

Mom was a pioneer when she chose love over the church

FIRST PERSON

By DON LAMBERT

Gathered around our 87-year-old mother's open casket, my siblings and I were astonished and gratified by what we learned. Our mother, who taught us to obey the rules, had herself disobeyed them 55 years earlier, with life-altering consequences for herself and for her family. My mother made a choice that would alienate her from the religion she had followed her entire life. Her decision, based on love, ultimately resulted in her virtual excommunication from the Catholic church.

Why would this small-town Kansas widow forsake the religion into which she had been born? That church forced her to choose between her past and her future, between adherence to strict Catholic doctrine and the man she loved.

The issue was divorce. Specifically, it was when a Catholic wished to marry a divorced person. Mom, a widow for five years with two small children, was dating a divorced man with two small children of his own. The church forced Mom to choose between her religion and the man she loved who promised her a better future. Mom chose Norman. They eloped when we were kids, ages 8, 6, 5 and 4.

My sister and I moved with our mother to Norman's farm. As a part of this newly blended family, we were eager to begin our new lives. We began attending the nearby one-room country school and learned about life on the farm. We were eager to help with chores, but not so eager to slop the hogs.

Mom even learned to drive a truck and plow the fields. Her involvements outside the home became 4-H, PTA, bingo, square-dancing and those Red Hat ladies.

As children, we were too young to understand Mom's defiance. When we grew older, it was water under the bridge. Mom never spoke of it; we never asked. Maybe she thought my sister and I would think less of her if we knew. In fact, the opposite would have been true.

In spite of her own fall from grace, she seemed not to want to tarnish our Catholic education. She took us to catechism classes every Saturday and to Mass on Sunday, my sister and I taking Communion while Mom sat watching silently.

I had not yet come to understand why my catechism classmates, no doubt echoing their parents, taunted me, saying that my mother was going to hell. Years later, I realized that Mom's excommunication, although not official, was but one example of how, for centuries, the Catholic church has crucified its own.

It was only after Mom's death that Norman relayed to me the rest of the story, revealing the details of Mom's courageous choice.

I don't know why Norman chose that particular time to talk about Mom's decision. Because the situation had been painful for our mother, he must have respected her wishes not to talk



Lila and Norman Cleveland, upon their 40th wedding anniversary in 1999

about it, even though we had learned most of it piecemeal. Now, however, it seemed he wanted us to know all about the choice she had made, because it affected us all.

Lila Mae Gertrude Pelland Lambert Cleveland was born in Cloud County, Kan., in 1927.

Her ancestors were French-Canadian Catholics who immigrated to Quebec and then to Kankakee County, Ill., where a controversy in the 1850s caused a major split in the local Catholic parish.

A charismatic priest, born and ordained in Quebec, had a disagreement with a local property owner in Kankakee County. A lawsuit for libel resulted, and the bishop ultimately excommunicated the priest.

The disgraced priest then became a Presbyterian and founded his own church 10 miles away. Four-fifths of the parish became Presbyterians. My ancestors were among those who remained true to Catholicism, maybe as much for their dislike of the former priest's temperance crusade as for his claims that the Catholic church was unfaithful to the Bible.

The French-Canadian Catholics, surrounded by *les infidèles protestants*, suddenly became a minority. They sought "higher ground" on a hill hundreds of miles away on the Kansas prairie. They named that hill St. Joseph, with the church and town named in his honor.

The Catholic church, not wanting a fiasco there such as it had experienced in Kankakee, made the community a Catholic enclave. Five Catholic churches were built within 40 miles. Catholic schools were opened and French-speaking priests served there. Assimilation was discouraged.

Life was tough on the Kansas prairie. Mom grew up during the Dust Bowl and the Depression. She remembered when crops didn't grow; her parents were kicked off one farm and moved to another. She attended a different school every year.

ing a married man. If they planned to get married, Norman would have to receive an annulment of his first marriage from the Vatican, despite being a Protestant. If he did not, Mom could no longer enjoy the sacraments of the church.

While most of Mom's relatives supported a potential marriage, a few did not. One Catholic aunt demanded an annulment. Norman balked. For the annulment, he would have to communicate with his ex-wife. She had left him and abandoned their two boys, a 3-year-old and a 6-month-old. He swore never to speak to her again. An annulment would never happen.

Then, one afternoon, a young visiting priest came to see Mom. The priest, on a righteous mission, demanded that she stop seeing the divorced man before it was too late. Otherwise, she would face eternal damnation in the fires of hell.

That evening, when Norman came calling, Mom told him of the visit by the young priest.

"What do you think we should do?" Norman asked her.

"I think," she said with a certainty that made Norman smile then and us now, "I think we should get married!"

Mom and Norman had a happy and prosperous life together for more than half of a century. They took care of each other throughout, even during Mom's last 10 years as she fought Alzheimer's disease.

My mother did not realize that she was a pioneer when she chose love over church. In her quiet way, she stood up to the archaic rules of an established organization, trusting her own heart.

Mom knew the comfort of her church at the end of her life. During her final days, a Catholic hospice nurse asked about giving Mom the last rites. I told her that 55 years earlier, the church had denied my mother the sacraments.

"Oh," the nurse said. "We don't care about that anymore."

Mom received the last rites.

[Don Lambert, a resident of Kansas City, Mo., is a longtime writer and promoter of the arts and history of Kansas.]



Giving voice to Catholic sisters around the world.



GLOBAL SISTERS REPORT

A project of National Catholic Reporter



GlobalSistersReport.org

Send story suggestions to info@GlobalSistersReport.org.

African theologians, bishops cry out

By JOSHUA J. McELWEE

NAIROBI, KENYA · A number of prominent theologians and bishops from across the African continent have sharply called for more expansive discussions at this fall's global meeting of Catholic bishops on family issues, saying last year's event focused too heavily on subjects mainly of concern to Europeans and North Americans.

Last year's discussions — which attracted global media coverage scrutinizing bishops' stances on controversial questions like divorce and remarriage and same-sex relationships — left out a multitude of pressing issues facing millions living throughout Africa, the prelates and academics argued at a groundbreaking conference here July 16-18.

In a reflection of the tone of the event, one theologian-participant made a poignant, echoing plea. The global church, she said, must entirely refocus itself to speak for voiceless Africans who are suffering in many ways.

"How outraged are we? Who is keeping a tab?" Nontando Hadebe cried out to other participants at the gathering, speaking specifically of the kidnapping of some 300 schoolgirls by the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria in 2014.

"There just needs to be an institution that says no — no more!" she continued, calling on the church to reorient to become the "guardian, sustainer, protector" of African and black lives.

"We need an institution that is outraged and that sustains that outrage as a prophetic teaching," said the South African, a rising theologian who has focused her work on the struggles of African women.

Hadebe, who teaches at Johannes-

burg's St. Augustine College, was one of 36 of the continent's most prominent Catholic ethicists gathered for the discussions, the last in a three-year series of such meetings being held at the Jesuit-run Hekima University College since 2013.

Organized as a "Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion, and Society in Africa," this year's event saw the academics and selected prelates discuss a wide range of issues, such as questions of ecological destruction and religious fundamentalism, and how Pope Francis is impacting the shape of Africa's church structures.

But many of the conversations focused most on the October meeting of the Synod of Bishops, the second of two back-to-back bishops' meetings called by Francis for 2014 and 2015 to focus on family life issues.

Among those addressing that subject were three prelates: Rustenburg, South Africa, Bishop Kevin Dowling; Malindi, Kenya, Bishop Emanuel Barbara; and Kibungo, Rwanda, Bishop Antoine Kambanda.

Both Dowling and Barbara bluntly faulted the 2014 meeting for not focusing enough on African issues.

Dowling, a prominent global voice as a co-president of the international Catholic peace group Pax Christi, said he hoped the 2015 event would avoid simply restating doctrines in "predominantly Eurocentric constructs."

More time at the meeting, he said, should be spent on "all the systemic issues which threaten relationships between people in societies and make it so hard for parents today to nourish their relationship with their own children and so bring them up in wholesome and life-giving ways."

Malindi, who has been selected as a substitute to attend the synod should



—NCR photo/Joshua J. McElwee
Nontando Hadebe

the Kenyan bishops elected to do so not be able, said the first synod was focused "much more on a Europe or a European culture which got converted to Christianity and is now facing big challenges because of the new era."

Africans, Malindi said, face many different challenges than Europeans. Many Africans, he said, are still dealing with issues related to being newer converts to Christianity and in trying to live their faith while respecting their traditional cultures.

The Kenyan bishop called for a new theology of marriage from an African context.

"If we want to have respect to our African Christian families, we need to work seriously on an African Christian theology of marriage," he said. "It's not enough to apply other models that have been there for centuries."

One theologian, Ugandan Emmanuel Katongole, even criticized what he called a "tyranny of pressing moral

questions" that immediately reduces problems the church needs to face down to issues of sexuality or authority.

"The overall effect of starting with the 'pressing moral questions' is to make a parody of the African voice," said Katongole, a professor of theology and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute. "It is to obscure what might be more broad, urgent but perhaps less sexy issues affecting millions of Africans."

"One wonders why sexuality is a pressing moral question but the fact that millions of Africans lack basic necessities like water, food and shelter is not," he said. "Why is sexual orientation a basic human right, but not the right to water?"

Call for African organization

In three expansive sessions at the Nairobi gathering focused on "Gospel of Family: From Africa to the World Church," the participants brought up a diverse range of unique family topics they said are facing the church on their continent but had not been adequately discussed at the 2014 synod.

Among the issues, too many to list in full:

- Identity struggles for Africans who feel separated from their traditional cultures after Christian conversion;
- Gender-based violence in households, overwhelmingly against women;
- Missing presence of fathers in family life;
- Large-scale, crippling poverty;
- Lack of "principled, ethical leadership" in both governmental and church spheres.

Several participants at the gathering called for leaders in the African church to work more closely together in order to coordinate in speaking out about such issues at the 2015 synod.

One theologian, Jesuit Fr. Paul Bere,

HANNA: OUR HOPE AND FEARS

Continued from Page 1

take this recollection to call to mind what the Lord has done for us, and how he accompanied us throughout the night of Aug. 6, 2014, as we were displaced with his people. This memory impels us to pray to the Lord so that we might be enlightened to understand his will for our lives during this crisis. Doing so, we would like to share with you our vision, our hope, and also our fears. We thank you for being with and accompanying us in our journey, breathing in us the spirit of courage to continue on our way.

As we remember last August, the words of the Psalm 124:2-3 come to our mind: "If the Lord had not been on our side when people attacked us, they would have swallowed us alive." It was really a dark night when we left, not knowing what to take with us or what to leave behind. Chris-

tians were everywhere on the road, not knowing what direction they should take. The shadow of ISIS's hatred surrounded everything, and we understood little of what was happening.

When we eventually arrived in Kurdistan, many people were homeless in the street; they were like sheep without a shepherd. After a few days

in Erbil, we realized that our towns in the Plain of Nineveh had been taken by ISIS, and our return became a distant and uncertain dream.

To add insult to injury, it was not only ISIS that increased our loss and our anguish but also our non-Christian neighbors, our friends in the neighboring villages, whom we served, taught and gave treatment — they betrayed us in times of trouble and crisis.

It was not easy to accept the fact that we were displaced people, almost abandoned by the Iraqi and Kurdish govern-



ments whose initiatives and acts were not up to the level we expected. The church took the responsibility for us, trying to gather and support the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were scattered all over the region of Kurdistan.

As a community, realizing how dramatic the condition was, we thought of ways to mitigate the crisis and help people with their basic needs.

We started our projects with empty hands, but with the help of our Dominican sisters and brothers, our friends and different organizations, we were able to provide the IDPs with food and non-food items. We distributed blankets and mattresses for 5,000 families; milk, diapers, housewares, towels, soap, summer blankets for 10,000 families; shoes for 740 pupils; and 5,000 air-cool-



—Courtesy of Dominican Sisters
An Iraqi girl living in a refugee camp gets water.

ers, 600 refrigerators and 400 water-coolers. Although some of these items were distributed for the IDPs in general, our focus was on the displaced families who rented houses. They are paying significant money for rent, and many of them do not have any income.

Additionally, we thought of children who were lost in the midst of this chaos. We opened two kindergartens

GLOBAL SISTERS REPORT
GlobalSistersReport.org

ON THE WEB
See story online at
GlobalSistersReport.org/node/28711.

for more expansive synod discussions

said he felt a “deep lament” that the complexity of issues facing Africans was not discussed at the 2014 event.

“It is so sad that the church of Africa did not make its voice heard and I doubt it will be heard in the upcoming synod,” said Bere, a native of Burkina Faso who teaches at the Institut de Théologie de la Compagnie de Jésus in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Bere, who also served from 2009 to 2014 as a consultant to the Synod of Bishops’ secretariat office at the Vatican, said African voices were not being heard because the different African churches were not organizing their arguments together.

Maryknoll Fr. Joseph Healey, an American who has lived in Eastern Africa for nearly 40 years, said the African bishops “have not come up with a strategy to clearly and incisively present in Rome [their] priorities.”

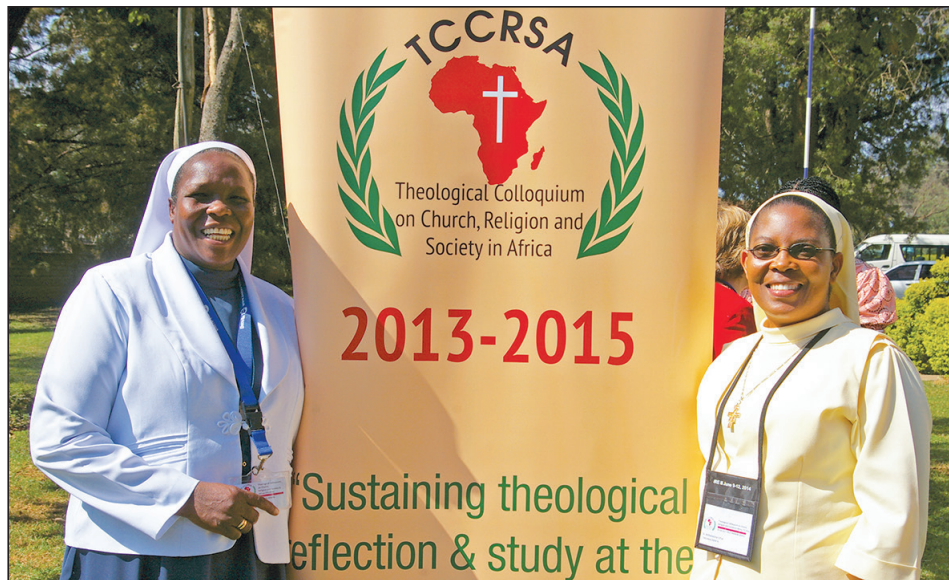
“Unlike other continents, which plan together and then come with clear priorities, our African interventions are often scattered and not planned together,” he said.

Barbara, whose Malindi diocese sits some 300 miles east of Nairobi on the Indian Ocean, focused his remarks on speaking for African Catholics struggling to live in both their traditional and Christian cultures.

The bishop said he constantly hears from Catholics in his diocese who feel “they are not living totally as Africans because they became Christians.”

Barbara also identified two specific proposals he said he had asked bishops at October’s synod to consider, writing to the Vatican synod office with suggestions: creation of a more gradual form of consent for marriage, and more extensive preparation courses for couples considering marriage.

On the first issue, the Kenyan bishop said traditional African marriages normally involved much



— NCR photos/Joshua J. McElwee

Assumption Sr. Veronica Rop of Kenya and Sr. Wilhelmina Uhai, a member of the Little Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in Tanzania, are seen at the Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion, and Society in Africa at Hekima University College in Nairobi July 17.



Emmanuel Katongole

more than the simple “Yes, I do” that provides for consent between married couples in Christian marriages. In the past, he said, consent between couples was even made over years — as the couples lived with one another, and their families came to be

gradually meshed together.

“Can we still today speak of a universal form of marriage where the only consent — ‘Yes, I do,’ coming from a Latin, German culture — will be sufficient to sanction a marriage?” Barbara asked.

“In the African context, it used to take stages,” he said. “There used to be involved both families before the marriage will come to be something. Is it enough today still to insist in our own culture, in our environment in Africa, that it is enough that you go in front of the priest or the minister and say, ‘Yes, I do?’”

The Kenyan bishop also said that church teaching on contraception and fertility focuses too specifically on defining sinful behavior.

“It is too simplistic to speak that our African Christian couples can only be taught about the good or negative

effects of contraception, infertility, or fertility under just the category of what is sinful or not,” said Barbara. “It is too simplistic for a culture where fertility is one of the most important elements in marriage.”

The Ugandan theologian, Katongole, presented seven social challenges he said face African churches and “press for fresh theological imaginations of what the church in Africa need to be, ought to be, and how it can respond to these challenges.”

Identifying sub-Saharan Africa as having the fastest-growing population in the world, the Notre Dame professor cited statistics that more than 50 percent of youth there are illiterate and unemployed.

“This will press the church in Africa,” said Katongole. “What kind of church will we have? I think in responding to this challenge, the African church will find herself drawing more on the ecclesiological vision of Pope Francis, of the church of the poor for the poor.”

‘Big man’ leadership

But the theologian also said that one of the key problems facing the church in Africa is a tendency to mirror in its structures a type of leadership popular in African governments, where one key figure exercises power as a “big man” or a “boss.”

“Church leadership, unfortunately, has by and large both mirrored and radiated the same style of leadership, where the bishop and to lesser extent the priest exercises chief and unquestionable lordship over those they lead,” said Katongole. “Accordingly, church institutions are characterized by the same and in some cases even worse forms of corruption and opacity.”

The theologian called on bishops

Continued on Page 18

where children can come for free and cooperated with some organizations to open a charitable clinic for the IDPs. And we have just got a license to open a primary school, also for free; we rented a place and hope it will be for the benefit of the IDPs. The aim of this is to show the IDPs the loving care of the church.

Having said that, we have to admit that work with and for the IDPs was not always manageable. There were some challenges that really burdened our mission. There are so many IDPs that sometimes we feel as if our work is inconsequential. Also, we were not prepared for this kind of work, nor have we skills to deal with it. Most shocking was the unexpected death of 10 sisters (most of them were in their 70s) in a very short period of time (three months).

Despite that, our ministry continues to be strengthened by the Lord, who blesses our efforts no matter how modest they are. Being occupied with such projects, we do not forget our mission to preach the word of God for our troubled people. Since winter, some of

Dominican Sisters from the United States and Iraq visit a makeshift shelter for refugees in an Erbil retail mall in January.



—Courtesy of Dominican Sisters

our sisters have been preparing 400 children for first Communion in six groups. The last first Communion celebration was on July 12. Moreover, the sisters will start preparing another 100 children for first Communion in towns and villages in Erbil and Duhok.

Additionally, sisters continue to go to the IDPs camps to minister: give talks, form groups of young people to have different spiritual exercises, pray with them and

arrange Masses. (We still remember vividly the first Mass two of our sisters attended at one of the IDPs camps when they had no altar; they used a desk, and one of the sisters laid her scapular on it as an altar cover.) The main aim of our work is to make sure that IDPs know that they are not ignored or abandoned by the local church.

Thank God, we have just had our annual retreat conducted by Dominican Fr. If-

ram Saqat, who is a biblical scholar and a psychologist. This helped us to make an interior journey and to recognize kindness, mercy and compassion in ourselves and others through forgiveness and reconciliation. We were 68 sisters. They were very blessed days. Hopefully, it will be for the benefit of each sister.

Now, as IDPs, and with the rest of our people, we do face everyday challenges. We won-

der how long this will last. Our hearts are filled with sadness and overwhelming grief. We wait but we get nothing; we think but do not understand. What is next? No one knows. Where are we going? Everyone is lost. Yes, we do have shelter but our hearts are anxious and the relationships are truly troubled and the reality is bitter.

Most elites have already left, and many are thinking of leaving the country because of the unhealthy conditions in which they live. Hundreds of IDPs are living in small, dark and damp caravans (cubicles). With the help of Pontifical Mission and L’oeuvre d’Orient, we are working to provide apartments for the IDPs. There is an unfinished building of five floors; we thought of building 146 apartments on the second and third floors. We depend on people of goodwill who help the IDPs live with dignity and hope.

We ask you to continue to pray for us. And thank you for being with us over the past 12 months.

Catholic moral theologians scan Asian reality

By JOSE KAVI

BANGALORE, INDIA · The first pan-Asian conference of Catholic moral theologians convened here last month to seek ethical responses to the region's fundamental issues and to help the church exist as a minority group in a multicultural and multireligious environment.

During the four-day conference, which concluded July 20, about 50 theologians presented scholarly papers dissecting the current scenario in the region, which accounts for half the world's population.

The conference, called "Doing Catholic Theological Ethics in a Cross-Cultural and Interreligious Asian Context," drew 95 moral theologians from around the world as well as some 300 seminarians and their professors.

Boosting their morale on the concluding day, Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila disclosed that Pope Francis sees the future of the church in Asia. The 58-year-old cardinal said the pope made the comments when they were discussing Tagle's recent appointments to international church bodies.

Since March, Pope Francis has approved Tagle's election of as president of the Catholic Biblical Federation and president of Caritas Internationalis, the first Asian to hold the post.

Tagle, who addressed the conference on "Church and leadership in cross-cultural and interfaith Asian context," noted that the church is moving toward regions such as Africa, Asia and Oceania. The audience began to applaud the remarks, but Tagle cautioned them.

"Places of deep suffering and pain have become the center of gravity of the church life and for reflection," he added.

"Please do not clap," he said. The papal expectation for Asian churches "is not a matter of honor. It is a great responsibility, a great mission, for us."

Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay had expressed the same sentiment earlier, when he requested the theologians help the church in Asia to find answers to the socioeconomic, religious and moral issues confronting the region. The 70-year-old cardinal, who led the Mass on July 18, reiterated the need to engage in a "threefold dialogue" promoted by the Federation of

Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC).

Gracias, FABC president and one of the eight cardinals who advise the pope on the management of the universal church, asserted that dialogue with Asia's poor, cultures and religions will help the church discover its identity and forge bonds of unity and build community in the Asian context.

Such a dialogue would force the church to confront the region's complex issues and problems like sexual violence against women, forced migration, religious fundamentalism, threats to democracy, fertility tourism, and land grabbing by corporate houses.

The theologians scrutinized all this and other related matters through 14 papers presented at plenary and 36 papers at concurrent sessions.

Redemptorist Fr. Vimal Tirimanna, who teaches theology at colleges in Sri Lanka and Rome, reminded attendees that the FABC has tried to teach how to live Christian life in the region since the federation was formed in 1972.

The Sri Lankan theologian, in his keynote address, regretted that most Asian theologians have failed to take FABC indications seriously and continue to walk along "the beaten track of the classical Western moral theology."

"This is obvious if one were to glance through the syllabuses of Asian seminaries and other theological institutes where moral theology is taught and studied," he said. "Even in their writings, the majority of Asian moral theologians seem to be locked inside the Western classical framework of moral theology."

The "classical European theology," he explained, perceives faith as a body of truths and dogmas and uses philosophy to explain them. Asian theology, on the other hand, starts with experience of the faith and analyzes concrete situations with the help of sociology, psychology and anthropology, along with Asian resources.

What matters to the bishops in Asia, Tirimanna said, is the daily experiences of their people rather than "purely abstract theological concepts."

Tirimanna expressed the hope that moral theologians in Asia would work toward a genuinely Asian moral theology that tries to understand farmers' suicide, starvation deaths, pollution,

and gang war killings while studying life issues.

Interfaith marriages are an "unavoidable reality" in multireligious Asia, posing both opportunities and challenges for evangelization in the region, he said. He wants theologians to help the church find "pastoral ways to protect the faith" of Asian Catholics who enter into such marriages.

The same idea cropped up when a Missionaries of Precious Blood priest from India spoke on interfaith marriages at a concurrent session. Fr. Maria Michael Peters noted an increase in marriages between Catholics and persons of other faiths in Asia, but little has been done to provide pasto-

'Places of deep suffering and pain have become the center of gravity of the church life and for reflection.'

—Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

ral care to couples who married under disparity of cult dispensation, he said.

The conference was organized by the association Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church and its Asian Regional Committee, along with the management of the venue Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (garden of virtues knowledge temple), a pontifical athenaeum for philosophy, theology and canon law.

Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore, who opened the conference, said that in the contemporary world, theology must be studied and applied in a cross-cultural and interreligious way. In the Asian context, that is an imperative, not an option, he said.

Fr. James Keenan, an American Jesuit and chief organizer, told *NCR* that the conference was part of preparation for the Third International Cross-cultural Conference for Catholic Theological Ethicists in 2018.

Keenan stepped into the job after Jesuit Fr. Lucas Chan of Hong Kong died of cardiac arrest May 19 at Marquette University in Milwaukee, where he was teaching. "Lucas had done everything for this conference," Keenan added.

Fellow theologians' love and respect for the 46-year-old was seen at a memo-

rial for him held July 18. His companions shared how he had meticulously planned the first meeting of moral theologians. He became the first Chinese Jesuit to work outside the province when he was assigned to Cambodia.

Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church announced the launch of a new book series in Chan's honor, *Asian Theological Ethics*, as well as a scholarship in his name for doctoral studies in biblical ethics at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram.

Kristine Heyer, a theology professor from the U.S. and a planning committee member, said Chan wanted younger scholars to attend the conference. The majority of the participants were below 50, she noted.

Keenan, who teaches at Boston College, said the conference was part of Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church's overall vision of linking theologians to one another. He said the association had a similar meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2012 for Africans and another one in Krakow, Poland, in 2014 for Europeans.

"Our strongest networks are in Asia and the U.S. We feel confident in Asia," he added.

While the Nairobi conference was mainly to welcome eight women who were studying for their doctorate in moral theology sponsored by the theological group, the Cracow meeting tried to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western Europeans.

"In Asia, we do not have to bridge gaps," Keenan said.

"There is a pan-Asian identity now. A Vietnamese would say he is both Vietnamese and Asian. There is a growing fascination for what is happening in other countries," he added.

Fr. Maurice Nyunt, the lone participant from Myanmar, said he was happy the conference had expressed the universality of the Catholic church.

Nyunt, executive secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, told *NCR* that the meeting addressed social and environmental problems that were common in most Asian countries. The biggest problem in his country, he added, was deforestation, which has filled rivers with mud, causing floods and innumerable suffering for the people.

His concern, he said, is how the conference discussions would reach people at the grassroots.

[Jose Kavi is the editor-in-chief of Matters India, a news portal started in March 2013 to focus on religious and social issues in India. This article is part of a collaboration between *NCR's* Global Sisters Report and Matters India.]

AFRICAN: 'PUSH THE BOUNDARIES'

Continued from Page 17

"to recover a vision of the church" grounded by Jesus' call to be servants.

Kenyan theologian Philomena Mwaura identified violence against women and lack of stable fathers in African countries as issues the October synod should discuss.

Mwaura, an associate professor at Kenya's public Kenyatta University, said there is a "crisis" in fatherhood on her continent, citing figures that only 3 percent of Africans say they have a good relationship with their fathers.

"The challenge in the modern African family today is the presence of fa-

thers," she said. "Boys do not have mentors; they do not have role models."

The Nairobi event was convened by Hekima University College's principal, Jesuit Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator. A Nigerian native who recently finished a term as the provincial of his order's East Africa province, Orobator arranged the three years of the theological conferences with distinct themes.

This year's theme was: "An Agenda for Vatican III: Ideas, Issues, and Resources from Africa for the World Church." Besides the family synod, other sessions also focused on ecological issues, religious violence, and the so-called pressing moral issues across the continent.

This year's event was also marked by an unusual amount of open dia-

logue for a theological conference. Presentations were limited to 10 minutes so that participants could spend time discussing ideas together.

During an opening conversational session July 16, participants roundly praised the three-year cycle, saying it had allowed them to expand their horizons by learning about the diverse range of experiences across their continent.

Kambanda, the Rwandan bishop, mentioned that he was appointed to his ministry two years ago and found his participation in the colloquia timely.

"It was providential for me as a new bishop in the diocese," he said, adding that he had just helped launch the process to create a new pastoral plan for his diocese in southeastern Rwanda.

"Here, I learned practical theology," said Kambanda. "Theology in practice, which inspired me in this pastoral plan."

Dowling, the South African bishop, said he knew that many theologians face difficulties in their work with the leadership in their dioceses.

"You face systemic challenges in the church and I'm very conscious of those," he told the group. "It's very important that you know that some of us in leadership not only love you but fully support you."

"Your role and calling is to push the boundaries, however difficult that may be," Dowling said.

[Joshua J. McElwee is *NCR* Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org.]



WORLD NEWS

CLIMATE

Get the deal done in Paris, urge bishops around the globe

PAGE 5



SPECIAL SECTION

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Freshmen and faith; immigrant students; sustainability

PAGES 1a-12a

BOOKS



MURDER AND FORGIVENESS

Author makes peace with sister's killer

PAGE 21

COLUMN

BRITISH TV

Shows to give your Netflix account a workout

PAGE 23

What's happening after coal?

By BRIAN ROEWE



—AP Photo/David Goldman

Above: In October, 2014, coal miners return after working a shift underground at the Perkins Branch Coal Mine in Cumberland, Ky.



Right: A mountaintop removal coal mine on Kayford Mountain, south of Charleston, W.Va.

—CNS/Tyler Orsburn

As visitors enter West Virginia, billboards present the Mountain State as a region filled with real, authentic experiences. Real adventure? Check. Real relaxing? Check. Real excitement? Check. To Jesuit Fr. Brian O'Donnell of Wheeling in the northern panhandle, the tourism campaign asks simply, "Which West Virginia do you want?"

That same question could apply just as easily to the people of the state. There is a land enriched with miles of coal seams but one in the midst of grappling with a changing global energy economy and worldwide questioning the efficacy and ethics of burning fossil fuels.

The reality of life without coal has become a pressing issue and is overdue for real discussion, said O'Donnell, executive secretary for the Catholic Conference of West Virginia. While the state's northern and central regions are more diversified and stable, its southern portion remains primarily reliant, economically and culturally, on its coalfields.

"The curious case of southern West Virginia is a conversation about what's happening after coal?" O'Donnell said. "Well, you don't begin it by averting to climate change, you begin by talking about, what's the reality about the coal industry in

Continued on Page 9

Synod puts forth new paths for the divorced

By JOSHUA J. McELWEE

VATICAN CITY · Three weeks of intense and sometimes publicly heated debates. One year of preparation, involving the considerations of the entire global church. A year before that of even more preparation for the two-week pre-meeting of sorts.

And on Oct. 24, the 2015 Synod of Bishops ended by doing something many had come to think might be im-

possible, even with all the prep time: asking for a softening of the Catholic church's practice toward those who have divorced and remarried.

Some 270 prelates approved — by two-thirds majority — new language for consideration by Pope Francis that says persons who have remarried should discern decisions about their spiritual lives individually in concert with the guidance of priests.

The pope himself put a point on the

matter, closing the Oct. 4-25 meeting with a strong renewal of his continual emphasis of the boundless nature of divine mercy, saying, "The church's first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy."

Although the final document from the synod says discernment for re-

Continued on Page 6



—AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes

Plaintiff Lee Bashforth holds a photo of himself outside Los Angeles Superior Court on July 16, 2007, the day that the Los Angeles archdiocese and attorneys for more than 500 victims of clergy sex abuse arrived at a \$660 million settlement.

NCR research: Costs of sex abuse crisis to US church underestimated

By JACK RUHL and DIANE RUHL

The U.S. Catholic church has incurred nearly \$4 billion in costs related to the priest sex abuse crisis during the past 65 years, according to an extensive NCR investigation of media reports, databases and church documents.

In addition, separate research recently published calculates that other scandal-related consequences such as lost membership and diverted giving has cost the church more than \$2.3 billion annually for the past 30 years. (See story on Page 15.)

Between 1950 and August of this year, the church has paid out \$3,994,797,060.10, NCR found.

That figure is based on a three-month investigation of data, including a review of more than 7,800 articles gleaned from LexisNexis Academic and NCR databases, as well as information from **BishopAccountability.org** and from reports from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Up until now, "nearly \$3 billion" has been the most widely cited figure by media, academics and activists for the cost to the U.S. church

Continued on Page 15

This issue was mailed on Oct. 30.

A mother holds her child as she observes a session of the Synod of Bishops on the family at the Vatican Oct. 24.



—CNS/Paul Haring

SYNOD: DOCUMENT LACKS SPECIFICITY

Continued from Page 1

married persons can “never overlook the demands of truth and love in the Gospel,” it seems to significantly move decision-making for how they can participate in the church to private conversations in dioceses around the world.

Suggesting use of what is called the “internal forum,” the document says priests can help remarried Catholics “in becoming conscious of their situation before God” and deciding how to move forward.

“The conversation with the priest, in internal forum, contributes to the formation of a correct decision on what is blocking the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the church and on steps that might foster it and make it grow,” states the document.

“For this to happen, the necessary conditions should be guaranteed of humility, discretion, and love of the Church and its teachings in the sincere seeking of the will of God and in the wish to give a more perfect response to it,” the document continues.

While the words in the document lack specificity, they may signify a notable shift in the church’s practice that divorced and remarried persons cannot take Communion without receiving annulments of their first marriages.

Also notable is that the words *Com-*

munion and *Eucharist* do not appear in the paragraphs, allowing interpretation of the meaning and a possible opening for Francis to make more specific decisions in the future.

It is also significant that the paragraphs faced opposition in the voting on the document, reflecting that a group of bishops would have preferred no change in current practice toward the divorced and remarried.

Catholic teaching says that acts of governance in the church can take place either in an internal or external forum. The internal forum is the forum of conscience, where a decision is made in private counseling with a priest without a formal decree or any sort of publicity.

The Oct. 24 final document from the Synod of Bishops is the fruit of three weeks of intense and sometimes heated deliberations among the global prelates, who were called to Rome by the pope to consider issues of family life.

The gathering followed a worldwide consultation conducted by the Vatican’s office for the synod that saw a questionnaire distributed to dioceses around the world, and an earlier synod held from Oct. 5-19, 2014, that discussed similar issues.

The softening on church teaching

‘The synod is a moment. We are in a process. If you see what has happened in our church in the last two years since Pope Francis has been elected, this really is an ongoing process.’

—Bishop Johan Bonny

toward remarried persons was so contentious at the 2015 gathering that one of the drafters of the synod’s final document told *NCR* the day before its approval that the matter would not even be put up for consideration.

“I don’t think we’re ready as yet,” Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay, India, said Oct. 23, referring to the possibility that the internal forum would be mentioned in the document. “The matter has not been sufficiently analyzed in depth. We all know, all the bishops know, that this is a possibility. But we’ve never focused on that.”

Gracias, one of 10 bishops appointed by Francis to help draft the document, added, “I don’t think we’re ready yet to have a consensus on this matter, and it would be not good to have the synod divided on this matter at the moment.”

A day later, the synod bishops voted on the document in their last session of the gathering, giving each paragraph a simple yes or no vote. And the assembly adopted each of the 94 paragraphs with the required two-thirds vote: 177 bishops of the 265 present for the voting.

The three paragraphs dealing with issues relating to divorced and remarried Catholics were closest in the voting, receiving, respectively, 187, 178 and

190 votes.

The middle paragraph, which received the most no votes of any paragraph in the document at 80, states that decisions on what action to take about divorced and remarried persons will not always be the same in every case.

“It is necessary to recognize that the responsibility with respect to determinative actions or decisions is not the same in all cases,” states that paragraph.

“The pastoral discernment, surely taking into account the righteously formed conscience of persons, must make itself aware of these situations,” it states. “The consequences of the acts done are also not necessarily the same in all cases.”

Laws and love

Francis concluded the synod after the voting Oct. 24 with remarks that spoke about the journey the bishops had traversed in their days together, and emphasized anew his call for prelates to refrain from being “doctors of the law.”

“The synod experience ... made us better realize that the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold

Continued on Page 8

MORE NEWS FROM THE SYNOD



—CNS/Paul Haring

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, Quebec, said the Synod of Bishops should

reflect on the possibility of allowing for female deacons as it seeks ways to open up more opportunities for women in church life. “We should really start looking seriously at the possibility of ordaining women deacons because the diaconate in the church’s tradition has been defined as not being ordered toward priesthood but toward ministry,” he said. The full story is online at NCRonline.org/node/111901.

Missionary Sr. Carmen Sammut said the synod is so much more diverse than the simple conservative-versus-progressive narrative often described in the media. “One of the things I appreciate very much being in the synod is the universality — the whole world is



—NCR photo/Tom Fox

Sr. Carmen Sammut

there,” said Sammut. “The groups are made up to have very big differences, to have very different backgrounds.” Sammut is one of just 13 unmarried women invited to participate as auditors. “I know that there are only three women religious, so whenever I feel I should say something, I do, but it’s very limited,” she

said. Read the full story at GlobalSistersReport.org/node/32441.

The discussions at the synod have shown a difference in the mindsets between the prelates and ordinary Catholics. U.S. Sacred



—Courtesy of UISG

Sr. Maureen Kelleher and Pope Francis

Heart of Mary Sr. Maureen Kelleher, one of 30 non-voting women auditors, said she has faced some difficulty talking with the bishops in the small group. “It’s very clear that I’m not speaking with one iota of formation on some of the teachings that have formed these men in the seminary,” said Kelleher. “Some of it is ‘Oh, here comes the bleeding heart. Well, she’s a woman what else would you expect?’ kind of thing.” Read the full interview at NCRonline.org/node/112621.

Intrigue surrounding the synod reached a high when a letter criticizing the synod process surfaced Oct. 12. The letter was addressed to Pope Francis and signed by 13 cardinals. Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of Durban, South Africa, told reporters at a briefing that Francis’ response to the letter

SYNOD: 'THE WEIGHT OF EACH ARGUMENT'

Continued from Page 6

its letter; but its spirit; not ideas but people; not formulae but the gratuitousness of God's love and forgiveness," he told the bishops.

"This is in no way to detract from the importance of formulae, laws and divine commandments, but rather to exalt the greatness of the true God, who does not treat us according to our merits or even according to our works but solely according to the boundless generosity of his mercy," Francis said.

The contested paragraph in the final document on remarried persons that received 178 votes also quotes at length Pope John Paul II's 1981 apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, saying that document means it is "the work of priests to accompany interested persons in the way of discernment according to the teaching of the Church and the directions of the Bishop."

The synod document proposes that divorced and remarried persons make an examination of conscience, asking how they have treated any children they may have had in their first marriages, if they attempted to reconcile with their partners, and what example they are giving to young people preparing for marriage.

"A sincere reflection can reinforce the truth in the mercy of God that is not denied to anyone," it states.

An earlier paragraph calls for the integration of divorced and remarried persons into the church community, but states such inclusion must be made "avoiding every occasion of scandal."

"They are baptized, they are brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit pours out in them gifts and charisms for the good of all," states that paragraph of remarried persons. "Their participation can express itself in various ecclesial needs."

"This integration is necessary surely for the care and Christian education of their children, who must be considered the most important," it continues. "For the Christian community, taking care of these persons is not a weakness of our faith and of our witness regarding the indissolubility of marriage; in fact, the church expresses exactly in this care its love."

Francis said in his remarks that the three-week synod "was about bearing witness to everyone that, for the church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would 'indoctrinate' it in dead stones to be hurled at others."

"It was also about laying bare the closed hearts which frequently hide even behind the church's teachings or good intentions, in order to sit in the chair of Moses and judge, sometimes with superiority and superficiality, difficult cases and wounded families," the pope said.

"It was about trying to open up broader horizons, rising above the hermeneutic of conspiracy or closed viewpoints, so as to defend and spread the freedom of the children of God, and to transmit the beauty of Christian newness, at times encrusted in a language which is archaic or simply incomprehensible," he continued.

The final synod document is about 66 pages long and touches on many issues facing families around the world. It is addressed specifically to Francis, with the bishops writing that they are giving it to him and "asking humbly" that he consider writing a document of his own about the family.

While the Vatican published the pope's remarks Oct. 24 in four languages, the final synod document was, at press time, still available only in Italian.

Consensus-building

Release of the final document comes after a gathering that was unusually contentious, even seeing publishing of a private letter written by 13 cardinals to Francis who told him the meeting seemed "designed to facilitate predetermined results on important disputed questions."

Washington Cardinal Donald Wuerl strongly rebutted claims of manipulation at the synod in an *NCR* interview Oct. 18, saying the process for the event took "extraordinary efforts to arrive at a consensus."

"I don't know how you would be unhappy with the process if you're really looking at consensus-building," said Wuerl, who was also a member of the final document drafting committee.

Francis seemed to refer to the contentiousness of the meeting in his closing speech Oct. 24, saying that during the synod different opinions were expressed freely and "at times, unfortunately, not in entirely well-meaning ways."

The synod's final document speaks about gay persons in one paragraph, repeating church statements that persons with "homosexual tendencies" should be "respected in their dignity and received with respect, with care to avoid 'every type of unjust discrimination.'"

The document, however, also criticizes international organizations that condition financial aid to developing countries on the institution of same-sex marriage laws.

The document also touches upon church teaching on artificial contraception, quoting Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that prohibited the practice. But the synod document also calls for a "consensual dialogue" between spouses when considering children.

The document also speaks of making decisions about having children after reflecting on what one is hearing in conscience. It quotes the Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* to say: "The responsible choice of procreation presumes the formation of conscience, which is 'the most secret core and sanctuary of a man where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths.'"

The synod document calls for development of women's roles in the church, putting that call in the context of violence against women in some countries and continuing gender inequality.

"A better appreciation of their responsibility in the church can contribute to the social recognizing of their



—CNS/Paul Haring

Pope Francis holds his crosier as he celebrates the closing Mass of the Synod of Bishops on the family in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 25.

decisive role," it states, suggesting women could participate in church decision-making, "in the governance of some institutions," and in the formation of priests.

Several synod prelates have said they expect Francis to develop themes of the gathering in his own document sometime in the future.

Cardinal Gérald Lacroix of Quebec said at a press briefing Oct. 23 that the pope has been listening closely to the arguments of the bishops during the three weeks of the gathering.

"He knows the accents, the difficult points," said Lacroix. "We may not have a consensus on everything, but he knows the weight of each argument."

Belgian Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp said at a separate briefing Oct. 23 that the synod's final document

opens a "pastoral window."

"The synod is a moment," said Bonny. "We are in a process. If you see what has happened in our church in the last two years since Pope Francis has been elected, this really is an ongoing process."

"People do not expect us to resolve all questions in one moment, but they want the church to travel with them, to listen to them," he said.

A sign perhaps that — even after years of preparation for two back-to-back synods — Francis' work of "journeying together" with his bishops and the wider church will, as ever, continue.

[Joshua J. McElwee is *NCR* Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org.]

Seeking Persons Trained in Intercultural Work

INTERCULTURAL CONSULTATION SERVICES (ICS) IS EXPANDING ITS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS AND IS SEEKING PERSONS WITH CULTURAL COMPETENCY TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY AND CREATIVELY AS:

- EXECUTIVE/OPERATIONAL DIRECTOR, AN 80% POSITION; AND
- ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS IN PROGRAM WORK, 3 TO 4 PART TIME POSITIONS.

Position descriptions and requisites can be accessed at: www.interculturalconsultation.com. See Opportunities.

Information can be requested at info@interculturalconsultation.com

RECEIVING APPLICATIONS UNTIL POSITIONS FILL. INTERVIEWS WILL BEGIN ON NOV. 16, 2015.



PHONE: 313.341.4841

8531 West McNichols Road • Detroit MI 48221

www.interculturalconsultation.com

email: ktierce@interculturalconsultation.com

Connecting
people of faith
to church and the
common good
since 1964.



NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER

THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

Subscribe today!

NCRonline.org/subscribe
Call us at 1-800-333-7373

50 & FORWARD
Celebrating 50 years of NCR