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In the **FOOTSTEPS** of **FRANCIS**

**Danny Taylor's journey of
Gospel service leads him
to the priesthood**

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call to rebuild the Church

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addresses regional challenges

Follow Francis:

The pope's teaching on creation leads us to healing



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As we try to determine what the “new normal” looks and feels like, I certainly hope and pray we will learn from all of the experiences related to the coronavirus. I am still struck by the words that Pope Francis prayed before the Blessed Sacrament in an empty, rain-soaked St. Peter’s Square on March 27. For me, he contextualized this whole COVID-19 experience within so many other illnesses that are not of a physical nature, but that we are no longer so concerned about.

As he reflected on the very relevant story of Jesus asleep in the boat as the apostles were frightened by a violent storm on the lake, we could all identify with the fear for our safety and the sense that God was asleep, or at least not hearing our pleas. It was this part of the prayer that remains with me, a section that found its way into my homily at the annual Christ Mass this year:

“In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick.”

Of course, throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has been pointing us towards the people on the margins and trying to awaken our Christian compassion to overcome indifference to their suffering; he has warned us against an over-dependence on electronics and technology to the exclusion of genuine human encounters; he has invited us to take the invitation to holiness and sainthood seriously; and he has challenged us to become engaged in the mission we have received from the Risen Christ, rather than to wait for someone else to build up God’s kingdom.

Each of these dimensions of his teaching can be seen in a new light because of the urgency

of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hopefully, this collective experience of vulnerability, which is so uncomfortable for us in the most powerful nation in the world, prompts us to reevaluate many of our priorities and values.

A couple of weeks ago, we marked the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ remarkable encyclical *Laudato Si’* about the urgency of caring for creation. The growing understanding of the ecological crisis in recent decades has led Catholic social teaching to promote the care of creation alongside so many issues that affect the well-being of the human family. The encyclical, addressed to all people, emphasizes the urgency of action to preserve the great gift of God’s creation and calls us to conversion from attitudes of mindless consumption to awareness of the interrelatedness of all creation.

That interrelatedness was celebrated in a poem by St. Francis of Assisi some 800 years ago, in which he described all of creation, animate and inanimate, as sister and brother joined in praising the Creator. The phrase “*Laudato Si’*” comes from that poem and means “may You be praised.” I think the pandemic has served as a hard lesson about our interconnectedness as we witnessed its rapid spread and experienced how a microscopic organism could wreak such havoc on the modern world.

Faithful to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the pope celebrates the creation of the human person as the highlight of creation. But the dominion over creation given to us by the Creator is not a license for exploitation, but rather a call to responsibility. The goods of creation are meant to be shared with everyone, not merely those who have greater technology and military strength.

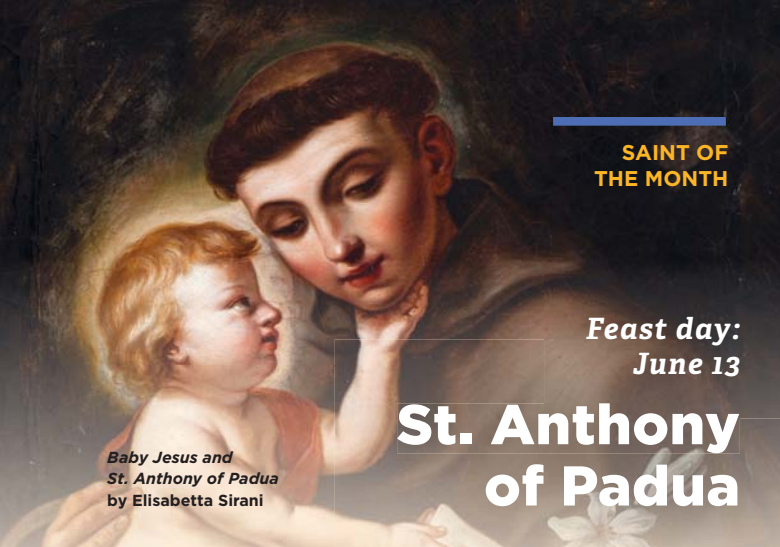
Each of us is challenged by the pope to examine our habits of consumption and be mindful of the effects of that consumption on the planet and its peoples. Always attentive to the voice of the poor, Pope Francis demonstrates how the poor are most affected by the climate crisis and how rising temperatures and rising seas across the globe lead to wars and larger scale migration. A cooperation of solidarity that transcends national boundaries is necessary in order to save the planet from even greater destruction.

The pope is aware that among those affected by climate change are those whose livelihoods have been sustained by industries that harm the environment in the long run. Addressing the ecological crisis will necessarily

involve investment in a new economy and the training necessary for the sustainable jobs in that new economy. This is something that we are very aware of in our part of the world.

The fifth anniversary of this encyclical is also a reminder that the clock is ticking. If we have done little with this encyclical and little to examine our lifestyles and little to advocate for a change in policies or to resist the reversal of so many good ecological policies and pacts, may our recent experiences and the teachings of our faith prod us into action now. May we be about the healing of our suffering world as we regain our health. †

“
Hopefully this collective experience of vulnerability, which is so uncomfortable for us in the most powerful nation in the world, prompts us to reevaluate many of our priorities and values.
”



SAINT OF
THE MONTH

Feast day:
June 13

St. Anthony of Padua

Baby Jesus and
St. Anthony of Padua
by Elisabetta Sirani

Discerning God's call requires an attentiveness and openness to the unpredictable, and a willingness to respond. This means we must trust God. Of course, trust demands vulnerability. This can be scary, for it means we are no longer in control. We may be asked to go where we do not want to, or just as importantly, to stay where we do not want to stay.

We see this clearly in the life of St. Anthony of Padua (1195-1231). He discerned a call to religious life relatively early. He was born in Lisbon, Portugal, and was named Ferdinand. He was the eldest son of a wealthy, influential family. His family had plans for him to enter into an ecclesiastical or bureaucratic career, but Ferdinand, following the promptings of the Spirit, left the wealth of his family behind and entered an Augustinian abbey at age 15. His path was far from determined, however.

Following his ordination, Ferdinand came to know some Franciscan friars, who had established a hermitage dedicated to St. Anthony of Egypt close to his abbey. After seeing the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs, who had died in Morocco, Ferdinand was overcome with the desire to preach and suffer for Christ's sake. Ferdinand successfully petitioned to leave the Augustinians and joined the Franciscans, taking the name of Anthony.

Anthony set out to go to Morocco to witness to Christ. He was prepared to become a martyr if necessary. However, his desire to go to Morocco was not what Christ desired for him. He became seriously ill and had to return home. Upon his recovery, he entered into a life of quiet prayer.

His journey then took another twist after he was pressured, over his objections, to deliver an impromptu sermon for a mixed crowd of Franciscans and Dominicans. The subsequent homily was so moving that Anthony came to the attention of Francis of Assisi himself. Anthony spent most of the rest of his life preaching. Anthony's preaching became known far and wide. It was to the genuineness of his own living out of the Gospel that many attributed the effectiveness of his preaching. His witness, far more than his words, moved people. And although Anthony came to be remembered as the "Hammer of the Heretics," he always preferred to present the beauty of the Christian message in positive ways.

St. Anthony is a doctor of the Church, the evangelical doctor. He is the patron saint of Portugal, travelers and searchers of lost items. †

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REPORT ABUSE – The Catholic Diocese of Lexington encourages all who have been abused by a priest, a deacon or an employee of the diocese to bring forth any instances of sexual abuse to the appropriate persons. Laura Napora, victims assistance coordinator for the diocese, may be contacted by telephone at 859.338.5695 or by email at victim-sassistance@cdlex.org or by mail to 1310 West Main Street, Lexington, KY 40508.

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ARTENISALABE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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“Laudato si’, mi’ Signore — Alabado seas, mi Señor”

— PAPA FRANCISCO

Durante este nuevo estilo de vida por la Pandemia del COVID-19, que esperamos termine pronto y que los científicos encuentren una vacuna y tratamiento para combatir este virus; en la que nos debemos quedar en casa para tratar de no contagiarnos, seguimos siendo parte de nuestro planeta Tierra y de este ecosistema. Hemos tenido que adaptarnos a la realidad difícil de lidiar en nuestro ecosistema con el Coronavirus que es tan contagioso y peligroso. Nuestro planeta y principalmente los humanos estamos en peligro constante debido a esta pandemia.

Es tan relevante entonces recordar la encíclica *Laudato Si’* (Alabado seas) de nuestro Papa Francisco que es sobre el cuidado de nuestra casa común, la Tierra. Aquí él invita a los científicos, los gobiernos, los líderes, las religiones y a la gente en general a que dialoguemos para actuar solidariamente en beneficio de nuestra hermana, la madre Tierra. Es relevante porque nuestro planeta sufre con la contaminación creada por actos humanos y esta pandemia nos recuerda lo frágiles que podemos ser si nuestro ecosistema cambia. Dios nuestro Señor ama y espera que amemos también a nuestra Tierra, Dios vio todo lo que había hecho y era muy bueno (Gn 1,31). Cuidemos lo bueno de nuestra Tierra para nosotros y para las futuras generaciones.

El Papa Francisco menciona en *Laudato Si’* (LS) que papas anteriores también tenían interés en cuidar a nuestra Tierra. El santo Papa Juan XXIII rechazaba la guerra, y quiso transmitir una propuesta de paz. “El beato Papa Pablo VI habló de una crisis ecológica, que es una consecuencia dramática de la actividad descontrolada del ser humano: Debido a una explotación inconsiderada de la naturaleza, [el ser humano] corre el riesgo de destruirla y de ser a su vez víctima de esta degradación [2]. San Juan Pablo II advirtió que el ser humano parece no percibir otros significados de su ambiente natural, sino solamente aquellos que sirven a los fines de un uso inmediato y consumo [4]. Sucesivamente llamó a una conversión ecológica global[5]. Benedicto XVI renovó la invitación a eliminar

las causas estructurales de las disfunciones de la economía mundial y corregir los modelos de crecimiento que parecen incapaces de garantizar el respeto del medio ambiente[10]. Recordó que el mundo no puede ser analizado sólo aislando uno de sus aspectos, porque el libro de la naturaleza es uno e indivisible, e incluye el ambiente, la vida, la sexualidad, la familia, las relaciones sociales, etc. Por consiguiente, la degradación de la naturaleza está estrechamente unida a la cultura que modela la convivencia humana [11].”



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El Papa considera que San Francisco de Asís es el “ejemplo por excelencia del cuidado de lo que es débil y de una ecología integral, vivida con alegría y autenticidad. San Francisco de Asís es el santo patrono de todos los que estudian y trabajan en torno a la ecología, amado también por muchos que no son cristianos. Él manifestó una atención particular hacia la creación de Dios y hacia los más pobres y abandonados. Amaba y era amado por su alegría, su entrega generosa, su corazón universal.” Nuestro Obispo de Roma tomó su nombre papal en honor a este santo.

Debemos cuidar y labrar nuestra tierra, esto implica una relación de reciprocidad responsable entre el ser humano y la naturaleza. El Papa nos dice que la existencia humana se basa en tres relaciones vitales estrechamente conectadas: la relación con Dios, con el prójimo y con la Tierra. La Biblia menciona que estas tres relaciones se han roto por el pecado, al vernos a reconocernos como criaturas



limitadas y pretender ocupar el lugar de Dios. “Como resultado, la relación originariamente armoniosa entre el ser humano y la naturaleza se transformó en un conflicto (cf. Gn 3,17-19).”

Este conflicto humano se observa claramente por ejemplo en la contaminación del agua, la basura en nuestros mares, el aire contaminado, el calentamiento global, la disminución de glaciares, el hoyo en la capa de ozono, la contaminación de nuestra tierra para el cultivo, etc.

Como menciona el Papa en LS, la cultura del descarte o desechable ha causado un exceso de productos que terminan en la basura y no se reciclan o reúsan, contaminando todo nuestro hábitat. Esto continúa enfermando a nuestro planeta y a todos, siendo los pobres generalmente los más afectados por no tener acceso entre otras, a agua embotellada causándoles enfermedades devastadoras como el cólera, etc. Especies de animales desaparecen continuamente por falta de una cultura que ame y respete la biodiversidad y a nuestro ambiente.

Las políticas locales, nacionales e internacionales no han tenido el interés de nuestra madre Tierra como prioridad, más bien el interés en obtener más remuneración monetaria y el egoísmo ha contribuido a que nuestra Tierra se queje a diario del daño que le hemos causado. De no cambiar nuestra forma de vida a nivel individual, familiar, local, nacional, global y espacial corremos el peligro de ser nosotros la especie en extinción en un futuro no muy lejano.

Esta contemplación de la realidad en sí misma ya nos indica la necesidad de un cambio de rumbo y nos sugiere algunas acciones, el Papa nos invita a todos a “delinear grandes caminos de diálogo que nos ayuden a salir de la espiral de autodestrucción en la que nos estamos sumergiendo.” Cabe mencionar que durante esta pandemia al haber menos automóviles emitiendo contaminantes al ambiente, ha dado un respiro a nuestra hermana Tierra y un aire mucho mejor a nuestros pulmones. Al terminar la pandemia, sería bueno que tengamos un plan de seguir sanos y que eso incluya a nuestro ecosistema, pues un ecosistema sano es lo que quiere Dios para nosotros. †

MINISTERING TO AN **ANXIOUS** GENERATION

Young people seek witnesses to faith who grasp the struggles they bear

I wonder if Jesus ever thought, during his ministry, as he watched the disciples stumble and argue their way through their years with him, “This would be easier if I just did it myself.” Did the disciples hold Jesus back in his mission with their fears and anxiety? We could agree that it would have been easier if Jesus had done it himself, but he did not choose that route.



DEACON JOHN BRANNEN
is director of youth, young adult and campus ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Lexington.

Jesus did the things that only the Jesus could do; he taught them, he prayed for them and, most importantly, he listened to them — understanding their anxieties and preparing them for what would be asked of them later.

Young people today are not so different from the disciples in their fear, stresses and anxieties. The Child Mind Institute, in a supplement to the 2018 Children’s Mental Health Report, stated as little as 1 percent of youths with anxiety seek treatment in the year their symptoms begin, and most anxiety symptoms go untreated for years.

Everyone talks about how “stressed” young people are, but getting them to open up about serious anxiety is not easy. Sometimes just finding the time to talk to them is hard. Diocesan youth retreats are one way that the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry works to create that space for listening, encounter and relationship. These retreats are rooted in sacred Scripture with experiences of prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, prayer teams and the celebration of Mass.

Roy Petitfils, a Catholic author, speaker and psychotherapist, in his book “Helping Teens with Stress, Anxiety and Depression,” recommends

both Scripture and prayer as means to help young people cope with the stress and anxiety while discovering God’s peace.

“In both the Old and New Testaments, our God reminds us that we have nothing to fear,” he writes. “The truth is that God designed us to experience both fear and calm, each in the right amount at the right time.” The challenge is to know the correct balance between the two.

Young people want authentic witnesses — those who vibrantly express their faith and relationship with Jesus. It takes a village; the relationship with the sacred is complicated. Christianity is often seen as something that belonged to the past, its value or relevance to our lives is no longer understood or appreciated. It requires the entire Church to achieve the growth of healthy, competent, caring and faith-filled Catholic young people thriving in faith in an anxious world. The truest path to gently, yet persuasively, guide young people to a deeper trust in the tender mercies of God is in meeting them where they are — intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, socially and physically, always with a listening ear and loving heart.

In March, the Church celebrated the one-year anniversary of *Christus Vivit* (“Christ Lives!”), Pope Francis’ exhortation to young people. He signed this document on the Solemnity of the Annunciation, the feast on which the angel said to Mary, “Do not be afraid.” *Christus Vivit* is a letter to the world’s youth that addresses both the importance of young people to the Church and the issues they face in their daily lives.

Young people are trying to make sense of a diverse and overly complicated world, dreaming of safety, stability, and fulfillment. They ask to be listened to

and be viewed not as just spectators in society but as active participants. They seek to engage and address social issues of our time and work towards building a better world. It is incumbent upon the Church to listen to young people validate and understand their struggles, needs and dreams earning the right to accompany and minister to them.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis highlights three great truths that are essential and absolute. First: “God loves you. ... At every moment, you are infinitely loved.” Second: “Christ, out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you.” Third: “Christ is alive.” And because Jesus lives, they can also live.

The prospect of helping anxious teens through emotional ups and downs can be overwhelming even for the most seasoned parents, educators, and ministers. However the substance of our worries may be different, we can deal with them from a common experience of God, which ultimately strengthens our potential to make a difference — so “Be Not Afraid.” †

“YOUNG PEOPLE WANT AUTHENTIC WITNESSES — THOSE WHO VIBRANTLY EXPRESS THEIR FAITH AND RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.”



WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRIEST?



Q: I WANT TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO MIGHT HAVE A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD. WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES I SHOULD LOOK FOR THAT INDICATE A YOUNG MAN MIGHT MAKE A GOOD PRIEST?

ASK FATHER

A: In my work as vocations director, I find that I ask myself one question over and over: How can I help identify potential future seminarians? Were I to take a poll of every priest on God's green earth, I am willing to bet that each of them would have a different answer to that question.

Reflecting on nearly 19 years of priesthood, I recall the priests and people who impacted my life and my decision to pursue Holy Orders. While each of these individuals was unique in their own way, they all shared certain virtues and attitudes that I feel are essential to the priesthood — or any other vocation for that matter. These virtues and attitudes are also necessary in identifying men who might have a priestly vocation.

In no particular order, humility, kindness and generosity are key identifiers for someone interested

in priesthood. A potential candidate must also accept his humanness. Jesus did not call perfect disciples 2,000 years ago, and Jesus does not call perfect disciples today. We need to embrace our strengths and weaknesses.

Formation is a lifelong process. This is true for every individual, let alone priests. We must always be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We must always pray that God will open our eyes and hearts to change any and all behaviors and attitudes and actions that do not reflect the light and love of Christ.

Another identifier for potential priestly candidates is a sense of humor — never laughter at the expense of another, but laughter about all of the silly mistakes and imperfections we bring to the vocation. I cannot tell you how many times I have rehearsed or practiced a Gospel pas-

sage or sermon, convinced I have it down perfectly, only to stammer and stutter all over myself. Making a joke about the incident, hearing people laugh, goes a long way in dispelling the image that a priest is anything other than human. We are all too human!

Finally, I would mention that another identifier would be the gift of adaptability. Sometimes we just have to "roll with the punches." We go through life with established routines and regimented schedules. Then a pandemic strikes, and all the routines and schedules go out the window. Flexibility and adaptability are great virtues to have at any time. They can make life a little more bearable.

Those are just some characteristics I think a potential candidate for the priesthood must possess. I know that there are many, many more. However, I think these are as good a place as any to start. And if these characteristics remind you of someone you know, you might consider mentioning that to him. Or you could pray for that person.

And if any single man would like to discuss priestly formation, please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address: dschwendeman@cdlex.org. I hope to hear from you. May God bless all who are in discernment, searching to find the path that God has mapped out for them. May you soon reach your destination. †



FATHER DANNY SCHWENDEMAN is pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Lexington and vocations director for the Catholic Diocese of Lexington.

Please Support Seminarian Formation

Vocations to the priesthood are vital in ministering to Catholics in the Diocese of Lexington and we currently suffer from a shortage of priests in our 50-county area. Our priests help us encounter Christ. The cost per seminarian is approximately \$42,000 per year for tuition and board, health insurance and other expenses. With the rising need for spreading the Good News in the Diocese of Lexington, please commit to allowing a future generation of young men to answer the call to the priesthood. Make a gift today at cdlex.org/donate or mail to Office of Development, Diocese of Lexington, 1310 W. Main St., Lexington, KY 40508.

FOUR LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF FATHER JOHN RAUSCH

Advocate for environmental justice left legacy of creativity and community



Glenmary Father John Rausch lived his priesthood advocating for justice in Appalachia. His sudden death at age 75 on Sunday, Feb. 9 left the Church and the communities he served with the challenge of carrying on his work, especially in care for creation, where his advocacy included leadership of the diocesan *Laudato Si'* Commission, from its establishment in 2018 until his death.

In 2007, Pax Christi USA named Father Rausch a “Teacher of Peace,” adding him to a list that includes Dorothy Day and Sister Helen Prejean. Chairwoman Judy Coode said, “What brings peace is tied directly to ecological issues.” Father Rausch lived every day as a Teacher of Peace. He taught the following lessons with creativity, passion and his simple lifestyle.

STORY BY
MARGARET
GABRIEL

1. Think (and live) outside the box. Fellow Glenmary Father Neil Pezzulo said perseverance set Father Rausch firmly outside the box and is the quality he most appreciated about his friend. “He went to Appalachia and stayed,” Father Pezzulo said. “Preachers and politicians and government programs came and went, but John came and stayed. He walked with the people and prayed for the people, but mostly he prayed with the people.”

Todd DePriest, mayor of Jenkins, Ky., a town in Letcher County created by the Consolidation Coal Company, met Father Rausch when the two conducted a listening session concerning the need for repairs on Elkhorn Dam. “You could tell he really had a heart for Eastern Kentucky,” DePriest said.

“He could hear the heart of Christ in the people he advocated for,” said Benedictine Sister Kathleen Weigand. “He championed people with black lung, people who have been affected by mountaintop removal.”

2. Everybody has something to contribute. Franciscan Sister Robbie Pentecost said it was not unusual to see someone walk out on one of Father Rausch’s homilies. But sometimes people would stay after Mass to tell him they didn’t agree with one — or more — of his points. He delighted in finding common ground, Sister Pentecost said. “He saw that people had to change their hearts, not their heads.”

Father Rausch believed everyone could make a contribution and surrounded himself with people with a variety of backgrounds and insight. Sometimes that was on a team or a committee, but more often around his dinner table. The meals he prepared were simple but legendary. Father Pezzulo described the unusual mix of people one might find gathered at 5 p.m. in Father Rausch’s small Powell County home: “It might be a Ph.D. or a farmer with a second-grade education. Or both.” Everyone worked together to prepare the meal.

Former Kentucky State Rep. Jim Wayne first met Father Rausch when both attended Maryknoll College. “He built community around that table,” Wayne said. “It was a masterful skill.”

3. You can live without a cell phone. A phone call was answered with “Hello, this is John,” or a recording: “This is John Rausch in Stanton, Kentucky.” His upbeat voice told where he was, when he expected to be home, closing with, “Let’s keep working for peace.” This was his landline. Although a friend gave him a cell phone, it was rarely charged. When he did use it, it was to make calls. He didn’t text, check email, take pictures or use Google, at least not on his phone. Father Rausch communicated with email in addition to his landline, but he preferred to connect in person, often around his dinner table.

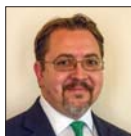
4. Community is key. His gift for hospitality grew out of Father Rausch’s reverence for community. “John loved preaching and saying Mass,” said Sister Pentecost. “But his real ministry was connecting people in community.” Father Rausch died several weeks before the coronavirus quarantine. Sister Pentecost said social distancing “would have driven John crazy!” but added that he would have valued the opportunity to slow down, pause and renew. “He would like giving people the opportunity to look at things in a new way,” Sister Pentecost said. “But he would really hate that no one was coming to dinner.” †

WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN ...

My brother says he feels closer to God on a fishing trip than in Church

THE QUESTION:

My brother says he feels closer to God when he's out on a fishing trip than he does in a church, and doesn't see why he should bother going to Mass. WHAT CAN I SAY?

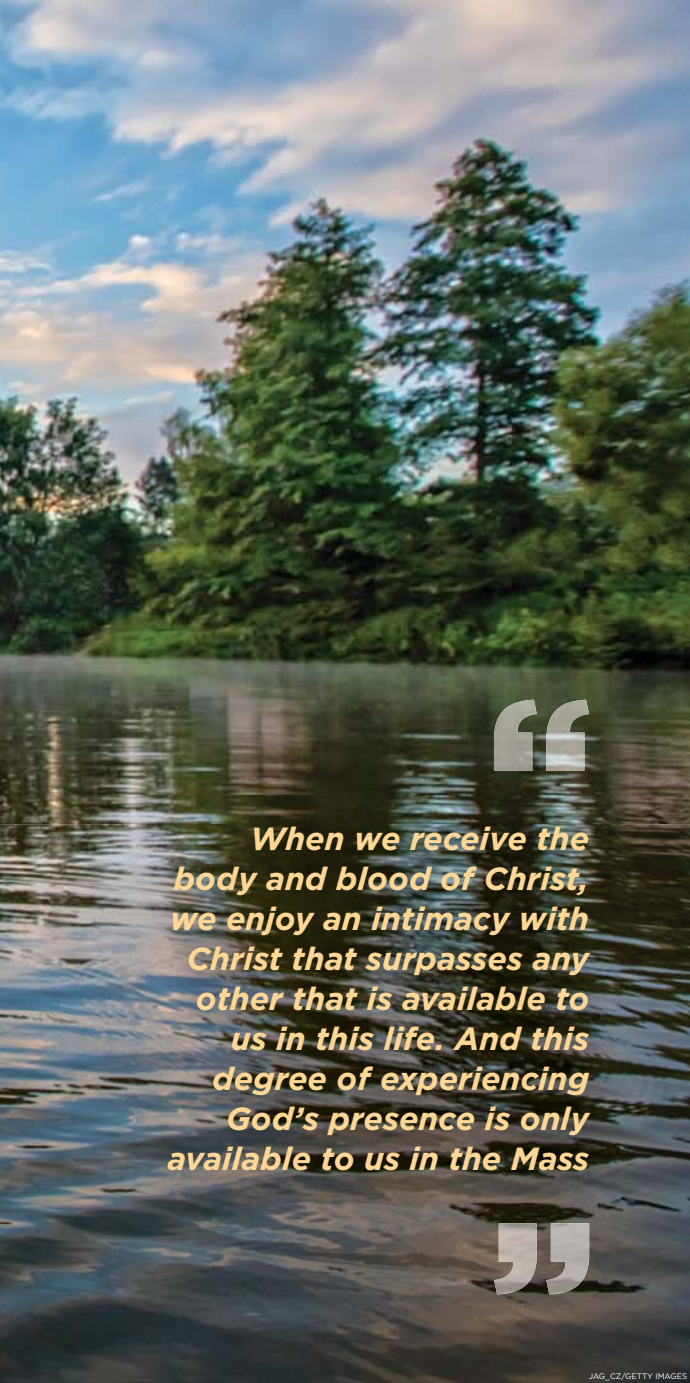


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Your initial response should be to affirm positively and without reservation that God can be experienced on a fishing trip. In fact, God is present everywhere. We call this the omnipresence of God. This means God is not confined by location, time, or even dimension.

This does not mean that God is everything — that would be a doctrine called pantheism. God is not everything, but our God is everywhere.

Then, you might want to deepen your understanding of your brother's experience of God when he is fishing. In other words, you should engage your brother to get him talking. For example, you could ask him: What does feeling closer to God mean to you? Are there certain moments during a fishing trip when you feel closer to God? What are you doing at those moments? What feelings do you experience at those moments?



When we receive the body and blood of Christ, we enjoy an intimacy with Christ that surpasses any other that is available to us in this life. And this degree of experiencing God's presence is only available to us in the Mass

JAG_CZ/GETTY IMAGES

The answers to these questions can help you identify the reasons he may not be feeling the same connection to God in a church. They might also reveal your brother's expectations about where God can be encountered, as well as his expectations about the Mass. If his expectations about the Mass are unrealistic, then you have an opportunity to dialogue with your brother about what one can properly expect from the Mass.

A MATTER OF DEGREE

Again, there is no doubt that God can be encountered on a fishing trip. If you are going to talk in-depth with your brother about this topic, consider doing it after you've accompanied him on a fishing trip. As we explored last time, silence is golden when it comes to hearing the voice of God,

and silence is a key component of any successful fishing trip. In addition, any activity or place capable of opening us up to an awareness centered on God can create an environment conducive to an experience of closeness with God.

At the same time, there are different degrees of presence. For example, when you are thinking of your brother, he is present to you to a certain degree for he is in your thoughts. However, when you speak to your brother over the phone, he is present to you to a different degree as you are hearing his voice and actually interacting with him rather than simply relating to the thought of him. Now think about when you see your brother in person and are able to actually embrace him. In such a moment, your brother is present to you in a deeper, more intimate way than before.

In the same way, we can experience different degrees of God's presence. We might experience God alone on a fishing trip. We might experience God when two or more persons are gathered in Jesus' name. (cf Mt 18:20) There really is no limit to where we can experience the presence of the God who loves us. So the question becomes: what is so special about the Mass and how might it differ in degree?

IT'S ABOUT COMMUNION

Our God is a Trinitarian communion: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We were created to share eternally in this communion. We do this here and now by being of the same mind, same love, same thought and same heart (cf. Phil 2:2) as Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We do this by keeping Christ's commands.

For example, Jesus told us when we pray to say the Lord's Prayer. We call this the perfect prayer precisely because Jesus taught it to us word-for-word, and Jesus only taught what he heard from the Father. So, when we pray the Our Father as instructed by Christ, we know by faith that we are of the same mind and thought of the Father. In other words, we are in communion with the Holy Trinity in a profound way and to a substantial degree.

Now consider the Eucharist. The priest says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world ..." We respond, "Lord, we are not worthy ... but only say the word and our soul shall be healed (made one, whole, saved)." Now who is the Word? The same Christ who takes away the sin of the world, or who takes away that which breaks communion with God.

This moment of communion is the very definition of feeling close to God. What's more, when we receive the body and blood of Christ, we enjoy an intimacy with Christ that surpasses any other that is available to us in this life. And this degree of experiencing God's presence is only available to us in the Mass, the same Mass to which you can invite your brother. And then invite him to breakfast to talk further about the many ways in which God is present in your lives! †



CALLED to preach the Gospel **ALWAYS**

**Lexington native son
Danny Taylor set to become
diocese's newest priest**

**STORY BY
ROBIN ROENKER**

**PHOTOS BY
DCN. SKIP OLSON**

Deacon Danny Taylor's ordination as a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Lexington was originally scheduled for the middle of May, but the COVID-19 crisis had other plans.

Now set for June 13, Taylor's ordination comes at an unusual time of social distancing — a step that, while necessary to keep parishioners safe, poses a particular challenge to those called into the ministry.

"How do we minister to people when the most responsible thing we can do is stay away from them physically?" asked Taylor, 30, who began to feel called to the priesthood around the age of 19.

"It's a difficult question. Reaching out through social media, a phone call or email is part of the equation," he said. "But I don't think that sufficiently replaces what it means to be physically present to others. Perhaps when we return to our new normal, we will be more appreciative to God for what it means to celebrate as community."

CALLED OUTWARD

Taylor, a graduate of Christ the King School, Lexington Catholic and the University of Kentucky, made the decision to pursue the priesthood after college, in the midst of pursuing his CPA certification and working at his family's Taylor Made Farm in Nicholasville, a leader in Kentucky's thoroughbred industry.

"I had these plans for my future. I always thought I would work for my family's business," Taylor said. "But I started thinking about the priesthood and what would fulfill me. I felt God tugging on my heart every time I would attend Mass or turn on Catholic radio. I had a feeling God was leading me in that direction."

Answering the call, Taylor entered St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana in fall 2014, graduating in May with both a master's in Catholic philosophical studies and a master's in divinity under his belt.

Taylor's time in seminary was a rich opportunity for growth and self-reflection.

"One of the most challenging things was the process of self-acceptance, learning who God made me to be and accepting my woundedness as an offering to God," he said.

A self-described introverted, quiet person, Taylor was stretched at St. Meinrad to "go

out of [his] comfort zone when it came to prayer," he said.

"I like to do *Lectio Divina* [prayerful Scripture reading] with the Bible or pray the Rosary alone in my room. That is where I naturally feel closest to God," said Taylor. "In seminary, however, I learned to enjoy praying in community, and I was introduced to charismatic prayer, where I really began to feel the Spirit at work."

GOD'S LOVE STORY

Taylor does not yet know where he will be assigned as a pastoral associate in the diocese. But, already, he's made an impact on the lives of parishioners at St. Mildred Catholic Church in Somerset, where he contributed to a parish youth summer camp last year. This spring, he preached fluently during St. Mildred's livestreamed Spanish-language Easter Mass.

"Danny is great at shifting back and forth" between English and

Spanish, said Father Jay VonHandorf, the pastor.

During his Easter homily, Taylor spoke in Spanish about "God's love story with us, catching our attention as he mapped out the humorous ways some soap opera love stories unfold — while he explained that our love story with God leads to the joyful wedding feast depicted in Revelation," Father VonHandorf said. "Deacon Danny has been a gift to our people."

After years of devoted study and preparation in the seminary, Taylor feels excited and ready to embark on his calling to the ministry.

"I hope to become a happy and loving priest," he said. "I think this is what it means to imitate Christ."

"God has put people in my path through these six years that have taught me so much," he added. "They've taught me how to be a better Christian and a better man. The many priests of our diocese have been such role models, teaching me what the true priorities of ministry should be: serving the least among us, persevering in prayer even amidst crisis, and loving God above all things."

Taylor also points to the examples set by his grandfather — "Daddy Joe" — and his parents as instrumental and lasting influences in his Catholic faith journey.

"My grandfather was my first spiritual mentor. Daddy Joe showed me that an essential part of being a man was being a believer in Christ and a faithful member of his Church," Taylor said. "I don't think I would have become a priest if it wasn't for him."

He added, "My parents also taught me the faith and inculcated in me a deep devotion. I can't thank them enough."

Danny's parents couldn't be happier about his chosen vocation.

"Duncan and I are so proud of Danny," said Carol Taylor, Danny's mom. "We both feel extremely blessed and humble that God called Danny to the priesthood. My heart is full."

She added, "He is the hardest worker I know and always gives 100 percent to everything he does. He is so intelligent and gifted in so many areas, but he is so humble and would never think that about himself. He has a great heart and is always thinking about everyone else."

SELFLESS ACTION

Because Taylor's ordination comes at a unique and challenging time in history, he's had the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of "Church" in profound and nuanced ways.

As Taylor has watched the unfolding of the COVID-19 crisis — largely while social distancing from his parents' Lexington home — it's "really the laity that are deepening my understanding of the Church," he said. "The brave medical personnel, the grocery employees, the sanitation workers — these people are putting their lives on the line to serve others. Isn't that precisely what being Christlike means?"

While the restriction on social gatherings has required Taylor — like everyone — to largely miss the opportunity to receive the sacraments, which, he admitted, "has been tough," he has found "spiritual nourishment" in viewing livestreamed Masses from the Cathedral. "I can feel God working through his ministers in this time of distress," he said.

In the long run, Taylor hopes this shared experience of living through the pandemic — and of seeing selflessness in action — will inspire a greater awareness in everyone about the power and nature of God's love.

"In this pandemic, we see how many people selflessly serve others and ask for nothing special in return," he said. "That is my dream for the whole Church." †

"ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING THINGS WAS THE PROCESS OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE, LEARNING WHO GOD MADE ME TO BE AND ACCEPTING MY WOUNDEDNESS AS AN OFFERING TO GOD."

THE HAZARD OF FOOD INSECURITY

Living *Laudato Si'* in the mountains means **patchwork of efforts** to feed families

STORY BY
DON CLEMMER



Quilting used to be a big deal in Perry County, but over the years and from one generation to the next, the craft of making quilts has fallen out of practice.

“A lot of that is dying, because people haven’t continued it,” notes Lori Helfrich, parish life director of Mother of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Hazard, Ky.

The same could be said of farming and gardening in the area, which is one of numerous contributing factors to widespread food insecurity in the area. This reality has driven some area churches to respond with efforts to feed the hungry, but these have been largely scattered and uncoordinated. This posed a challenge to Helfrich and other leaders of faith communities to in effect create a quilt of their own out of this patchwork of efforts and create something that could cover

the chasm of need in their community. “You have to be creative about it,” says Helfrich. “How do you encourage people to come together? ... You have to build relationships between people who don’t normally interact.”

So last fall, Helfrich and collaborators from across different Christian denominations and secular groups organized the Food and Faith Summit, an effort to get everyone on the same page and start building on existing efforts.

Steep, rough terrain

“We still have a lot of folks who need food assistance to make ends meet, but there seem to be fewer resources now to help them,” says Jennifer Weeber, who coordinates with farmers’ markets in the region as part of her work as Norfolk Local Food Coordinator for the Community Farm Alliance. “We have a lot of people going hungry, [who]

are not certain where their next meal is coming from, and who are having to make the difficult choice between food and medicine, food and rent, food and utilities, etc.”

Helfrich at Mother of Good Counsel notes that poverty in the area encompasses many things: “You have people who have jobs, but they’re not paying enough to be living on. If you’re a single parent, you might be working three jobs, but you still might not be able to cover what you need to,” she said. She also cites the widespread role of addiction. “It’s in nearly every family, because it’s available and it’s a numbing of the other issues that people are facing,” she said, adding that passing a drug test can therefore be a major hurdle for those seeking a job.

Also contributing is the legacy of strip-mining in the area, which “strips the land of everything and any top soil,” noted Helfrich. “That adds to

Lori Hefrich, left, parish life director of Mother of Good Counsel in Hazard, and Emily Whitaker, a Presbyterian and local "wannabe farmer" have helped organize efforts against food insecurity in Perry County. PHOTO: DON CLEMMER



“GOD PROVIDED THIS and continues to. It’s a natural thing, and isn’t it great that we’ve been able to expand with care of the earth?”



food insecurity.”

And most recently, there’s the impact of COVID-19.

“Food security was precarious here before the pandemic, and now the problem becomes exacerbated,” said Hefrich. “The most vulnerable populations are hit hardest when something like this unexpected happens. All of this ties together with care for our common home and *Laudato Si’*.”

Interwoven solidarity

As a result of last fall’s summit, Hefrich and her allies are now the Food and Faith Coalition and are seeking funding for some of their initiatives. These initiatives often draw on the values of Pope Francis encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si’*, which was published five years ago in June.

“We’re trying to link all these things,” said Emily Whitaker, a Presbyterian and one of Hefrich’s collaborators. “I love being involved in all of these projects.

Whitaker, who moved onto her parents’ property in the area after their death, has overseen a farmers’ market

for the last several years, but also has helped organize dinners that introduce area residents to locally grown foods and recipes derived from them.

“We can talk all day about having foods at the farmers’ market, but if people don’t buy them and put them in their mouth, it’s not going to help,” said Whitaker. “You can be one of the people that helps that farmer continue their work and increase that amount of local food that’s available.”

Whitaker, a computer professional turned “farmer wannabe,” is one of numerous people across Perry and Letcher Counties who has, with the help of funding from the National Soil Conservation Service, set up a high tunnel — essentially a greenhouse but with plants growing from the ground — on her property. The soil of this former strip-mine has nothing organic in it.

“It’s rocks. It’s rubble from deep down by where the coal was,” she said. She also keeps bees on the property in hopes they can help pollinate anything she might be able to grow.

Hefrich likens a process like this,



and all the Food and Faith Coalition’s work, to seeking resurrection in a crucified place. “There are charitable pieces happening, about feeding people. But what is the justice piece? How is the system changed so that it’s really helping people? ... It seems very bleak at times. But there are sparks of hope in it.”

Whitaker finds great hope in seeing this cohort of community leaders, all women, who are doing something other than throwing money at a systemic problem.

“God provided this and continues to. It’s a natural thing, and isn’t it great that we’ve been able to expand with care of the earth?” she said. “And those are just very cool messages, and I think they belong in the Church!” †

CREDITS

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▲ Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv. celebrates a livestreamed Mass for patients and staff at St. Joseph Hospital in Lexington on May 4. **Photo provided**



▲ Cathedral of Christ the King children Oliver and Hattie show their love for our earth during the pandemic. **Photo provided**



◀ On June 6, Ronald Sagum will be ordained to the transitional diaconate, the final step before ordination to the priesthood.



JUBILEE — Sister Frances Wagner, a School Sisters of St. Francis who served in the Catholic Diocese of Lexington, is celebrating her 60th jubilee this year. She served at New Hope Ministry in Sandy Hook (1985-91), Our Lady of the Mountains School in Paintsville (1991-94) and with the Christian Appalachian Project (1994-97). Sister Frances currently resides at Clement Manor in Greenfield, Wis.



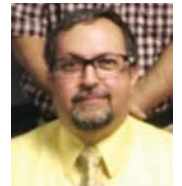
▲ A young woman at Mary Queen of the Holy Rosary in Lexington crowns a statue of Mary during a May crowning ceremony at the parish. **Photo provided**



Bob Amato



Jeremy Watson



Kurt Sosa



Ed Parsons

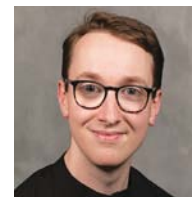


Lane Marshall



David James

▲ On June 6, six men will be ordained to the permanent diaconate: Bob Amato (wife Carmen) of Good Shepherd in Frankfort; David James (wife Mary Jo) of St. Luke in Nicholasville; Lane Marshall (wife Mary) of Annunciation in Paris; Ed Parsons (wife Hye Kyong) of Pax Christi in Lexington; Kurt Sosa (wife Angela) of Sacred Heart in Corbin; and Jeremy Watson (wife Amy) of Sts. Peter and Paul in Danville.



▲ Simon Holden, a parishioner of Good Shepherd in Frankfort, entered St. Meinrad Archabbey as a novice in January, beginning a year of monastic formation.

IN MEMORY

Retired Deacon Karl Melinger died on May 2, age 80. He was ordained in 1990, among the first ordinations in the new Catholic Diocese of Lexington. He was assigned to Holy Family Parish in Ashland, Ky., 1990-97. Karl and his wife Frances had been living in Florida. He is survived by his wife, three daughters, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Young nun: Sister Emily TeKolste, SP



Emily TeKolste is a millennial woman who actively works to promote social justice. She's also a woman religious. This Sister of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, who will turn 32 later this month, is an organizer for the DC-based social justice lobby NETWORK, of "Nuns on the Bus" fame. NETWORK works to create a society that promotes justice and the dignity of all in the shared abundance of God's creation.

Sister Emily spoke with Cross Roads about her work with NETWORK, how it intersects with the Church in Kentucky and what it's like to be a nun of her generation.

CR: *What does your work with NETWORK consist of?*

Emily: I'm on the grassroots mobilization team at NETWORK, which means that I work with people who want to get more involved in advocacy work. Advocates in the field are critical in supporting the policy work of our government relations team (our registered lobbyists), because members of Congress listen to their constituents. So my work involves a lot of relationship-building with people in the six states that I focus on: Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. I work with people to build advocates teams and participate in lobby visits (or conference calls, during this time of COVID-19). This involves creating and leading workshops, giving policy updates, preparing people for conversations with Congressional staffers and other things as necessary.

CR: *How does your vision of working toward a more just world fit with your vocation to religious life?*

Emily: In my early years in my community, my postulant director told me, "It sounds like your first vocation is to the work of justice." In truth, it was my call to the work of justice that fed my call to religious life and to the Sisters of Providence. It is clear to me from the Hebrew prophets through the life of Jesus, from the traditional Catholic

social documents through the lives of many of my justice heroes like Dorothy Day and Father Dan Berrigan that faith in a God of love and justice demands action for justice. As Dr. Cornel West said, "Justice is what love looks like in public."

As a student at Xavier University, I first began to see the injustices of the world, and I grew angry. It wasn't right for people to be treated this way. I also saw a response rooted in a faith that does justice. It wasn't until five years after I graduated that I entered my community; in the meantime, I left behind the faith of my childhood — a legalistic and moralistic approach to Christianity — and found myself in community, first at the Catholic Worker community in Indianapolis and then, through those relationships, with the Sisters of Providence. Whether it's as a member of a religious congregation or not, the truth is that we can only effectively and sustainably do the work of justice when it's rooted in community.

CR: *What is it like being a millennial and a nun?*

Emily: For me, the blessings include the cross-community relationships that we have the opportunity to build, the communal approach to justice, the inspiring people I can call friends and peers, the relationships I have with sisters in my own community, the legacy I inherit as part of something bigger than myself, the ongoing opportunities and support for self-development,

and so much more. It's also exciting to be a part of the Spirit's work of creating the present and future of religious life. One particular blessing has been the opportunity to develop and share my spiritual life beyond those who identify with a Catholic or Christian religious tradition.

CR: *How can people get involved with your efforts?*

Emily: The work of justice must be communal and intersectional. That means that we need you! Only you have the specific gifts that God has given you to share with the world. The work of justice involves so many different pieces, and each of us can do the part that best fits with our own selves. One of my favorite stories from justice organizing comes from the Civil Rights Movement. One of the key organizers wasn't at the march she had organized. When someone asked her about it, she said, "I can't march, but I can organize, so I organize. And you march. And together we change the world."

If you're interested in getting more involved but don't know where to start, reach out. I'm happy to talk to you about what opportunities might be a good fit for you. If you just want to sign up for action alerts (where NETWORK tells you when to call and what to say), text JUSTICE to 877-877 or go to www.networklobby.org and scroll to the bottom to enter your email. To reach me directly, email me at etekolste@networklobby.org. I hope to hear from you! †



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