparency and co-responsibility, in terms of their financial affairs,” Smolik said.

In February, the Leadership Roundtable convened the Catholic Partnership Summit, a gathering of more than 200 Catholic lay leaders and clergy. From the summit, it released a report, “Healing at the Center of Christ,” which is a plan to develop a new culture of leadership in the Church and a new response to the abuse crisis.

The report urged Church leaders to “provide full financial transparency regarding all aspects of the abuse crisis, include how monies are being used.” The report also called upon bishops to “build a broad, deep, and transparent financial management and accounting system.”

“Catholics are very much looking for new models at how the Church is served.”
What’s Happening?

Knights host breakfast at Most Precious Blood Parish

FORT WAYNE — St. Gaspar del Bufalo Council No. 11043 will be serving breakfast on Sunday, Sept. 22, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the gymnasium at Most Precious Blood, 1515 Barthold St. Cost is $10 for adults, $5 for children 6-12, and $25 per family. $5 carryout packs will be available. Proceeds this month will help support parish schools. Visit www.kolc11043.org.

40 Days For Life: Allen County Right To Life

www.40daysforlife.com or call Lisa Petrovas at 260-797-3144.

Rosary for the unborn

FORT WAYNE — A rosary dedicated to the innocent lives lost every day through legalized abortions will be prayed Monday, Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, 4916 Trier Rd.

St. Matthew Cathedral ‘You’re Amazing’ MISHAWAKA — Join Justin Fatica and Hard As Nails Ministries and be ignited with Christ’s never-ending passion Wednesday, Sept. 25, 7-9 p.m. at Marian High School, 1311 S. Logan St. All ages are welcome. Register early at https://st-matthew-cathedral-event-hn.eventbrite.com; walk-ins are welcome. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

St. Joseph - Hessen Cassel fall festival

FORT WAYNE — St. Joseph - Hessen Cassel will have a fall festival Saturday, Sept. 28. A 5K or 1 Mile fun run/walk will start at 8 a.m.; volleyball tournament at 10 a.m.; children’s games from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. High-stakes bingo at 1 p.m.; High’s chicken dinner from 4-7 p.m.; silent auction until 5:30 p.m., with a live auction from 6:30-7 p.m. Live music will be provided by The Hubie Ashcraft Band from 7-11 p.m. Visit www.facebook.com/SJHCFallsFestival for details.

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September 22, 2019

IMMIGRATION, from page 1

— joined caravans headed to the U.S., their fate unknown, she said.

The training lasts up to two years and focuses on developing the skills most in need locally. After completion, Urbina and her staff connect students with local companies seeking to hire people at reasonable wages. Some students even open their own businesses.

“There are many possibilities because they get a job. They don’t have to leave. They have income,” Urbina said.

“You can notice the difference in the young people from when they start and then when they finish,” she continued. “They are more mature about their future. They want to be a different person. Some of them only know the violence in the towns and when they’re in the program, they change their mind. They think they have a better future. If they have the right attitude, that can be possible.”

Jones said about 80% of YouthBuild graduates find work. He credited the high success rate to not just skill development but also to providing the emotional support young people need to cope in the challenging environment in which they live.

Most young people want to stay in Honduras with their families, he explained.

“They’d much rather stay here because they’re home,” he told CNS. “There’s a saying: ‘Nobody leaves home unless home is in the mouth of a shark.’ When you’re threatened, people don’t have any other choice (but to leave).”

YouthBuild also has been developing an agricultural program for young people. Trainees have encouraged young people to develop new products beyond the traditional crops.

Jones identified beekeeping as an area of growing interest. There’s also an emerging specialty dairy market in which graduates are producing yogurt, cheeses and other in-demand products.

“A lot of young people are willing to do agriculture,” Jones said. “This idea that they don’t want to do agriculture is a myth. What they don’t want to do is be tied to corn and beans. So what we’re trying to do is find the crops that are in demand and finding more markets for what’s being grown.”

YouthBuild also is training young people to monitor the environment, a need that is growing in a region that is seeing changing weather patterns that has disrupted traditional planting and harvesting cycles.

“We just reactivated a rural high school degree in agriculture,” he explained. “Right now education doesn’t train people to stay on the land in the rural areas. We’ve got to get people reconnected and give young people exciting options where they use technology to create new opportunities and not feel the only action they have is to leave.”

Elsewhere in Central America, largely in the region’s so-called dry corridor that stretches across 10 of Guatemala’s 22 departments and much of Central America, efforts are underway to help farmers better respond to changing climate so they are not forced to migrate.

Dan McQuillan, technical adviser for agriculture for CRS in Latin America, said the U.S. bishops’ relief and development agency is implementing Water-Smart Agriculture, or Agua y Suelo para la Agricultura, known in Spanish as ASA.

He said the program has moved from watershed management for household consumption to managing limited water resources, especially among subsistence farmers. The evolution emerged because of less predictable rain patterns caused by climate change.

The program also is working on a broader scale, educating urban and rural dwellers about water management.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program warned in an April report that prolonged droughts and brief heavy rains destroyed more than half the corn and bean crops of subsistence farmers, leading to declining production and more food insecurity. About 1.4 million people are facing food shortages, the agencies said.

In years past, farmers could anticipate when rain would come and prepare their fields appropriately. When necessary, they would borrow money for planting and then pay off the loan when they sold part of their crop beyond what they needed to feed their family.

With erratic rain patterns, however, farmers can misjudge when to plant and lose a substantial portion of their crop if they plant too early or too late. With reduced yields a family could face a greater risk of hunger or a loss of income. Further, common illnesses such as infectious disease, diarrhea and pneumonia compound hunger. Such a situation can fuel emigration to the U.S.

Under ASA, McQuillan said, farmers are learning about crop rotation, cover crops and other practices that hold water in the soil and limit the impact of inconsistent rainfall.

McQuillan said the practices farmers are implementing seem to encourage farmers to “stick it out.” “One coffee farmer told us that he was thinking about leaving, and the last three years the yield has increased so he’s working at it,” McQuillan said. ASA also has begun discussing how to more effectively use satellite data and other technology to the benefit of farmers.

For now, McQuillan said, local efforts will concentrate on tracking rain and weather patterns to aid in the hope finding the optimal time for planting.

Dan McQuillan, technical adviser for agriculture for CRS in Latin America, said the U.S. bishops’ relief and development agency is implementing Water-Smart Agriculture, or Agua y Suelo para la Agricultura, known in Spanish as ASA. He said the program has moved from watershed management for household consumption to managing limited water resources, especially among subsistence farmers. The evolution emerged because of less predictable rain patterns caused by climate change.

The program also is working on a broader scale, educating urban and rural dwellers about water management.

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