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JUNE 2022 *Letter*

Honoring the Elderly: Local Senior Exemplifies the Value of Pope Francis' Words

By Christine Corbett Conklin

In a recent address in Rome, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of respecting and caring for the elderly. "...They are the honor of our civilization, the old people who opened the doors," he remarked.

And indeed, there are valuable lessons to be learned and fascinating stories to hear from those who have lived many years and experienced so much. Just one local example is Helene (pronounced hay-leen) Berthold Black, a resident of Peach Tree Retirement Center in Yakima.

"The Lord will never leave you or forsake you," proclaims this native of Vienna, Austria, who celebrated her 97th birthday last month. "God is our faithful friend." Those statements become truly remarkable when you hear the story of Helene's life.

Born in Vienna in 1925, Helene was baptized Catholic and attended "convent schools as a girl," she explained in an interview with the *Central Washington*

Catholic. However, with the coming of World War II and the invasion of Austria by German troops in 1938, her life underwent a drastic change.

"Hitler closed all those schools," she recalled. Her father, who worked for the post office, and her brother, Frederick, who was just two years older than Helene were both "called up" for military duty. By 1945, Soviet troops beat back the Germans and captured the area. The tales of assaults on women during this time are infamous. Helene was a wartime victim, later being forced to abort a child.

Another time, she was arrested and told she would have to spend the night with a soldier if she didn't want to go into custody. She pretended to agree and then, in the night, her landlady snuck her out of her building to catch a freight train to safety.

After she worked for a time in a German bank and another office, the



Helene Black acknowledges God's goodness.

American troops arrived to liberate the area. Helene went on to work as a switchboard operator for the Americans.

"They all told me, 'Helene, you've got to come to America,'" she recalled. "Idaho is like the Swiss Alps." By 1961, she was able to make the move, coming to Idaho and later to Tacoma, Washington. The years that followed brought more hardships, with an

Continued on page 3

Changes in Diocesan Priest Assignments Are Announced

Bishop Joseph Tyson has announced the following changes of assignments for priests in the Yakima Diocese. The effective dates are noted below:

- **Father Jaime Chacón**, pastor of St. Andrew Catholic Church in Ellensburg, was appointed pastor of Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Moxee May 21, following the death May 20 of Father John Murtagh. Father Chacón remains pastor of St. Andrew through June 30. He was ordained a priest May 21, 2004.

- **Father Alejandro Trejo**, pastor of Our Lady of the Desert Catholic Church in Mattawa, is appointed pastor of St. Andrew effective July 1, while remaining pastor of Our Lady of the Desert through July 31. He was

ordained a priest May 23, 2003.

- **Father Lalo Barragán**, vice rector of Mount Angel Seminary in St. Benedict, Oregon, is appointed pastor of Our Lady of the Desert effective August 1. He finishes a five-year assignment at the seminary June 30, 2022. He was ordained a priest May 23, 2014.

- **Father Gerardo Cisneros**, who was appointed parochial vicar of St. Andrew effective April 1, is appointed parochial vicar of St. Pius X Catholic Church in Quincy effective June 1. Ordained a priest June 3, 2006, he was released from the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in April for one year to discern diocesan priesthood.

- **Father Edwin Lozada**, of the Diocese of Pereira, Colombia, continues

as parochial vicar of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church in Moses Lake, where he began service in December 2021. Ordained a priest March 3, 2013, he has been released by his bishop for up to five years of service here.

- **Father Christian Melendez**, ordained a priest May 27, at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Wenatchee, is assigned to further studies effective July 1, while serving on weekends in parishes as needed. He is studying to complete the Washington State requirements to be a licensed clinical psychologist. He will reside in Yakima at St. Paul Cathedral.

Please keep these priests in your prayers as they serve the faithful of the Diocese of Yakima.

A Message from Bishop Tyson...

Dear Friends:

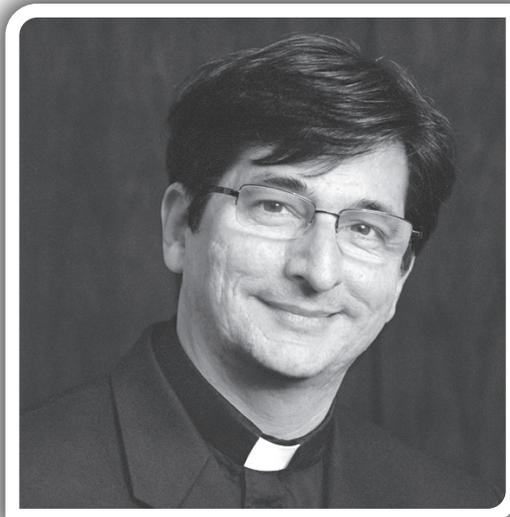
In this month's *Central Washington Catholic* you will read the succinct and wise advice of one of our Yakima residents, the 97-year-old Helene Berthold Black: "Be honest, be kind and trust the Lord."

This entire interview brings to mind Pope Francis and his elevation of the elderly as sources of wisdom. Interestingly, a couple of years ago when our Holy Father met with us bishops from the Pacific Northwest, Pope Francis located the lack of respect for life within a larger "throwaway culture." The Spanish he used is "descartados." In Argentinian Spanish, "descartados" often refers to the packing around a product from a store. The cellophane wrapping around a pack of gum. The paper juice box. The cereal box. The empty plastic milk jug.

Obviously, our care for the unborn and the dying are key because without the right to life there are no other rights. But by speaking to us of the underlying "throwaway" culture, Pope Francis is interested in drawing attention to the underlying soil that allows migrants to be living under tarps at an abandoned airport, and asylum seekers to be turned away. He has likened abortionists to "hitmen" – a reference to the mafia. And in the same talk with us bishops he addressed the abandonment of the elderly. After their lives have been used up, they can be too easily tossed away like mere packaging from a grocery store product.

Campaign for Human Development Collection Planned

Our parishes will hold the collection for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) the weekend of July 16-17. More than 37 million people in the United States live in poverty. CCHD supports them by funding programs that empower local communities to address the challenges they face. It identifies and addresses the unique obstacles people face as they work to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty.



Bishop Joseph Tyson

We are living in very polarized times both politically and socially. Some of this tension splashes back into our lives as families and parishioners. But what ought to incentivize us to resist the throwaway culture can be found in the interview Christine Conklin conducted with Helene. Beneath the horrendous loss, pain and suffering lies a sacred story of beauty and strength made so by her response to the gracious movements of God in her life. These are modern day parables each of us need if we are to find reasonable happiness in this life and eternal happiness in the next. The elderly serve all of us as orientation points that bring together the truth that without God we cannot fully know our own happiness and our own human fulfillment. Happiness consists, not in what we get, but in what we give. The elderly can often give us a complete roadmap that goes

much further than our individual life experience.

Needless to say, when I read how Helene prays every day in German and English, I could not help but think of my own late grandmother who was a parishioner for many years at St. Paul Cathedral in Yakima. When the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union collapsed, she held up her Rosary which she prayed often for the conversion of Russia through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, and noted in her German dialect "Gook mal! Schaffts!" "Look. It worked!" (The high German verb is "gieken.")

Can we trust this? Can we trust the power of prayer? Can we renew our efforts to pray for conversion – not only of Russia – but the conversion we need in our lives? I hope and pray that this summer gives you time and space to consider your life map. I hope the interview with Helene as well as our other accompanying stories give you the incentive to know your life is not over, there is still a journey ahead and that God can accompany you no matter how painful your history.

With every best wish and blessing!

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

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If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy, please believe in the possibility for hope and help and healing. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Yakima Diocese has a sexual abuse hotline for those who wish to report some incident concerning that issue as regards a bishop, priest, deacon or diocesan employee or volunteer. (888) 276-4490.

The Church Mission Congress Nears

Make plans now to attend the upcoming Church Mission Congress, scheduled for Saturday, October 15 at Holy Family Church, 5315 Tieton Drive in Yakima.

The Congress will provide an opportunity to discuss where we stand as a Church, in the Synod process involving the three elements of “Communion, Participation and

Mission.”

For more information, or to volunteer to help, contact Valeria Flores at valeria.flores@yakimadiocese.org or call (509) 965-7117.

Collection Assists Retired Priests and Seminarians

“Think of the day in three periods – morning, afternoon, and evening. Take one of those periods to yourself for prayer or to do something simple like buying groceries...”

Father Kelly is happy to be a priest and to serve the community of Yakima. He also emphasized the importance of the Priest Retirement and Seminarian Education Collection as it is an invest-

ment – not a cost – to train the next generation of priests such as himself.

“It’s always awkward to ask people, because you are asking them for money,” Father Kelly said. “But when I was a seminarian, I was able to meet and know different communities, all people who funded my education.”

He mentioned that he is one of five children, and his parents would not

Continued from page 4

have been able to provide five college educations, especially since he was a seminarian for seven years.

“Thank you to parishioners,” Father Kelly said. “They made this possible – without them I would not be here.”

As Father Kelly reflected on seminary and his first year of priesthood, he also looked forward to the future and serving different communities.

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inability to bear children following her assault by the soldier, a marriage to a widower with two children which ended in divorce, and a battle with breast cancer and resultant surgery. She learned about Peach Tree from her brother, who also had immigrated to this area, and lived at the retirement center for a time.

As she looks back at her life and its many challenges, Helene observes, “God always got me out of the mess.” Yes, there is evil in the world, she acknowledges,

“but for every evil, there is 100 times more Jesus Christ.”

At 97, Helene remains bright-eyed and personable, with an incredible memory for detail. Her blue eyes become sad in discussing some of the trials she has endured, but her spirit remains strong.

“I am in a good place,” she says, noting that she prays every day in English and in German and attends Mass when it is offered at the retirement

Continued from page 1

center. She has a little chihuahua named Honey as a companion. Her stepson, who now lives in Yelm, comes to visit her when possible.

So, what advice does Helene have to offer after all she has experienced? “Be honest, be decent, be kind and trust the Lord,” she suggests... How many more remarkable stories are waiting to be told by residents of retirement centers and nursing homes throughout our Diocese? Yet, how often do we take the time to visit, to listen and to try to brighten a resident’s day?

In the words of Pope Francis, “Honor is a good word to frame this aspect of returning love that concerns old age. That is, we have received the love of parents, of grandparents, and now we return this love to them, to the elderly Today we have rediscovered the term ‘dignity,’ to indicate the value of respecting and caring for the (life) of everyone. Dignity, here, is essentially equivalent to honor honoring the elderly and recognizing the dignity they possess.”

He continues, “Please don’t leave them alone (We) must transform how we educate the young about life and its stages.... (This honor) is an ambition that will bring radiance to our youth who inherit its best qualities....”

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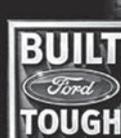
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Collection Assists Retired Priests and Seminarians

By Daisy Pérez

Every July parishioners listen as a seminarian speaks to them from the pulpit about his call to priesthood, and concludes his talk with a thank you. Without the parishioners' generous donations and prayers, our seminarians' journey to the priesthood would not be possible.

This talk is part of the annual Priest Retirement and Seminarian Education (PR/SE) collection. Its purpose is to support ongoing formation for seminarians, provide an education for seminarians studying for the priesthood, and help support senior priests, especially those who need assisted living or nursing care services. Last year our



Father Michael Kelly was ordained in May 2021.

generous donors contributed around \$240,000 (the goal was \$225,000).

Parishioners begin to see the fruits of this collection in the work of our younger priests. Recently Father Michael Kelly, parochial

vicar of St. Joseph Parish in Yakima, reflected on his first year of priesthood.

He recalled an encounter with an elderly woman in the hospital who, doctors said, would die within an hour. Her family – her grown children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren – stood around her bed in silence and Father Kelly joined them.

“They were just there for each other (in silence),” Father Kelly said. “Words would have done so little... It was a dif-

ficult moment, but also it was a beautiful moment to witness that they were so open to the Lord.”

During his first year of priesthood Father Kelly has enjoyed being a priest because it gives him the opportunity to teach the Faith

and he has especially enjoyed teaching RCIA classes. However, he said it can be overwhelming at times.

Father Kelly has drawn on the experience of Father Mauricio Muñoz (Pastor of St. Joseph Parish) and Father Bill Vogel, S.J., (a long-time pastor and parochial vicar in the Diocese). Bishop Tyson has offered him a piece of advice to ensure Father Kelly doesn't burn out,

Continued on page 3



Father Seamus Kerr blessed Father Kelly.

The 'Saints of Summer' Offer Inspiration For Us All

There are many great saints who can give us inspiration, and pray for us, as we go through life. Here are just a few of the “Saints of Summer,” those whose feast days are celebrated in this season. How many can you name? Answers follow at the end:

1.) June 29. One of the most important of saints, this Roman citizen at one time presided over the persecution of early Christians. After a vision that caused his conversion to Christianity, he was baptized and assumed a different name. He became an apostle, preaching in many lands.

2.) July 1. Born in 1713, this Franciscan worked for the conversion of the people of Mexico and what is now California. Among the Indian people, he taught agricultural methods and how to raise cattle. He established 21 missions from Carmel to San Luis Obispo to San Francisco.

3.) July 3. One of the 12 apostles, he is credited with receiving the assurance that “Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life.” Tradition says that he evangelized people in many lands, but he is best known for questioning whether Jesus had truly risen from the dead and touching his wounds.

4.) July 11. Born in 879 in the area of modern-day Ukraine and Russia, this saint had a notorious past, allegedly scalding her husband's murderers and killing many of their followers. Upon her conversion, she asked that missionaries be sent to Kiev. She was unable to convert her son, but Christianity was finally introduced in the area by her grandson, St. Vladimir.

5.) July 24. A lesser-known Irish saint, he was baptized by St. Colman and became the first bishop of Ardmore. He preached the faith in Ireland shortly before St. Patrick arrived. He is credited with many conversions and founding a monastery in what is now County Waterford. Numerous miracles have been attributed to him.

6.) July 29. This brother of Martha and Mary lived in Bethany. He may have gone on to become a bishop, according to tradition. Numerous churches have been built in his honor.

He is best known, however, for being brought back to life by Jesus.

7.) August 11. The patron saint of babies and youth, this woman was born in about 291. She is thought to have been a Greek princess who died as a teenage martyr. A consecrated virgin, she refused to marry a Roman emperor and was tortured, each time reportedly being healed by the prayers of angels. Finally, she was beheaded, dying at 3 p.m., as Jesus did.

8.) August 18. Perhaps best known as the mother of Constantine the Great, this saint was much revered by her son. After becoming a Christian, she helped locate Christian relics and had many churches built in the Middle East, reportedly including the Church of the Nativity, at the site of Jesus' birth. She did pious works of charity and located and brought back to Rome parts of the True Cross.

9.) August 27. An excellent example of the power of prayer, this saint was born circa 331 in what today is Algeria. The mother of St. Augustine, she spent 17 years in prayer, helping to convert Augustine from his wayward life. Earlier, she had helped to convert her husband and mother-in-law, after additional years of prayer.

10.) September 5. Born in 1910 in Albania, this tiny woman achieved international fame for her works of charity. At age 18, she left home to join the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland, later spending more than 60 years in service to the people of India with the Missionaries of Charity. She founded the Corpus Christi Movement for priests, and dedicated her many awards to “the glory of God and in the name of the poor.”

Answers

1.) St. Paul; 2.) St. Junipero Serra; 3.) St. Thomas; 4.) St. Olga; 5.) St. Declan; 6.) St. Lazarus; 7.) St. Philomena; 8.) St. Helena; 9.) St. Monica; 10.) St. Teresa of Calcutta.

(Thanks to catholic.org for information on these and many other saints.)