A Letter from Bishop Brennan

September 24, 2020

Dear faithful of the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese,

I write to you again to address matters of common concern. I do so as a brother in Christ who has been given the awesome responsibility to serve as your shepherd here in West Virginia. I have considered these matters in the light of the Gospel of Christ, the teachings of our Church and my experience of forty-four years of pastoral ministry.

1. The Coronavirus pandemic. We are still in the middle of it. West Virginia has seen an upsurge of confirmed cases of the disease recently, so we cannot afford to relax our vigilance. We must persevere in patience, letting God's grace help us lead our lives productively and safely.

Since late May, we have received no reports of COVID-19 virus outbreaks traceable to a public Catholic Mass. I congratulate our parishioners, clergy and their teams for this good result but, please, do not let down your guard. While I advise persons with weakened health to stay home, I do not hesitate to urge healthy parishioners to go to Mass and bring their children, for our safety measures are working. Isn't it inconsistent to go to stores and restaurants but not to Mass, where you are safer than in many of those other venues? Is feeding the stomach more important than feeding the soul? Hearing God's Word together and receiving the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion are fundamental to our Catholic faith. If you're healthy, come to Mass!

Most of our Catholic schools have opened with teachers and students in the classroom and rigorous safety protocols in place. So far it has gone well. A few Catholic schools are teaching virtually, because of conditions in their counties, but, thankfully, our teachers are proficient at doing this. I compliment our Superintendent Mary Ann Deschaine and her staff, the principals, personnel, parents and students of our Catholic schools, for their good spirit and cooperation.

We also cooperate with civil officials in this matter, trusting that they are trying their best to deal with a changing landscape.

Most of our children attend public schools. Our parishes are beginning to offer religious education classes again, safely. Consult your parish for precisely how they are doing it. Parents: you are the primary educators of your children. Your parish offers you help but cannot replace you. Lead your children to Jesus! You should be aware that Catholic Charities and many of our parishes continue to serve people in need, while adopting protective measures for the benefit of the serving and the served.

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Catholic Charities West Virginia Wins $333K Innovation Challenge

WHEELING—Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) was announced as the winner of the Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) Social Innovation Challenge. CCWVa will receive a $333,333 grant for its innovative Hospital Transition Program.

“We are incredibly grateful to CCUSA for this opportunity that will improve health outcomes for so many West Virginians,” said Beth Zarate, CCWVa Chief Executive Officer. “More and more Catholic Charities agencies across the country are focusing on community-based health initiatives, holistically addressing the needs of the people we serve. We are thrilled to bring a program of this nature to West Virginia.”

The CCUSA Innovation Challenge aimed to inspire Catholic Charities agencies to propose a fresh solution toward reducing poverty. “These awards are a testament to our strong commitment to exploring innovative ways to meet the increasing needs of our brothers and sisters who depend on Catholic Charities agencies for help and hope,” said Sister Donna Markham, OP, PhD, CCUSA President and CEO. “We are excited to see how these programs progress and look forward to assessing their impact on promoting paths out of poverty and suffering.”

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We must not stop reaching out with Christ’s love to those who need our help. You should be proud of what your fellow Catholics are doing in this regard. Could you join them?

Let us pray hard for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic and for greater cooperation by our fellow citizens in the public health measures mandated or recommended to us all. I believe we Catholics can be a model for others in our society in showing how responsible people act in a public health crisis.

2. The upcoming elections. I urge you to remember, regardless of your political affiliations and views in Christ, that we are first and foremost disciples of Jesus Christ, who gathers us as one in his Catholic Church. While many of our fellow citizens engage in harsh rhetoric and even violence to express their feelings about issues and political leaders, we have to act differently everywhere, but especially in Catholic settings. Our parishes, schools and Church groups must be places of calm, and the current political storm is simply too wrong to despise a brother or sister in the faith because of his or her political views. We must worship, pray and work together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In this light I have told our priests and deacons that they are not to endorse, in homilies, bulletins, social media or by other means, particular candidates or political parties. They can and should strive to shed the light of the Gospel on urgent moral and social issues, for our Catholic tradition has much wisdom to offer in such matters, but our clergy, religious and lay employees should not use their Church positions to advance favored candidates or parties. That is unfair to their fellow citizens and to the Church.

As for those who think the former bishop should go to jail, only the civil authorities can charge a person with a crime or send him to jail; the Church can do neither. To be clear, the Diocese cooperates with civil authorities who are not investigating alleged illegal behavior. If we filed a lawsuit to recover more money from the former bishop, it is highly likely we would lose. Owing to constitutional concerns over the First Amendment’s guarantee of a free exercise of religion, civil courts are very reluctant to interfere in the internal organization and norms of religious bodies, and canon law gives the bishop considerable control over how diocesan funds are spent. Those who dislike referring to my predecessor as a bishop must reckon with the fact that he is a bishop by virtue of his ordination; the discipline Rome imposed on him does not change that reality. With respect to the title “emertius,” Rome uses it as a technical term for a retired bishop but I do not use it because I know that, for English speakers, the term connotes honor and esteem, which neither we nor Rome attributes to the retired bishop.

One of the things we learn in life is that we can get some satisfaction relative to the Bransfield affair: to the best of my knowledge, the Holy See has never told a bishop in this country to apologize to his people and to make some financial restitution to them. Rome did that to Bishop Bransfield, even if the “apology” was anemic and the financial restitution, though substantial, was less than we initially sought. I do think Rome’s decision is a “shot across the bow” to bishops that outrageous conduct will not be tolerated and will be punished. I hope that we will not get stuck in endless quarrels that cannot change the past, but which can certainly bog us down in the present. As some of you have told me, we need to put the Bransfield saga behind us and move on to the present. As some of you have told me, we need to put the Bransfield saga behind us and move on to the present.
Statement Regarding Civil Suit Filed by Former PCHS Principal

WHEELING—The following is a statement from Tim Bishop, spokesperson for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, regarding a civil suit filed by former Parkersburg Catholic High School principal.

“This civil suit arises from an employment dispute with a former principal whose contract was not renewed. The Superintendent of Schools, Mary Ann Deschaine, and the designated pastor of the school, Father John Rice, determined it was in the best interest of the school to have new leadership. No issues with Father Rice were raised in the discussions with the former principal.

The recent news story was prompted by the Court’s granting the Diocese’s motion to compel arbitration of the non-renewal of the contract pursuant to the terms of the contract.

The allegations alleged involving Father Rice were promptly investigated, reviewed by the Diocesan Sexual Abuse Review Board and determined not to be credible abuse claims.

Diocesan Official Appointment:

Bishop Mark Brennan has made public the following appointment:

**Father John R. Gallagher** is appointed interim designated pastor of Parkersburg Catholic High School for a term of one year, effective immediately. This is in addition to his current assignment as pastor of St. Michael Parish in Vienna.

Challenge...

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CCWVa proposed an innovative Hospital Transition Program in partnership with Wheeling Hospital. The two organizations will work together to develop a supportive transition for high-risk patients as they are discharged from the hospital.

A CCWVa case manager will coordinate with the hospital team to work with patients prior to discharge. The case manager will provide individualized supportive services, following up with the patient to ensure they understand discharge instructions and are connected to community resources.

“For high-risk hospital patients with complex needs, this collaboration will provide a more fluid transition from the inpatient setting to home, reducing readmission rates and helping individuals better achieve and maintain health stability,” said Sara Lindsay, CCWVa Chief Program Officer.

Additionally, space will be made available within the hospital for a “food pharmacy” – a food pantry for those with fixed or low incomes to visit before they are discharged. Volunteers from local parishes will collaborate to help operate and stock the pantry with donations of nutritious foods specific to certain chronic illnesses. Client-centered patient education will be a key component of the food pharmacy.

“Collaboration with valued community partners, like Wheeling Hospital, is so key in our non-profit social service work,” said Lindsay. “Through resource leveraging and strategic program development, we are able to provide higher quality services to some of the most vulnerable people in need.”

To learn more about CCWVa, visit www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org.
Phase Two: Reopening of Churches for Public Worship

Updated as of September 24, 2020

In an effort to provide some further clarity and/or updates to specific protocols, the diocese is releasing this document to supplement the original guidelines and directives that were issued on May 7, 2020. While the bulk of the directives from the May document remain in effect, some protocols have been adjusted and refined based on the experiences of these last four months. Bishop Brennan and diocesan administration have worked closely with all the clergy, staff members, volunteers and parishioners who have been diligent about following these directives for the health and safety of all who gather for public worship. Moreover, the diocese has encouraged all parish communities to restore their full liturgical schedule of weekend Masses, daily Masses and other sacramental celebrations as existed prior to March 2020. Bishop Brennan continues to invite those who are physically able and healthy to resume attending Mass in person, if they have not already done so — to hear God’s Word with their brothers and sisters in the faith and to receive the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist.

*Any distribution of printed materials such as worship aids or bulletins is to be undertaken with care — if possible, individuals are to carefully pick up these items from a table as they enter/leave the church. If these items must be distributed by a volunteer or usher, he/she should wear gloves for the distribution of these materials.*

*If attendance at particular Masses is increasing and the space/setup of the church building allows, pastors may wish to add an additional station where a deacon or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may also distribute communion.*

*Any distribution of printed materials such as worship aids or bulletins is to be undertaken with care — if possible, individuals are to carefully pick up these items from a table as they enter/leave the church. If these items must be distributed by a volunteer or usher, he/she should wear gloves for the distribution of these materials.*

*Just as for funeral Masses, the same standard requirements remain in effect for weddings. Those gathered for wedding rehearsals should wear masks at all times and an overview of the protocols should be explained by the local pastor during the rehearsal as there may be many guests who are not familiar with specific parish directives. For the actual wedding ceremony, the pastor may make a determination based on factors such as the size of the worship space and the placement of the bride, groom and the wedding party as to when, if at all, masks may be removed for certain moments during the celebration of the Wedding liturgy.*

*Updated as of September 24, 2020*

*Confirmation — The Office of Worship and Sacraments has made available additional guidelines for the celebration of Confirmation during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Norms for Reopening Parish Facilities for Meetings and Gatherings

Updated as of September 24, 2020

The following norms are intended to assist pastors as they reopen their parish/mission facilities to serve those entrusted to their pastoral care. Obviously, the diversity in size, location and facilities will require pastors to make some adaptations in the following norms. However, the substance and intent of these norms are to be observed. These norms are provided to promote a safe environment for our faith communities.

Please note that the State of West Virginia currently does not permit gatherings of more than 25 under most circumstances. For any clarification you might need, please consult your local county health department.

1. Parish Meetings and Formation
   a. Parishes may convene and host in-person regular meetings of parish committees, most importantly Parish Council, Finance Council, parish administrative staff and VIRTUS trainings. Preparations must be made in advance for physical distancing, such as sitting on every other seat. Attendees must wear masks upon entry and exit from parish buildings and during meetings. No tactile greetings are permitted. Hand sanitizer must be made available to all those in attendance. No food or drink is to be served. Any handouts must be taken home by those in attendance or distributed electronically. Wipes and sanitizing supplies should be available for individuals to sanitize the pew, door handles, etc. Once they are finished making their visit and are preparing to leave the church. The hours the church is open should still be limited (not 24 hours a day); as well, regular sanitization of all commonly touched surfaces should be done daily after the closing and before the opening of the church for the next day.
   b. Parish meetings may reconvene at this time in our parishes. This includes parish groups, youth groups, prayer groups, or outside groups such as ecumenical groups, AA, scouting, etc. Guidelines in Section 1 (a) above must also be followed. For youth groups, minors are not to be taken off-site by parish employees or volunteers. They are not to travel in groups for diocesan or parish-sponsored events. Field trips are also not to take place at this time. Youth should travel only with their parents or guardians and only with members of their own households.

   Adult religious education, youth religious education and formation classes and related programming, etc., may meet in person at this time and are to follow the norms put into place by the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis. Contact Daniel Maul for more information in this regard.

   See “Gatherings” on Page 5
Guidelines for Music During Liturgical Celebrations

(The following guidelines have been developed by the members of the Diocesan Music Consultation Group. Updated as of September 24, 2020)

WHAT SHOULD WE BE SINGING?

The Diocese still asks that singing be done in moderation during the COVID pandemic. Therefore, the question becomes “What should we be singing?” According to the USCCB document, “Sing to the Lord” paragraph 110-118 describes for us a hierarchy of liturgical music. “Singing by the gathered assembly and ministers is important to all celebrations. Not every part that can be sung should necessarily be sung at every celebration; rather, preference is given to those parts that are of greater importance.”

1) Dialogues and Acclamations—Among the parts that can be sung, preference should be given to the dialogues and acclamations of the Eucharistic liturgy. It is our intent to God’s Word and actions. These are; Gospel Acclamation, Holy Holy, Mystery of Faith, and Great Amen.

2) Psalms—The Responsorial Psalm in the Liturgy of the Word of the Mass, “has great liturgical and pastoral importance since it fosters the meditation of the Word of God.” Singing of Psalms is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition and early Christianity. Jesus sang Psalms, our Jewish brothers and sisters sing Psalms. (In light of the COVID pandemic, you DO NOT have to proclaim the Psalm from the ambo. It may be sung from a different location.)

3) Refrains and repeated responses—These include the Kyrie and Lamb of God, at the Mass

4) Hymns—At Mass, in addition to the Gloria, hymns that have been judged appropriate may be added to the Liturgy. There is no mention of a Preparation of the Gifts song or a Recessional Hymn in the Roman Missal; thus, their use is optional.

INSTRUMENTALISTS

At this time, other instrumentalists may now be reintroduced into our music ministry programs as long as the standard safety protocols are followed including wearing of masks, distancing and minimal rehearsal time together with other musicians. String instruments, guitars, handbells, and percussion appear to pose minimal risk (please consult https://www.acda.org for guidelines for safely returning to ringing). Some concern still exists regarding the use of woodwind and brass instruments and the potential spread of aerosol droplets that could be produced by these instruments. We would caution against the use of these instruments at this time; larger musical organizations (such as symphonies, etc...) are looking into covers and other measures to mitigate the challenges posed by woodwind and brass instruments. As we learn more from these developments, we will revisit the usage of woodwinds and brass instruments.

VOCAL CHOIRS

At this time, concern still exists regarding vocal choirs/ensembles and their potential to spread aerosols and other droplets into the air. Moreover, many members of our choirs fall into the higher risk category because of age and other underlying health issues. Thus, full vocal choirs may still not be utilized at this time. The consultation must be given to a small schola of no more than four members to allow SATB music. Like all musicians, these schola members are to wear masks at all times (even while singing), and proper distancing must be taken to a distance where they are located in the church and are to be in an area that allows at least six feet of space between each of the singers. We also recommend that each schola member have his/her own microphone to prevent cross-contamination and to allow their voice to be clearly heard and understood while singing with the mask. Moreover, a reminder that the schola should always encourage and support the singing of the assembly; as well, it is suggested for moderation in the number of musical selections the schola will actually sing before and during the Mass or service. As more studies do further investigation into larger group singing and its impact on spreading the virus, additional updates may be made to this aspect of music ministry. Further information on singing and related protocols may be found at the American Choral Directors Association (www.acda.org).

“BROADCASTING” AND/OR REPRODUCING MUSIC/LYRICS IN PRINT OR VIA PROJECTION

Please know that separate and specific licenses must be obtained if your parish/community broadcasts any liturgical service involving copyrighted music that is played and/or sung during the broadcast. The term “broadcast” includes podcasts, Facebook live, YouTube, and any other method where the liturgical service is recorded and then shared. As well, a separate license must be obtained if your parish/community reprints the lyrics and/or the music used in a worship aid, bulletin or any other printed material; this same license would also allow for the projection of lyrics and music. Much of the music that most parishes utilize falls under the license of OneLicense.net. However, if you use music outside of the coverage of OneLicense.com, you would need to secure additional licensing (ex. Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) covers many contemporary songs which some parishes may choose as part of their repertoire). In addition to obtaining the license, each song, either projected or printed, must include the composer’s name and the copyright notice with the publisher’s name (this includes both the reproduction of lyrics with the melody line and/or simply the reproducing of the song’s text); moreover, music used each week must be reported to the respective licensing company. The Office of Worship and Sacraments can provide assistance in answering questions related to appropriate licensing. Worship aids are only for single-time usage and must be disposed after each Mass.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Recordings of choirs or liturgical instrumental recordings are not to be used during the celebration of the Eucharist and are not to be used in place of music that would normally be sung or played during Mass.

Please remember that all musicians (vocalists and instrumentalists) should wear masks at all times during the Mass(es) and during any rehearsals; as well, regular sanitizing, appropriate distancing and good air ventilation must also be practiced. Regarding rehearsals, it is recommended not to share any instruments or printed materials and to keep rehearsals to a minimum with the length of the rehearsal not to exceed 30-50 minutes. Music ministers, as leaders, must always practice and exhibit proper adherence to the protocols and safety guidelines; since there remains no tolerance for spreading the virus, music ministers must demonstrate greater awareness and take additional precautions for the safety of all.

Bishop Mark E. Brennan

Gatherings...

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2. Indoor Parish Hall or Gymnasium Events
   a. Funeral Luncheons and other gatherings with meals: Presently, parishes may NOT have funeral luncheons/dinners.
   b. Wedding Receptions, Baptismal/Confirmation gatherings, Bridal/Baby Showers, etc.: Presently parishes may not hold these types of gatherings.
   c. Charitable Outreach: Parishes have been and still are encouraged to continue charitable outreach to the community during the pandemic, with special emphasis on operating food pantries, "meals on wheels," utility assistance, clothing distribution, and outreach with local partners such as the Gabriel Project, Red Cross, St. Vincent de Paul Society, etc. Be certain to follow social distancing guidelines, use location specific plans to avoid contact, always wear masks and encourage hand washing/using of hand sanitizer. Organizers must clearly mark separate doors for ingress/egress and mark floors for one-way traffic flow. Track names of those in attendance at the entrance of your facility for contact tracing purposes. Prohibit use of public drinking fountains. Clean bathrooms frequently. Sanitize after each facility use.

3. Indoor Outdoor Fund-Raising-Auctions, Craft Fairs or public events without food or beverage service: At this time, you may seek permission to have these events. First, assemble your plans for the event and submit them to your county health department. First, would you receive county approval, please forward your plans and the approval from the county health department to Bryan Minor in the Chancery, and we will respond as soon as possible.

4. Athletic Activities: With the permission of the pastor/administrator, parish indoor athletic practices, games or recreational activities on parish property may resume at this time, but these are all subject to WVDEA and WVDDHR color coded guidance and policies (green and yellow: you may proceed; gold, orange or red follow state rules). Guidance for Catholic School facilities is available through the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. If you have any questions, please refer to your county health department.

5. Bingo: With the permission of the pastor/administrator, Bingo may resume under the following conditions:
   b. You must submit your plan to the county health department and secure written approval to begin bingo on your property.
   c. Submit your plan to begin bingo along with written permission from the county health department to Bryan Minor for diocesan consideration, and we will respond as soon as possible.
   d. Rentals: Parish halls and gymnasiums are not available for parishioner or public rental at this time.

3. Outdoor Facilities and Venues: While outdoor events appear to provide more flexibility, it is important that plans be taken to keep these events safe. Therefore safe-distancing is important as is the wearing of masks and meals are not to be served at these locations.

Mark E. Brennan
Bishop Mark E. Brennan
This weekend is Priesthood Sunday, a special day set aside each year to honor priesthood in the United States. The Sept. 27 celebration is sponsored each year by Serra International, which describes the special day a time to reflect upon and affirm the role of the priesthood in the life of the Church as a central one.

“Priesthood Sunday is to priests like Father’s Day is to dads,” said Deacon John Yaquinta, chaplain of the Clarksburg Serra Club. “It’s a time to honor all our current priests, with spiritual bouquets of prayer; to pray for those in study to be priests, and also to remember our retired priests.”

Deacon Yaquinta, who is also permanent deacon at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood, said this is also an opportunity to just say thank you to priests for their vocation.

“I urge all Serrans,” he said, “to pick up the phone and/or send an e-mail to thank a priest today.”

Priesthood Sunday is annually celebrated on the last Sunday of September. In normal times, the day is celebrated in many ways from a special prayer service, to a feast, to songs from children. Parishes would tailor the event to suit their own style. Though the 2020 celebration is hindered a bit by the pandemic, the Catholic faithful can still mark the special day with prayers, a message or, again, just a simple thank you to a priest after Mass.

The Serra Club of Charleston has been fortunate to have several in-person meetings since early July, observing social distancing and other COVID-19 protocols, said Charleston Serra President Michael A. Kawash, noting that attendance has not been at the levels prior to the pandemic. And, even though normal celebrations cannot be held, the club still plans to make Priesthood Sunday special.

“Priesthood Sunday will be different this year, as we will limit what we are doing to using social media to heighten the faithful’s awareness of the role of priests in our lives,” Kawash said. “We do not want that important date to pass this year without showing our appreciation for everything priests do, especially in bringing us the sacraments.”

In anticipation of Priesthood Sunday, Wheeling Serra Club President Chris Freeman spoke of the club’s mission and the many
Life Chains Planned around Diocese for Respect Life Sunday, Oct. 4

WEST VIRGINIA—Respect Life Sunday is Oct. 4, and will include a national life chain to be held from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. This is a one-hour display of silent witness in public prayer for the protection of life from conception to natural death.

Stanley Wyatt, a prisoner of St. Anthony Parish in Charleston, is helping with efforts and planning in his community. Life chains, he said, are scheduled on Kanawha Boulevard and MacCorkle Avenue in the Kanawha City section of Charleston, as well as MacCorkle Avenue in South Charleston, Jefferson, and St. Albans. Another Life Chain, Wyatt said, will be held at the same time on Washington Street West in Charleston between Maryland and Delaware avenues. Other life chains in the region will be conducted in Cross Lanes, Hurricane, and Huntington, he said. “Participant stand 10 feet apart,” Wyatt said. “Signs are available from me for pick up or delivery. We ask that signs be retained for the following year.”

No registrations needed, he said, “Just show up.” Signs are also available along the route at living Word Christian Center or Christian Assembly in Charleston.

In the Eastern Panhandle a life chain will be held from 2-3 p.m. on East King Street and South Queen Street.

The youth group from St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg will be participating.

These are just a few of the life chains being held in West Virginia on Respect Life Sunday. For more information, faithful should contact their parishes.

October is Respect Life Month with this year’s theme “Live the Gospel of Life.” Sponsored annually by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the annual Respect Life Program is “a year-round, nationwide effort by leaders like yourselves to help Catholics understand, value, and become engaged with building a culture that cherishes every human life,” program officials said.

For more information and resources for Respect Life Month, visit www.respectlife.org.

Priesthood...

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great priests in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charlestown. “Our mission as Serrans is to promote and foster vocations,” Freeman said. “Our diocese is fortunate to have so many wonderful priests. We invite all Catholics to give thanks and join us in offering prayers for our priests and for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.” Freeman also offered:

The Serran Prayer for Vocations

“We give thanks for all priests who are ordained to serve our church, that their ministry may be fruitful and appreciated by the people they serve. We also give thanks for their gifts to our parishes and their vocations to the ordained priesthood.

We pray that good men may be drawn to love and to serve the people of God. For retired priests, we pray that they may experience God’s abundant love as they walk a new path of prayer and servanthood in retirement.

We affirm, support and celebrate our priests’ gift of service to us and pray that we may never take the presence of our priests for granted, as we cherish the celebration of the Mass and are nourished by the Eucharist.

We also pray for all priests who struggle with loneliness, declining health or loss of mobility, that they may be comforted by the grace of the Holy Spirit. May this parish family always embrace our priests and sustain their ministry by our love, our constant prayer and our trust in their leadership.

Finally, we pray for priests who now sleep in peace of the resurrection, and for those who may die this year or this day, that God lead them gently into their eternal reward. Let us offer our prayers in thanksgiving for our priests this Sunday and throughout the year.”

For more information about Priesthood Sunday, visit Serra International’s website: serraus.org/priesthood-sunday/
U.S. Bishops Say ‘Enough’ on Federal Executions

By Carol Zimmermann,

**WASHINGTON (CNS) —** Just hours before the sixth federal execution took place this year, and two days before the next one was scheduled, two U.S. bishops’ committee chairmen called on the government to end this practice.

“We say to President Trump and Attorney General Barr: Enough. Stop these executions,” said Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in a statement issued late Sept. 22.

In the last 60 years, before the Trump administration restarted federal executions, there were only four federal executions. Since July, there have been five, which is already more federal executions than were carried out in any year in the last century,” the bishops said.

They said the Catholic Church “must give concrete help to victims of violence” and “encourage the rehabilitation and restoration of those who commit violence.” They noted that “accountability and legitimate punishment are a part of this process” and emphasized that “responsibility for harm is necessary if the political system may find a way to end the death penalty, so as to achieve a measure of justice that does not involve the violence of execution of a fellow human being.”

**Congress Urged to Cover Immigrant, Refugee Families in Any Stimulus Bill**

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The chairman of the U.S. bishops’ migration committee told a House subcommittee Sept. 23 that any stimulus bill Congress is considering must include assistance for immigrant and refugee families and also make them eligible for past stimulus relief.

Many immigrants and refugees in this country are among the front-line essential workers who have become undoubtedly more important during COVID-19, said Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington.

Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration, he made the comments in written testimony to the House Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship on “Immigrants as Essential Workers During COVID-19.”

“Immigrants and refugees are a blessing to our country,” the bishop said. “The church teaches that every human being is created in God’s image and deserves dignity and respect and that human labor has an inherent dignity, allowing all to share in the ongoing work of creation, while providing the resources to build and sustain families.”

“The contributions of essential workers have become undoubtedly more important during COVID-19,” he continued. “While many essential workers are U.S. citizens, many are also immigrants and refugees. Immigrants comprise 31% of U.S. agricultural employees ... and they risk their own safety to support their families and to ensure continuity in the nation’s food supply chains.”

Immigrant and refugee families are “significantly vulnerable” to COVID-19 and “less likely to have access to medical care,” Bishop Dorsonville noted.

And so far, “they have been completely left out” of any federal stimulus package offering financial help to many segments of the U.S. workforce and U.S. families, he said.

“We urge Congress to include immigrant and refugee families in any future COVID-19 relief as well as be made eligible for past relief efforts,” he said.

“Additionally,” Bishop Dorsonville said, “we continue to advocate Congress for a path to citizenship for undocumented workers who have been living, working and contributing to our country. As Pope Francis states: No one must be left behind.”
Pro-life Leaders Welcome ‘Born Alive Executive Order’ Announced by Trump

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — President Donald Trump’s Sept. 23 announcement that he will issue a “Born Alive Executive Order” will “provide necessary legal protections for some of the most vulnerable in society,” said Jeanne Mancini, president of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund.

“These steps had to be taken,” she said, “because some Democrats in the Senate promised to block legislation that mandates basic medical care for children who survive an abortion — an extremist view shared by vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris.”

Mancini made the comments in a statement she issued shortly after Trump announced the order in his remarks during the annual National Catholic Prayer Breakfast, which this year could not be an in-person event because of the pandemic and was livestreamed to over 10,000 registered participants.

“We believe in ... the eternal truth that every child, born and unborn, is made in the holy image of God. ... I will always defend the sacred right to life,” the president said. His executive order will “ensure that all precious babies born alive, no matter their circumstances, receive the medical care that they deserve. This is our sacrosanct moral duty,” he said.

Trump’s opponents and some obstetricians and gynecologists say existing law that already provides protections to newborns, whether born during a failed abortion or under other circumstances.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Nebraska, the lead co-sponsor of the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, S. 311, has said current law does not provide enough protections. His bill would protect newborns who survive abortions by requiring appropriate care and admission to a hospital. On Feb. 23, a Senate vote to advance the bill failed.

In other reaction to Trump’s planned executive order, said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, “protects the youngest of patients and ensures that their right to life is defended to the greatest extent of the law.”

“Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life Action, called it “a humane response to a struggling infant gasping for air.”

“The fact that Democrats in the House and Senate have blocked efforts to provide legal protections for babies born during botched abortions should horrify all Americans,” she said, adding that “one of the sleeper issues of this election cycle is infanticide, which is allowed under our current laws.”

The Guttmacher Institute estimates that out of about 926,000 annual abortions, about 12,000 take place after viability, or after 20 weeks, she said.

“The radical reality of Roe is that abortion is legal in the U.S. through all nine months, sometimes with taxpayer funding, and it offers no legal protections for babies born during botched abortions,” Hawkins said.
True Change Requires Input of Everyone, Not Just the Powerful, Pope Says

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The world will not overcome the current crisis if only big businesses, financial institutions and the powerful have a voice, Pope Francis said.

“Everyone must be listened to. Everyone — those on the top, those on the bottom,” he said Sept. 23 during his weekly general audience.

“Getting out of this crisis does not mean brushing a coat of paint over the current situation,” he said.

“Overcoming a crisis means changing. And true change comes about with everyone, all the people,” who make up a community, he said to applause.

“Either together or it will not work,” he said at the audience, which was held in the San Damaso courtyard of the Apostolic Palace.

He continued his series of talks on “healing the world” by reflecting on the “principle of subsidiarity,” which emerged in church teaching in Pope Pius XI’s 1931 encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno” on the reconstruction of the social order.

Subsidiarity has been explained as balancing the many necessary levels of society — government, business, family, associations, etc. — and seeking the allocation of resources by higher levels of society to support engagement and decision-making by the lower levels.

Pope Francis said the principle works both ways: from top to bottom and from the bottom to the top, with all levels working in a cooperative, not competitive way, leading to greater unity and working for the common good.

Unfortunately, he said, not everyone has the possibility, the right, the resources or the courage to take on their responsibility in helping heal the world.

“Many people cannot participate in the reconstruction of the common good because they are marginalized, excluded or ignored; certain social groups do not succeed in making a contribution because they are economically or socially suffocated,” he said.

“In some places, people are not free to express their own faith or values and could even go to prison if they did and, especially in Western nations, many people repress their own ethical or religious convictions,” the pope said.

“Unfortunately, this injustice happens often in those places where huge economic and geopolitical interests are concentrated, such as, for example, certain extractive activities in some areas of the planet and where the voices of indigenous peoples, their culture and worldviews are not taken into consideration.

“Today, this lack of respect for the principle of subsidiarity has spread like a virus,” the pope said.

“The largest financial companies are listened to rather than the people or the ones who really move the economy,” he said. “Multinational businesses are listened to more than social movements.”

Also, when it comes to finding a vaccine for the coronavirus, he added, “the large pharmaceutical companies are listened to more than the health care workers employed on the front lines in hospitals or in refugee camps.”

To sum it up, he said, “the powerful are listened to more than the weak. And this is not the way. It is not the human way; it is not the way Jesus taught.”

The pope recalled “the spontaneous gesture of applauding for doctors and nurses” during the lockdown in Italy and other countries, as a sign of encouragement and hope.

“Let’s extend this applause to every member of the social body for their precious contribution, no matter how small,” and make sure they are listened to, consulted and given a chance to do something, he said.

“Let’s applaud those that culture characterizes as the rejected: the elderly, children, persons with disability, workers, all those who dedicate themselves to service,” he said, and let them collaborate to overcome this crisis.

People should not be content just with applauding, though, he said. “Let’s encourage ourselves to dream big ... seeking the ideals of justice and social love that are born of hope” rather than trying to reconstruct a past that was “unjust and already ill.”

At the end of the audience, Pope Francis blessed a large bell that was commissioned by the “Yes to Life” Foundation in Poland.

The bell, called “The voice of the unborn,” was to be used at events recognizing the value of human life from its moment of conception to its natural end, the pope said in remarks to visitors from Poland.

May the tolling of the bell, “re-awaken the consciences of lawmakers and all people of goodwill in Poland and the world,” he said.

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CONFIRMATION IN SHEPHERDSTOWN

Bishop Mark Brennan confirms a young member of St. Agnes Parish in Shepherdstown. With him is Father Mat Rowgh, former pastor (left) and Father Andrew Switzer, current pastor (right). The next confirmation will be at All Saints Parish, Bridgeport Oct. 11 at 3 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Below is the full confirmation schedule.

CONFIRMATION SCHEDULE

Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

All Saints Parish, Bridgeport
Sunday, October 11 at 3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Blessed Sacrament Parish, South Charleston
Saturday, October 17 at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

St. Anthony Parish, Follansbee
Sunday, November 22 at 10:30 a.m.
Una carta del obispo Brennan

24 de septiembre de 2020

Queridos fieles de la diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston,

Le escribo nuevamente para abordar asuntos de interés común. Lo hago como un hermano en Cristo a quien se le ha dado la asombrosa responsabilidad de servir como su pastor aquí en Virginia Occidental. He considerado estos asuntos a la luz del Evangelio de Cristo, las enseñanzas de nuestra Iglesia y mi experiencia de cuarenta y cuatro años de ministerio pastoral.

1. La pandemia de coronavirus. Todavía estamos en medio de eso. Virginia Occidental ha visto un aumento de casos confirmados de la enfermedad re- cientemente, por lo que no podemos permitirnos relajar nuestra vigilancia. Debemos perseverar con paciencia, dejando que la gracia de Dios nos ayude a llevar nuestras vidas de manera productiva y segura.

Desde finales de mayo, no hemos recibido informes de brotes del virus COVID-19 que se puedan atribuir a una misa católica pública. Felicito a nuestros feligreses, clérigos y sus equipos por este buen resultado, pero, por favor, no bajen la guardia. Aunque aconsejo a las personas con problemas de salud que se queden en casa, no dudo en instar a los feligreses sanos a que vayan a misa y traigan a sus hijos, porque nuestras medidas de seguridad están funcionando. ¿No es inconsistente ir a tiendas y restaurantes pero no a misa, donde estás más seguro que en muchos de esos otros lugares? ¿Es más importante alimentar el estómago que alimentar el alma? Escuchar juntamente la Palabra de Dios y recibir al Señor Jesús en la Sagrada Comunión son fundamentales para nuestra fe católica. ¡Sí estás sano, ven a misa! La mayoría de nuestras escuelas católicas se han abierto con maestros y estudiantes en el aula y se han implementado rigurosos protocolos de seguridad. Hasta ahora ha ido bien. Algunas escuelas católicas están enseñando virtualmente, debido a las condiciones en sus condados, pero, afortunadamente, nuestros maestros son competentes en hacerlo. Felicito a nuestra superintendency, maestros, padres y personal, los directores, personal, padres y estudiantes de nuestras escuelas católicas, por su buen espíritu y cooperación.

También cooperamos con los funcionarios civiles en este asunto, confiando en que están haciendo todo lo posible para hacer frente a un panorama cambiante.

La mayoría de nuestros niños asisten a escuelas públicas. Nuestras parroquias están comenzando a ofrecer clases de educación religiosa nuevamente, de manera segura. Consulte a su parroquia para saber exactamente cómo lo están haciendo. Padres: ustedes son los principales educadores de sus hijos. Su parroquia le ofrece ayuda pero no puede reemplazarlo. ¡Lleva a tus hijos a Jesús! Debe tener en cuenta que Caridades Católicas y muchas otras de nuestras parroquias continúan sirviendo a las personas necesitadas, a la tierra que adoptan medidas de protección para el beneficio de los que sirven y los que sirven.

No debemos dejar de acercarnos con el amor de Cristo a aquellos que necesitan nuestra ayuda. Debería estar orgulloso de lo que están haciendo sus compañeros católicos a este respecto. ¿Podrías unirte a ellos?

Oremos mucho por el fin de la pandemia de COVID-19 y por una mayor cooperación de nuestros conciudadanos en las medidas de salud pública que se nos ordenan o recomiendan a todos. Creo que los católicos podemos ser un modelo para otros en nuestro estado al mostrar cómo actúan las personas responsables en una crisis de salud pública.

2. Las próximas elecciones. Les insto a recordar, independientemente de su afiliación política y opiniones, que somos ante todo discípulos de Jesucristo, quien nos reúne como uno en su Iglesia Católica. Si bien muchos de nuestros conciudadanos se involucran en una retórica dura e incluso en la violencia, quienes se queden en casa, no dudo en instar a los feligreses sanos a que vayan a misa, donde estás más seguro que en muchos de esos otros lugares.

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Obispos de EE. UU. dicen ‘basta’ a las ejecuciones federales

Por Carol Zimmermann, Catho-
lic News Service
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Las autoridades de las agencias federales de justicia aceleraron las ejecuciones en el país, debido al inicio de la nueva administración de Joe Biden, que ha prometido que no liderará un programa de condenas a muerte.

El arzobispo de Washington, D.C., Wil-
bur J. Harbert, anunció que un grupo de obispos de la Conferencia Nacional de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, el arzobispo de Oklahoma City, el presidente del Comité de Actividades Pro-Vida de la Conferencia Nacional de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, el arzobispo de Kansas, el pre-
presidente del Comité de Actividades Pro-Vida de la USCCB, y el presidente de la Asociación de Sacerdotes Católicos de los Estados Unidos, el arzobispo de Dallas, Richard E. Malone, se reunió el 22 de septiembre en Washington para manifestar su preocupación por las ejecuciones federales en el país.

En un comunicado, los obispos expresaron su preocupación por las ejecuciones federales y el Nuevo Programa de Justicia, un esfuerzo de la administración Biden para acelerar las ejecuciones.

"Hay que cesar inmediatamente las ejecuciones federales y poner fin a la pena de muerte en el país", afirmó el arzobispo de Washington, D.C.

Los obispos también expresaron su apoyo a la Iglesia Católica en sus esfuerzos por promover la paz y el diálogo.

"La Iglesia Católica ha sido un líder en la lucha contra la violencia y la pena de muerte en el país. Nos unimos a todos los que trabajan por una sociedad en la que la violencia y la muerte sean cosas del pasado", declararon.

Por su parte, el arzobispo de Dallas, Richard E. Malone, expresó su preocupación por el aumento de las ejecuciones en el país.

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By Katie Hinerman Klug, Catholic Charities West Virginia Marketing Communications Specialist

Recently we received a visit from 9-year old Reed Burdette (and his grandmother). Reed had received a food purchasing card in response to COVID-19, and decided to make a difference with his.

He decided that he only wanted a handful of items for himself, and chose to use his card to purchase 143 pounds of food for the Elkins food pantry. He said he was hoping it would make a difference for people that needed it, and he wanted to do what he could.

Throughout this pandemic and its struggles, one thing that has continued to be both humbling and impressive is the generosity of our community. Thank you, Reed!

To learn more about Catholic Charities West Virginia, visit www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org.

The Mission of Catholic Charities West Virginia: Guided by God’s love, Catholic Charities collaborates with community partners, parishes and families to provide caring and compassionate services to people in need and work toward lasting and meaningful change.
**Bishop Blesses Wheeling Hospital Facilities**

It was a beautiful fall morning to honor two critical care facilities of Wheeling Hospital. Bishop Mark Brennan held two blessings Sept. 23 for Wheeling Hospital's newest Urgent Care in downtown Wheeling, and the Ambulatory Surgery Center in Ohio on the Bridgeport and Martins Ferry border. Bishop Brennan is pictured above (left) with Dr. Rex Lasure, director of the Wheeling Care Center, and Father Cyprian Osuegbu, Wheeling Hospital pastor. At top right is the Urgent Care, and at right is the Ambulatory Surgery Center.

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