WORLD YOUTH DAY

A Journey of Hope
through the generosity of others

BY BISHOP EDWARD J. BURNS

As many of you know, the plans to go to Rio de Janeiro with the young people of Alaska for World Youth Day with Pope Francis came very close to being cancelled due to the bankruptcy proceedings of the travel agent with which we booked our trip. Nevertheless, the bishops of Alaska took the risk to proceed in salvaging the trip for our youth (who had worked so hard to scrape together the means to go) by putting forth diocesan funds (close to $200,000) with the understanding that fund-raising efforts would be put into place to help replenish those funds. Through it all, there were no guarantees that the money would be recovered, either through the fund-raising efforts or through the...

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August 10:  
Deacon Vincent Hansen and Deacon Charles Rohrbacher  
7th anniversary of diaconal ordination (2006)

August 23:  
Feast of St. Rose of Lima  
Patronal Feast of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Wrangell

September 8:  
Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Patronal feast of the Cathedral in Juneau

CHURCH 
CALENDAR

August 15  
Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Holy Day of Obligation

September 2 - Labor Day

September 4-11  
Bishop Burns’ Pastoral Visits:  
Petersburg and Wrangell

September 11 - Patriot Day

September 14  
Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

September 15  
National Catechetical Sunday

Support Holy Name Catholic School, Ketchikan  
September 15, 2013 Special Collection

Address Change

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juneaudiocese@gci.net.

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A Journey of Hope through the generosity of others:
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upcoming months-long legal process in bankruptcy procedures.

This past Friday, I was informed by the executive director of our Alaska Conference of Catholic Bishops that we were only $5,000 from the goal of recovering our total amount. When I shared this with the staff of St. Paul the Apostle Church, I learned that they had $3,000 of contributions yet to be submitted. With this, I was very pleased to learn that we are only $2,000 from our goal. This is good news!

And with this news, I say—“Thank you!” Your contribution made a trip of a lifetime and a historic moment in the Church—a reality for our youth. First and foremost, our Church is committed to our young people—whether it is providing a safe environment for them or making sure that they are given the best catechesis. We recognized that this trip was important for those who attended and for those who supported this journey. Secondly, it was significant that our young people had the opportunity to witness a historic moment in the Church—the first Latin American Pope on his first trip back to the continent of his homeland since his election.

This journey to World Youth Day was a journey of hope. When Pope Francis arrived, he said to the President of Brazil at his welcome reception, “I do not bring you silver or gold, but what I bring you is a precious gift—Jesus Christ.” These words sum up the focus and thrust of World Youth Day. Pope Francis brought the message of Jesus Christ and celebrated the Eucharist with 3.5 million people at the closing Mass of the World Youth Day events on Copacabana Beach in Rio. Through it all, he challenged the world’s young people with the task of being Christ’s disciples.

World Youth Day began in 1984, when Blessed Pope John Paul II invited youth from around the world to Rome. While this event was intended to celebrate Catholic faith, the Holy Father invited all youth, regardless of their religious beliefs, to participate. This open invitation to youth, ages 18-35, to gather as a sign to the world of the unity and peaceful presence of cultures and peoples from around the globe has remained a feature of every World Youth Day. Pope John Paul II recognized that young people naturally are hopeful, especially if that hope hasn’t been strangled out by messages of despair and a lack of love and justice in their homes and communities. He also recognized that youth need to participate in Christian hope as a living reality. It is in the context of coming together as a people of faith, a people of Christian hope, that youth were able to embark more fully upon the path of life in the spiritual realm.

One of the young people who attended the World Youth Day event in Rio was at Mass with me at the Cathedral, exactly one week after that enormous event. I drew a comparison of Mass with Pope Francis a week previous with 3.5 million people and the current Mass we were celebrating in the smallest cathedral in the US. Whether the venue is big or small, it is the same Lord, the same Eucharist, the same Church and the same experience—it is a journey of hope.

Salvaging the trip was worth the risk. As these young people return from our pilgrimage to their Alaskan homes, I trust that they carry with them the message of Jesus Christ. I pray that young people are looking for today will bear fruit through such expressions of love and compassion. It is my prayer that the young people who celebrated those days with Pope Francis, the Successor of St. Peter, will also risk much in living their faith for others and professing their love in Jesus Christ.

Again, “Thank you!”

Thank you to everyone who supported the Alaska World Youth Day pilgrims! Without your generosity this trip would not have been possible.
The Southeast Alaska Catholic

Synod Theme:
The People of God
Responding To Christ’s Call

BY BARRY P. SCHODEL

At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him. He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness. He therefore chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. He gradually instructed this people. . . . All these things, however, happened as a preparation for and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ . . . the New Covenant in his blood; he called together a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit.

After some reflection upon the essential trajectory of the 2nd Diocesan Synod for the Diocese of Juneau we considered some themes that well articulated this moment for the local Church. Because the Year of Faith is meant to be an opportunity to revisit the writings and teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Post-Conciliar tradition we wanted to establish continuity with two key principles of the Second Vatican Council: the People of God and the call that is upon us for a New Evangelization.

The above quote is from Lumen Gentium, the chapter that focuses on the Church as the People of God. The People of God are a people who live according to a call, a call to holiness, to salvation, a call to live in the Spirit. The People of God have been reborn by baptism and Spirit, they are intimate friends and disciples of Jesus, servants of God the Father, and messengers of the truth and love of the Holy Spirit. The People of God are a people who desire the Glory of God before all else, and who respond gratefully to the invitation to partake of the divine nature, to put on the new person, participating in the priestly, prophetic, and royal offices of Christ, each according to their particular vocation. The People of God are meant to be a sacrament of salvation for all peoples, a sign of Faith, Hope, and Love that comes from docility to the Gospel as authentically interpreted by the magisterium of the Catholic Church. The People of God no longer live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, and as One People yearly renew their baptismal commitment to renounce evil and the Author of Sin, and renew their commitment to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith. The People of God as members of the mystical body of Christ, the Church, have two primary responsibilities 1: To Repent and Believe 2: To Go and Make Disciples of all Nations Proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

As we approach the Synod in November we will include in the Southeast Alaska Catholic a monthly reflection on this call as well as information on developments and progress towards our 2nd Diocesan Synod.

Barry P. Schoedel is the Diocesan Assistant for Evangelization and Technology and member of the Synod Preparatory Commission.

Synod Preparations:
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emphasizes an important dimension of the life and vocation of the People of God:

• Caring for the Temporal Needs of the Church: Stewardship/Administration

• Parish Life and Spiritual Growth:
  Liturgy/Sacraments/Shrine/Diocesan Missions

• Future of our Church:
  Youth/Church Vocations/Pastoral Plan

• Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ:
  Evangelization/Catechesis

• Catholic Life in Society:
  Charity/Justice/Service

For the most current information, check out the new website for the Second Diocesan Synod: www.evangelizeseak.com. This website will be updated every Monday and important communications are available by clicking on “recent communications.”

Do you sense the call to give yourself to God and to the mission of the Church by participating in the Synod? Join us in the special time of grace and service.

Volunteers will be needed for committees for Hospitality, Transportation, Communications, Liturgy, and Set-up. Also, please consider donating Alaska Airline miles and companion fare tickets to bring Synod Members from across the diocese to Juneau. Member housing in Juneau will be needed as well. If you can help, please email your contact information and details to: Peggy Mattson at dioceseofjuneau@gci.net or phone 586-2227 ext. 31.

Pray, Learn, Act and Give—
Help CRS provide relief to Syrian refugees

On my mind this past year has been the civil war in Syria and the resulting humanitarian crisis inside Syria and in neighboring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. This last week I traveled to CRS (Catholic Relief Services) headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland for three days of training with other Diocesan Directors (I’m the Diocesan Director for our diocese). While in Baltimore I learned more about the ongoing work of CRS in Syria and the region on behalf of refugees fleeing the fighting.

Although not yet really in the consciousness of most Americans (or most American Catholics), the past two years of civil war in Syria have resulted in the violent deaths of almost 100,000 Syrians, mostly civilians. An estimated 1 million refugees have fled into neighboring Lebanon (a country with a total pre-war population of 4 million). Tens of thousands more have fled to Turkey and Jordan. And an undetermined but large number of refugees are displaced within Syria itself.

The causes of the Syrian civil war are complex, but involve fighting between rebel forces, mostly made up of Sunni Muslims (who are a majority in Syria) and the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, members of the minority Alawite sect who control the army and the police and Sh’ia Muslims (also a minority) who support the government. Syria’s Christian minority, made up mostly of Eastern Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox clergy and faithful, are committed to finding a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict that guarantees their continued presence and participation in Syrian society. In the contested regions of the country, extremist groups have attacked Syrian Christian neighborhoods, assaulted and even killed clergy and faithful and have damaged or destroyed churches and monasteries.

Because of the ongoing violence and destruction, Muslim, Alawite and Christian refugees have fled to nearby Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Most arrive with nothing except the clothes they are wearing and whatever they can carry. Working in close coordination with the Catholic bishops of Lebanon and Jordan and with its long-term partners, Caritas Jordan and Caritas Lebanon, CRS has been providing refugees:

Food: Vegetable cooking oil, beans, rice, lentils and sugar.

Medical care: High-quality medical and dental care at eight clinics across Jordan. Services include counseling for survivors (especially children) of trauma. Because a number of refugees suffered wounds during the violence, and many lack access to medical care, the need for these services is significant.

Hygiene and sanitation: CRS is distributing soap, sanitary napkins, buckets and other materials to help prevent health crises, such as waterborne diseases. Teams of CRS staff members and volunteers are teaching survivors about hygiene practices, such as hand-washing, safe waste disposal and ways to keep water clean.

Emergency household supplies: CRS is providing prepackaged relief kits of bedding, kitchen sets, fans and other essential living supplies to arriving refugees.

What can we do to help? CRS recommends that we Pray, Learn, Act, and Give.

Pray: Included in this article is the icon of Our Lady of Saidnaya (from the Eastern Orthodox monastery of Saidnaya outside of Damascus). With this icon before you, lift up our brothers and sisters in need in Syria by praying the rosary or this collect from the votive Mass for Refugees and Exiles:

O Lord, to whom no one is a stranger and from whose help no one is ever distant, look with compassion on refugees and exiles, on segregated persons and on lost children; restore them, we pray, to a homeland and give us a kind heart for the needy and for strangers.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Learn: You can learn more about the refugee crisis in Syria by going to the CRS website http://crs.org/countries/lebanon and http://crs.org/countries/jordan . The Italian Catholic news service AsiaNews, a ministry of the PIME missionaries is another excellent source of up-to-date information on the conflict in Syria and can be found at http://www.asianews.it/en.html

Act: You can act to urge our representatives to work for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria by participating in the work of Catholics Confront Global Poverty. Their action alert can be found at http://www.confrontglobal-poverty.org/get-involved/action-center/.

Give: You can help with the work of CRS on behalf of Syrian refugees by making an online donation to CRS at http://crs.org.

Deacon Charles Rohrbacher is the Office of Ministries Director for the Diocese of Juneau. Phone: 907-586-2227 ext. 23. Email: charlesr@gci.net
Walking down the street on Monday, July 29th, in the sunshine I came across a new piece of artwork on Juneau’s newly remodeled Main Street. It’s a giant blackboard with the words “Before I die I want to . . .” written on it in big block letters. Below, there are several columns of blank lines for passersby to write their own reflections.

Though it was only 10 a.m. on its first morning open for business, several people had already taken colored chalk in hand and written down their responses:

“Have a baby.”
“Travel A LOT!”
“Be an Olympic swimmer.”
“Marry Christine and bring her joy every day of her life.”
“Write a novel.”
“Walk like Christ.”
“Forgive my Father.”
“Have my children return to their Catholic faith.”
“Tell u Jesus saves.”

Reading the Juneau Empire later that weekend in September (“competed” is a little deceiving, “survived” is probably more accurate). The relay is divided into 10 legs ranging from 5.6 miles to 16 miles. I am not a natural runner. I first became inspired to try running during my junior year of high school after watching the aforementioned movie and realizing that to run you don’t need perfect form, speed or endurance, you just need to run (and then walk when your face begins to turn purple) and then run some more.

There’s a scene in the movie where Eric Liddell, a pastor from Scotland, has a heart-to-heart with his sister Jennie who wants him to give up his dreams of being an Olympic runner and return to China to be a missionary. Looking over the hills of Scotland, Eric tells her, “I believe God made me for a purpose. For China. But he also made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure. To give it up would be to hold him in contempt.”

When I run I don’t necessarily feel God’s pleasure. I usually feel like I’m dying too. But when I hear the synthesizer soundtrack in my mind and picture the 1924 Olympic hopefuls running through the surf it reminds me that this simple act, done with joy, can be spiritual as well.

Liddell’s passion to run for God, and the new artwork on Juneau’s main street, both ask the question, what is it that is uniquely yours to do in this world? Where do you feel God’s pleasure and how might you use that passion, that desire to build the Kingdom of God?

As one respondent wrote down, “Before I die I want to figure out what I want to do before I die.” Contemplating this question could be the first step to greater awareness of how God might be calling us through our deepest desires.

Katy Beedle Rice is the Director of Religious Education at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Juneau. She blogs about motherhood and spirituality at blessedbrokenshared.blogspot.com/
The World Youth Day Experience

JACOB COFFMAN

After coming back from Brazil, unpacking, and spending time with loved ones, I have finally found a moment to sit and reflect on the pilgrimage that I just experienced.

For the past week Rio de Janeiro was covered with millions of Catholic pilgrims from all over the world. Everywhere we went we would see someone with the commemorative, and functional, World Youth Day backpack given to every pilgrim.

The week was filled with bishops, archbishops, and cardinals throughout the city, giving catechesis sessions each day. They provided catechesis to pilgrims in many different languages so that everyone was able to participate in these events.

In addition, every day had a special event on Copacabana Beach in the evening. Every night when Pope Francis would arrive, the streets would be lined with thousands of people, leaving no room for anyone to move. Everyone was waiting to see Pope Francis drive by, sometimes for only a few seconds. The pilgrims from Alaska seemed to treasure those few moments the most.

As the Alaska group sat together on the beach the night of the Vigil, waiting for Pope Francis to arrive, we had one of the most moving experiences of the entire pilgrimage. We found out that we were only 50 of the 3 million people on the beach that night. The night only got better as Pope Francis arrived and we could feel his holy presence.

The Pope started the Holy Hour of the Vigil with exposition of the Eucharist. It was announced that we would take fifteen minutes of silence. More than three million people were so silent on the beach that you could hear the waves in the distance. The reverence and understanding that all three million people were in the true presence of Jesus Christ was shown in the fifteen minutes of true silence in front of the Eucharist.

At the culmination of the weekend was Mass with the Holy Father. Again, three million on the beach participated in the truest form of prayer in our faith, the Mass. In the Holy Father’s homily he challenged everyone to go, serve, and make disciples. After giving a very moving homily and receiving Communion came the final blessing by Pope Francis. Right before the final blessing Pope Francis announced that the next World Youth Day would be in Krakow, Poland, the home city of Blessed John Paul II who started World Youth Day. This announcement seemed to delight everyone.

Now that World Youth Day has ended, we look forward to the next one. We don’t forget those times that we found most moving or life changing in Rio, but look forward to the new ones we will experience in 2016. I hope that even more people can take this next opportunity to grow closer to God with millions of pilgrims, both old and new, at the next World Youth Day.

Jacob Coffman is the Diocese of Juneau Youth and Young Adult Ministry Coordinator. He can be contacted at: jacobtcoffman@gmail.com, or, 789-3687.

High School Students
Mark Your Calendars NOW!

Diocesan High School Youth Conference

SEPTEMBER 13—15, 2013
Where: St. Paul’s in Juneau
Facilitators will be ‘5 Thousand’ from South Carolina. This is a nationally known group that is said to be AWESOME! Teens, start making your plans to be in Juneau for this event— it will be a weekend you won’t want to miss!

If you would like to be part of the planning team or help with the retreat in any way contact Jake @ 789-7387 or email: jacobtcoffman@gmail.com

www.dioceseofjuneau.org

(Above) Jacob Coffman, at right, stands with Josh Piltz and a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal from New York at World Youth Day. (Below, left) Jacob Coffman holds the Argentinian flag, while Brianna Tobin holds the flag of Uruguay on Copacabana beach for World Youth Day 2013. Pilgrims at World Youth Day often trade flags as keepsakes of the event.
World Youth Day Rio draws over 3 million to closing mass

Pope commissions young people to be missionaries without borders

BY CINDY WOODEN, CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

RIO DE JANEIRO (CNS) -- Pope Francis commissioned some 3 million young people to join forces and form what could be called Missionaries Without Borders.

“Where does Jesus send us?” he asked World Youth Day pilgrims July 28. “There are no borders, no limits: He sends us to everyone.”

On the white sand of Copacabana beach -- under partly sunny skies, a relief after days of rain in Rio -- Pope Francis celebrated the closing Mass for the July 23-28 celebration of World Youth Day Rio.

Although retired Pope Benedict XVI had chosen the theme for the gathering -- “Go and make disciples of all nations” -- it was tailor-made for Pope Francis, who continually tells Catholics: “Go out. Go forward. Keep going.”

“Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole church and that includes you,” he said.

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Alaskan Pilgrims in Rio

(From top left, clockwise) The World Youth Day cross is carried up to the stage before the arrival of Pope Francis on Copacabana beach July 25. (CNS photo); Alaska pilgrims explore Paraty—a preserved Portuguese colonial town near Rio de Janeiro; pilgrims Allison Jackson, Caylee Haus, Theresa Austin and Molly Minnerath enjoying their time at Paraty; the three Alaska bishops before the closing Mass of World Youth Day with Pope Francis; Diocese of Juneau youth minister Jacob Coffman enjoys a sunny break in the wet weather while in Rio.
Pope Francis the merciful

BY JAMES MARTIN, AMERICA MAGAZINE

James Martin is a Jesuit priest, editor at large at America magazine and author of “The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything.”

I found it amusing that the biggest news from World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro was not that Pope Francis attracted 3.7 million people to his Sunday Mass on Copacabana Beach (inevitably nicknamed “Popacabana” for the week). Nor was it the pope’s dramatic speech before an enthusiastic crowd in Rio’s Varginha slum, where he affirmed the Catholic Church’s stance on combating poverty, deploying terms like “social justice,” “economic inequalities” and “solidarity.” Nor was it even when his motorcade took a wrong turn and ended up on a crowded street, with the papal car suddenly swamped by well-wishers.

No, the worldwide headline-grabber was the pope’s off-the-cuff comment during what one reporter friend told me was an “insane” (in the best possible way) news conference on the flight back to Rome. Despite some turbulence, Pope Francis expertly fielded questions for 82 minutes. And in response to a question about a supposed “gay lobby” in the church, he answered:

“There is so much being written about the gay lobby. I have yet to meet anyone who introduces himself at the Vatican with a ‘gay card.’ … If a gay person is searching for God with goodwill, who am I to judge them?”

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World Youth Day message:
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told his beachfront congregation, which included hundreds of thousands who had spent the night on the sand, sleeping or not.

Long journeys, days of rain and sometimes improvised accommodations did not dampen the spirits of the World Youth Day participants, and Pope Francis told them that if they did not share their experience of God’s love with others it would be “like withholding oxygen from a flame that was burning strongly.”

Jesus did not tell his disciples to share the Gospel “if you would like to, if you have the time,” the pope said. Instead, he commanded them to proclaim the Good News to the world.

Sharing the love and mercy of God and the salvation offered by Christ through the church “is born not from a desire for domination or power, but from the force of love,” the pope told the young pilgrims, who were joined on the beach by tens of thousands of Rio residents and other Latin Americans, including Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, Bolivian President Evo Morales and Suriname’s President Desi Bouterse.

But even more special guests were present: The pope invited a couple and their baby girl, who has anencephaly (missing part of her brain), to come forward during the offertory. Pope Francis met the family July 27 as he was leaving Rio’s St. Sebastian Cathedral and invited them to participate in the Mass. Under Brazil’s abortion laws, the couple would have been able to abort the child, but chose not to.

With the father carrying the baby, the parents walked up to the pope wearing shirts with a Portuguese message on the back: “Stop abortion.”

In his homily, Pope Francis told the young people that evangelizing requires a personal witness of love for God and love for others, especially the weak, the poor and the defenseless.

When the psalm says “Sing a new song to the Lord,” he said, it is not talking about a certain set of lyrics or a specific melody, rather “it is allowing our life to be identified with that of Jesus; it is sharing his sentiments, his thoughts (and) his actions.”

“The life of Jesus is a life for others,” the pope said. “It is a life of service.”

The pope did not mince words with his young audience, telling them: “Evangelizing means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.”

Pope Francis said he knows how daunting it can be to recognize that each Christian bears personal responsibility for sharing the Gospel with his or her actions and words, but Jesus told the first disciples and tells disciples today, “Be not afraid.”

“Jesus does not leave us alone; he never leaves you alone,” the pope said.

And the church does not leave any of its members, or even small groups, to go it alone, he said. “Jesus did not say: ‘One of you go,’ but ‘All of you go.’ We are sent together.”

“Be creative. Be audacious,” he said. “Do not be afraid.”

Pope Francis thanked the hundreds of bishops and thousands of priests who accompanied their young pilgrims to Rio, but told them the pilgrimage was just one step on the young people’s journey of faith.

“Continue to accompany them with generosity and joy, help them to become actively engaged in the church; never let them feel alone,” he said.

He gave the younger generation a final instruction, “As you return to your homes, do not be afraid to be generous with Christ, to bear witness to his Gospel.”

It can change the world, he said. “Bringing the Gospel is bringing God’s power to pluck up and break down evil and violence, to destroy and overthrow the barriers of selfishness, intolerance and hatred.”
was lobbies — “any type of lobby, business lobbies, political lobbies, Masonic lobbies” — that were cattivo (evil).

Third, the pope moved rather quickly from a question about a “gay lobby” in the Vatican to a comment about gay people in general. That is, he did not say, “If a gay priest is searching for God,” but “If a gay person is searching for God.” Then his remarkably compassionate comment: “Who am I to judge them?”

Fourth, he did not use words from the Catechism that many gays and lesbian Catholics say frustrate them, like “intrinsically disordered.” Nor, after saying that gays should not be “marginalized,” did he warn against homosexual activity, as might be expected.

Finally, the pope’s tone was eminently pastoral. When you watch the video of his remarks, you hear the voice of a kind pastor. Several of my gay and lesbian friends say the video moved them to tears.

So there is something new. And for those who might think that this may be more style than substance, I would say that in the church, style often proves substantial.

But there is also something old. Pope Francis has not changed church teaching on homosexual activity. (Nor would you expect him to alter church doctrine during an in-flight news conference.) Instead, he turned to a portion of the old teaching that often goes overlooked: The Catechism says that gays and lesbians are to be treated with “respect, compassion and sensitivity.”

Even older is the unwillingness to judge. A few minutes after the pope’s news conference was posted online, several reporters called to ask if I was surprised. One reporter speculated, “Maybe the pope even had a copy of the Gospels with him.” (“Yes,” I said, “I am sure he does.”) The passage the reporter was speaking of is from the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus says, “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.” Jesus uses hyperbole to make sure his listeners understand, saying that you must take the “log” out of your own eye before you can take the “speck” (another translation of the Greek “karpfis” is “splinter”) from another person’s eye.

In other words, if you want to judge
Pope Francis’s the merciful:
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someone, judge yourself. And just to be clear, Jesus adds: “You hypocrite!”

Yes, Pope Francis knows the Gospels. And he knows this line well. The pope also knows that Jesus’s comment does not mean any of us will escape judgment. The Gospels are greatly concerned with judging moral activity, with both John the Baptist and Jesus offering vivid images of the Last Judgment (the separation of the sheep from the goats, the unquenchable fire, the weeping and gnashing of teeth). God’s judgment of our actions means that God is concerned about what we do. A God who doesn’t judge is a God who doesn’t care.

But in the Gospels, it is God (or Jesus) who does the judging, not us. Jesus counsels his disciples not to judge but rather to show mercy. Indeed, Jesus not only counsels this, he demonstrates it by consistently approaching public “sinners” with an offer of forgiveness rather than condemnation. In the story of the “woman caught in adultery,” in the Gospel of John, Jesus challenges those in the crowd to “throw a stone at her” if they believe themselves to be without sin. After no stones are thrown, Jesus asks the woman who has condemned her.

“No one, sir,” she says.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” says Jesus. “Go on your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

One message to the crowd is: Do not sin yourselves. But there is another message as well: Leave the judging of others to me. As for you, have mercy.

So for those expecting a wholesale condemnation of gays and lesbians, Pope Francis pointed them to mercy — not changing church doctrine on homosexual activity, but highlighting church teachings on how our brothers and sisters deserve respect, compassion and sensitivity. And in a largely unnoticed comment responding to a question about divorced and remarried Catholics, another group that often feels marginalized, the pope said, “I believe this is a time of mercy.”

The theme is already a hallmark of Francis’s pontificate. Only a few days after he was elected pope, in his first Sunday Angelus message, he said, “Mercy is the Lord’s most powerful message.” I don’t know how much clearer you can get.

So, aboard a bumpy flight after a grueling trip, Pope Francis instinctively moved to his default: mercy.

That was Jesus’s default. It should be ours, too.

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St. Augustine of Hippo • Feast day: August 28

St. Augustine was born in North Africa. His father was a pagan who converted on his death bed; his mother was Saint Monica, a devout Christian. He received a Christian upbringing and in 370 went to the University at Carthage to study rhetoric with a view to becoming a lawyer. He gave up law to devote himself to literary pursuits and gradually abandoned his Christian faith, and taking a mistress who eventually bore him a son. He returned to his Christian faith and was baptized in 387. Upon the death of his mother he returned to Africa, sold his property, gave the proceeds to the poor, and founded a monastic community at Tagaste. He was ordained in 390 and moved to Hippo where he established a community with several of his friends who had followed him. Five years later he was consecrated Bishop. Augustine’s intellect molded the thought of Western Christianity. He wrote profusely, expositing and defending the faith, and to this day many of his two hundred treatises, and three hundred sermons are of major import in theology and philosophy. Among his his best-known works are his Confessions, and City of God. His later thinking can be summed up in a line from his writings: “Our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in you.” Called Doctor of Grace, he is one of the greatest of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

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Pope’s women in the Church remarks urge a deeper theology

Jul 31, 2013 (CNA/EWTN News) - Recent comments by Pope Francis on the role of women in the Church not only assert that their status does not depend on ordination, but call for a developed “theology of women,” says a Catholic analyst.

“He’s acknowledging that a lot has changed with the modern world for women, and that maybe the Church hasn’t spoken as much as it could to the issues that women are facing,” said Ashley McGuire, senior fellow of The Catholic Association.

“He put to rest,” however, “any question as to whether or not he’s going to change Church teaching,” she told CNA.

Pope Francis spoke on the role of women during a 20-minute interview with the Spanish newspaper, El Pais, during a July 29 flight back to Europe following World Youth Day in Brazil.

During the interview, the Pope emphasized that the understanding of women’s participation in the church cannot be limited “to the acolyte, to the president of Caritas, the catechist,” and advocated for “a more profound theology of women.”

The Pope also spoke plainly on the topic of the ordination of women, saying that “the Church has spoken and said no.”

“John Paul II, in a definitive formulation, said that door is closed.”

He noted that the existence of a male-only priesthood does not diminish the role of women, adding that the “Virgin Mary was more important than the apostles and bishops and deacons and priests,” and that the feminine Church, as the Bride of Christ “is more important than the bishops and priests.”

“This is what we should try to explain better,” Pope Francis said.

McGuire said that she was “glad to see him talking about and addressing the role of women” and “appreciated what he said, because it’s not sufficient just to say what women can or cannot do.”

The topic of women’s ordination, she said, is “not something that he has the ability to change,” stressing a “continuity” between Pope Francis’s words and the work of previous Popes.

“I think that Pope John Paul II laid a really great foundation,” in works such as “Mulleris Dignitatem,” McGuire said, in providing steps towards the new “theology of women” Pope Francis mentioned.

“I think it’s exciting to think that Pope Francis is going to build on that,” she added.

McGuire also said she appreciated that the Pope “hinted at professional women,” and his “acknowledging where ‘woman’ is in our times.”

“I’m excited to see him addressing the role of women without it having to do with women’s ordination.”

“I just see him acknowledging something that the laity has been talking a lot about recently: that women make a very positive contribution to the professional world, to the Church, to society more broadly.”

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Ashley McGuire of The Catholic Association.
SAINTHOOD CAUSE OF SISTER ANNE CATHERINE EMMERICH

Recently, I listened to Mel Gibson being interviewed about the making of his film, “The Passion of the Christ.” He referred to the visions of a certain Anne Catherine Emmerich. That prompted me to read more about those visions, which I found to be inspiring and, frankly, life-changing. What is the Catholic Church’s stance on Emmerich? Is she a candidate for sainthood? (Atlanta)

Answer:

Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, a Catholic nun, was a member of the Augustinian order who lived in Germany and died in 1844 at the age of 39. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2004 after a miracle was documented through her intercession. She was a mystic, a person drawn to deep prayer from an early age, and regularly experienced visions in which she felt herself talking directly with Jesus.

She was also a stigmatic who bore on her body the wounds of the crucified Christ. Sister Emmerich suffered from a debilitating illness, spending much of her adult life bedridden and in persistent pain, and she offered her suffering in union with that borne by Jesus. Those who were sick regularly asked for her prayers.

Mel Gibson has said that he based much of his 2004 film, “The Passion of the Christ,” on the visions of Sister Emmerich as reported by the poet Clemens Brentano in a book called “The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to the Meditations of Anne Catherine Emmerich.”

Brentano wrote the book after extensive interviews with Sister Emmerich. The controversy regarding Sister Emmerich, in large part, surrounds the writings of Brentano, which are considered by most experts to be unreliable, filled with pious fabrications and poetic elaborations. There is also, in Brentano’s work, a strong anti-Semitic strain; he portrays Jews not only as obsessed with torturing Christ but also with killing Christian children and using their blood in demonic rituals.

When Sister Emmerich was beatified in 2004, it was made clear by the Vatican that the church’s judgment was based on her personal life and sanctity, and not at all on Brentano’s writings, which the Vatican announced that it was setting aside due to their questionable authenticity.

CENTERING PRAYER

Having seen references in a book I read to something called “centering prayer,” I decided to learn more -- and now I’m quite confused. A number of websites, which identify themselves as Catholic, condemn centering prayer as dangerous or even heretical. But I’ve also heard that centering prayer was developed and promoted by some Catholic priests. So I have two questions. First, is centering prayer a good thing or a bad thing? And if it’s acceptable, then why do people object to it so strongly? (Finksburg, Md.)

Answer:

Centering prayer is a method of Christian contemplation that places a strong emphasis on interior silence. The aim is to forego all thoughts and images to experience the direct presence of God. It grew popular in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly through the writings of three Trappist monks from St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Mass.: Abbot Thomas Keating, Father Basil Pennington and Father William Meninger. (A book written by Father Pennington in 1980, “Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form,” was published in several languages and sold more than one million copies.)

Some critics claim that centering prayer blurs the distinction between the creator and the created and borders on pantheism, with the belief that we are all connected to an impersonal energy force that is divine. In 1989, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a document entitled, “On Some Aspects of Christian Meditation.” It warned of potential dangers in blending Christian prayer with Eastern methods of meditation -- although it never specifically mentioned centering prayer.

The guidelines for centering prayer invite the user to sit quietly with eyes closed, choose a sacred word as a gently present anchor (“Jesus,” perhaps, or “Abba”) and focus not on any discursive thoughts but solely on one’s desire to be in the presence of the Lord and open to any divine promptings.

No doubt there are people who can do that in a way that is theologically orthodox -- not with an amorphous “melting into God” but with the consciousness of one’s own frailties in the face of God’s majesty.

One needs to remember, though, that the true contemplative experience of God in prayer comes only as a gift and can never be guaranteed by any particular technique.

---Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfathed@doyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208.
Obama wrong to blame religious schools for social ills

BY CATHERINE NEUMAYR, CATHOLICANCHOR.ORG

If Holy Rosary Academy (Catholic) and Grace Christian School (Protestant), both in Anchorage, were to close their doors and send their students to the public schools in the area, would the city of Anchorage be better off?

If you ask President Barack Obama, he would say, “Yes.” He recently expressed his conviction that Catholic and Protestant schools breed fear and resentment in their students.

On June 17 the president was in Ireland for the G8 conference. Before the conference he spoke to 2,000 young people in Belfast about the tensions between Catholics and Protestants.

He said: “If towns remain divided – if Catholics have their schools and buildings, and Protestants have theirs – if we can’t see ourselves in one another, if fear or resentment are allowed to harden, that encourages division. It discourages cooperation.”

Oversimplifying or reducing to the absurd is a fallacy and evident in the president’s superficial understanding of Irish history and politics. He undoubtedly believed that he was offering a lasting answer to the young people of Belfast.

Unfortunately, dividing the young from the traditions of faith embraced by their elders is a strategy of President Obama’s. Implicit in his rejection of religious schooling is the premise that religious education promotes ignorance in the blindly faithful youth who has been subjected to its Scriptural stories and dogmatic hocus pocus. The president is careful not to admit this out loud, but his message to the Belfast youth is manifestly evident.

He implies by his statement that somehow these schools and buildings because they contain people who hold different understandings of how to follow Christ are breeding grounds for civil war. In other words, having a different point of view is the enemy. In the place of differences, Obama implies, all should subscribe to the same views or keep their views private so that harmony can ensue.

The question that this assumption begs is obvious. Whose view, if not the Catholic or Protestant viewpoints, should these young people of Belfast embrace? I am positive it is President Obama’s viewpoint that he prefers the youth adopt.

The next natural question, then, is what is President Obama’s viewpoint? Well, to be clear, it is the belief that the “Parental State” should educate children in an entirely secular setting. Why do I say this? President Obama subscribes to a system of thought that rejects religious belief and transcendent authority. It centers instead on humanism, a belief that humans through their own power can improve the lot of their fellow human beings. This system of thought has led him directly towards socialism which is the system that answers the humanist’s angst over human struggles and posits the state as the pacifier of all division.

Am I exaggerating? Consider how invasively Obamacare, the HHS mandate, same-sex “marriage” advocacy, abortion rights, the IRS and taxes have become the new “social justice” mandates of the state. President Obama has deafened himself to the pleas for religious liberty in his own country, while perpetuating his belief in an ever-expanding secular state authority in other nations, like Ireland, a country on the cusp of ending Catholic and Protestant tensions that were borne not out of religious convictions but out of secular greed and a desire for power – sins found in every generation.

I submit to you that it is inside the religious “buildings” (I prefer to call them churches) and schools where the freedom to think logically, live virtuously and honor God’s creation is inculcated. Here in Anchorage both the Holy Rosary Academy and Grace Christian School unequivocally teach the truths of their respective Christian faiths. Each produces academic excellence. Each demands virtuous behavior and fosters good citizenry. Each seeks goodness, truth and beauty for her students. When religious schools are ordered toward the charity modeled by Christ, harmony between schools with differing views exists.

The writer is principal of Holy Rosary Academy in Anchorage and a member of the Catholic Anchor Advisory Board.
Why faith feels like doubt and darkness

God is ineffable. This is a truth that’s universally accepted as dogma among all Christians and within all the great religions of the world. What does it mean?

In essence, it means that God is beyond us, not like us, but in an utterly different sphere. More especially, it means that God cannot ever be captured in thought, imagination, or word. Any concepts, images, or words we have about God are inadequate at best and idolatrous at worst. God is always beyond what we can think, speak about, or imagine.

But we do have thoughts, images, and words about God and many of these are given to us in scripture. What’s to be made of our traditional biblical and theological images of God? Aren’t they accurate and adequate? In a word, no, they aren’t. To paraphrase Annie Dillard, the concepts and language about God that are given us in scripture and church tradition are simply words that we have permission to use without being struck dead for idolatry. We should never pretend they are accurate and adequate; scripture itself makes that clear. Not understanding this confuses our notion of faith and doubt.

Because we do not existentially grasp and accept that God is ineffable, we generally confuse faith with imagination. Simply put, because we think God can be imagined and conceptualized, we feel that we have faith precisely to the extent that we can imagine God’s existence and God’s person. Conversely, we feel we are in doubt and agnostic when we cannot imagine these. And so we naively identify faith with the capacity to create the right imaginative fantasies and feelings about God, and vice versa.

But, since God is ineffable, we can never imagine either God’s existence or God’s person. This is an impossible task, by definition. We have only finite concepts within which to try to capture infinity and thus all our human faculties are incapable of conceptualizing God, tantamount to trying to think of the highest number to which it is possible to count.

Does this mean then that faith opposes human reason? No. Faith doesn’t negate human reason, it simply dwarfs it, akin to the way the most sophisticated formulae within contemporary astrophysics dwarf elementary arithmetic and the way the blinding light of a noonday sun dwarfs the paltry light of a candle. Moreover, though helpful, even these analogies limp and are inaccurate. God’s existence and person may not be imagined as that of some supreme Super-person, someone like us, except supremely greater. To imagine God in this way still puts God into the realm of the finite, a creature still, even if Super-supreme, imaginable, able to be conceptualized, not ineffable, a number we can still count to. God, though, is not a reality that can be counted. God’s existence and person can never be conceptualized.

Moreover, this is true as well for our understanding of God’s love. It too is beyond our imagination and capacity to conceptualize. Our universe, though finite, is so vast and prodigious that our imaginations already run out of room in their efforts simply to picture the finite world. Beyond this, just on this one planet, earth, we have billions upon billions of persons, each of which has a heart and meaning that is individually precious. How can we imagine a God who somehow knows and loves this all intimately? We can’t! Our minds and our hearts simply don’t stretch that far; though they do stretch far enough to ask: Why wouldn’t an infinite God create so unimaginably huge a universe and so many billions and billions of people to love and share in this creation? And why would an infinite God suddenly say (after we have been born): “That’s enough! I now have as many people as I want!”

God befuddles the mind, the heart, and the imagination. It cannot be otherwise. Any God who could be understood would not be God. God is not a supreme Superman, like us, only bigger, stronger, and more powerful. The infinite, precisely because it is infinite, cannot be circumscribed and grasped, either in its existence, its person, or its capacity to love. We can know the infinite, but we cannot think the infinite.

Because of this, at some point in our lives, faith will feel like darkness, belief like unbelief, and God’s person and existence will feel like nothing, emptiness, non-existence, nada. Our minds and hearts will, at that point, come up dry and empty when they try to imagine or feel God, not because God doesn’t exist or is less present than the physical world, but because God is so massively present, so real, so above all other lights, that God’s reality will dwarf everything to the point to where it gives the impression that it itself doesn’t exist.

In faith, God is known this way: As a light so bright that it’s perceived as darkness, as a love so universal that it’s perceived as indifference, and as a reality so real that it’s perceived as nothing.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website: www.ronrolheiser.com.

Any God who could be understood would not be God.

Faith and Reason? Learn more at:
‘Juneau Catholic’ YouTube Channel
Faith and Reason playlist

If you have any questions about the Diocesan Policy for working with children in ministry please contact:
Victim Assistance Coordinator and Safe Environment Coordinator for the Diocese:
CALL: MS ROBERTA IZZARD, 907-586-2227 ext 25
EMAIL: robbiei@gci.net

Safe Environment Policies: www.dioceseofjuneau.org/victim-assistance-coordinator

Protecting our Children

We are children in ministry.

St. Therese
Juneau, Alaska

Are you a child in ministry?

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One of the pleasures of living in Juneau is welcoming the many visitors and friends that come here to experience the beauty of Southeast Alaska each summer. They come with great anticipation to witness God’s handiwork in our rainforest home, and we in turn find our own appreciation heightened and our communities enhanced through these cultural and spiritual exchanges.

Recently, the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Juneau had the pleasure of welcoming a group of talented gospel-style musicians from Chicago during their 5-day trip to Alaska in early July. Eleven members of the St. Malachy/Precious Blood Gospel Choir, all friends of the current Cathedral of the Nativity rector Fr. Pat Casey, OMI, and accompanied by two additional Chicagoan parishioners, arrived in Juneau on July 5 for a weekend of music, liturgy, and sightseeing.

During the years of 1999-2006, Fr. Pat Casey was pastor of both St. Malachy and Precious Blood parishes on the west-side of Chicago, and, a musician himself, he recognized the talent and energy of these musicians to inspire and to preach the gospel message in song. Originally two separate parishes, St. Malachy and Precious Blood were merged under Fr. Casey’s tenure there, and two of the choirs subsequently combined to form the St. Malachy/Precious Blood Gospel choir.

The choir offered a concert in the Cathedral’s St. Ann’s parish hall for the community. At right) Arthur Griffin leads the assembly and the St. Malachy/Precious Blood choir in song at Sunday mass at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Juneau, July 7th.

An enthusiastic ecumenism and sharing of joy is unmistakable among the group. Their support and encouragement of each other, and their joy in praising God through song is impossible to miss. Back home in Chicago, every Sunday they lead music at the St. Malachy/Precious Blood Catholic Church; then, when they finish, they walk down the street to the Baptist Church and together lead music for another Sunday worship service.

If you missed the St. Malachy/Precious Blood Gospel choir, take heart: they said this was their first-but-not-last trip to Alaska.

Thank you to Fr. Pat Casey for his invitation to the St. Malachy/Precious Blood choir, and for his gracious hospitality during their visit.