

FAITH

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BELIEF by Jacqueline Herrera

Spiritual practices can help grieving children

For many of us, including children, current events can incite overwhelming emotion. From the war in Ukraine to the shooting in Uvalde, it can feel as though



Herrera

we are constantly faced with acts of violence and tragic loss. Children are naturally curious and may want to understand what is happening in their world. They may experience confusion, pain, anger, sadness and fear. Many profound and complicated questions arise, and one's spirituality can be a powerful source of support. Hope, faith and belief are protective factors associated with resilience in children.

When I speak of spirituality, I lean on the definition of researcher Lisa Miller, founder of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute at Columbia University: "Spirituality is an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding. The word we give to this higher power might be God, nature, spirit, the universe, the creator, or other words representing a divine presence. But the important point is that spirituality encompasses our relationship and dialogue with this higher presence."

Children thrive in loving relationships, and their relationship with a divine presence, faith and belief are protective factors associated with resilience in children. Mourning and grief look different for each child. It is a personal process that is not linear. Some children may express pain through crying, anger, withdrawing or acting out. Children must have adults to listen, provide a safe environment and encourage exploration of their grief and loss. This can look like sitting with a child in their pain or helping them label their feelings. Many children (and adults) may question their spirituality; they may blame or be angry at God. Providing space for their anger increases their sense of safety and validates their experience and feelings — and is necessary for them to make meaning of what has happened.

I was once working with a school-aged child whose family sought therapy to help her process previous traumatic events. Unfortunately, during treatment, she experienced further loss. Her parent died from COVID-19, and shortly after, a close family member was diagnosed with a terminal illness. In one session, during a

Children continues on F2

Vatican names 3 women to office that vets bishop nominations

Move aims to break up the all-male clerical hierarchy of the Holy See

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME — Pope Francis on Wednesday named three women to serve as members of the Vatican office that vets bishop nominations, in another first for women to have a say in Catholic Church governance.

The Dicastery for Bishops oversees the work of most of the church's 5,300 bishops, who run dioceses around the world. The dicastery's members, who include cardinals, bishops and now women, meet periodically to evaluate proposed new bishops whose names are forwarded by Vatican ambassadors. The ambassadors usually come up with three candidates for each opening after consulting with local church members.

The pope still makes the final call and can bypass candidates proposed by his ambassadors and then vetted by the dicastery. But the addition of women into the consultation process is nevertheless significant and a response to calls to break up the all-male clerical hierarchy of the Holy See and demands that women have a greater say in church decision-making.

The new members are Sister Raffaella Petrini, who already holds a high-ranking



Andrew Medichini/Associated Press

Pope Francis, shown at his weekly general audience on June 22, named two nuns and a laywoman Wednesday to serve in the Vatican office that vets bishop nominations.

Vatican position as the secretary general of the Vatican City State, which runs the Vatican Museums and other administrative parts of the territory.

Also named was Sister Yvonne Reungoat, former superior general of the Daugh-

ters of Mary the Helper, a religious order also known as the Salesian Sisters; as well as a laywoman, Maria Lia Zervino, president of a Catholic women's umbrella group, the World Union of Female Catholic Organizations.

Church doctrine reserves

the priesthood for men, given Christ's apostles were male. Women have often complained they have a second-class status in the church, even though they do the lion's share of its work running schools, hospitals and passing the faith from generation to generation.

Inflation boosts demand at food banks as pandemic anti-hunger measures fall away

By Haley Barker, Riley Farrell and Marika Proctor
RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

At the Seven Loaves Food Pantry at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church in Plano, volunteers have been serving 800 to 1,200 families a week since the pandemic began — about four times the weekly traffic in 2019.

At the ICNA Relief Food Pantry in Raytown, Mo., just east of Kansas City, 100 new families have registered to receive the Muslim-led organization's services in just the past month.

"We are busier than ever right now," said Shannon Cameron, executive director of the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry in Aurora, Ill., where, after a slight dip around tax return season, between 30 and 60 new families are registering every week.

The inflation that has loomed over the economy and restricted many Americans' purchasing power of late has doubly affected low-income people who already struggle to get by. A recent survey by the anti-hunger organization Feeding America has shown that increased demand has affected nearly 80 percent of U.S. food banks, as higher prices cause more families to seek assistance.



Rick Bowmer/Associated Press file photo

A Utah Food Bank volunteer loads groceries on May 13 in Salt Lake City. Groups nationwide are seeing supply chain issues.

And while President Joe Biden recently signed the Keep Kids Fed Act, extending free meal programs for schoolchildren, many stopgaps funded during the pandemic have ended or are only available in some states.

"For the households that were already food insecure in 2020, nearly half of those reported using a food pantry," said Jordan Teague, interim director for policy analysis and coalition building at Bread for the World. "Now, more people are facing the crisis. We're all sort of feeling that pinch, and government programs are coming to an end."

Since the 1980s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has donated surplus commodities it buys to stabilize farm prices to

the Charitable Food Assistance System, a network of food banks. For four years, the Trump administration bolstered the program to offset the cost of its tariff increases, raising the share of the USDA's contributions to as much as 15 percent of some food banks' supplies. Those resources, too, have now trailed off.

"We saw a real increase even before the pandemic hit in those USDA commodities and, obviously, during the pandemic, USDA made more commodities available as well," said Celia Cole, CEO of Feeding Texas, a faith-based food security organization based in Austin. "Now, without them, we're seeing a drop-off."

Food banks are looking more than ever to make up the gaps

with private monetary donations and government financial assistance. "For every dollar donated to a food bank, we can stretch it to four meals," said Cole. "We encourage people to be educated with their elected officials in support of hunger-fighting programs like SNAP and the Child Nutrition Programs."

High gas prices have added further strain on local food pantries, causing delays in the transport of food from farm to market, and from market to food banks.

"We own a fleet of semis," said Mike Hoffman, inventory and logistics director at Midwest Food Bank, a Christian charity that supplies more than 2,000 churches, nonprofits and community centers across the country. "Fuel prices have taken a toll. We've gone through our entire year's fuel budget in the first five months."

The same supply chain problems, including a lack of available truck drivers, that have beset the economy apply to fighting hunger. Barbara Wojtkiewicz, part of the leadership team that runs the food pantry at Christ Church in Plymouth, Mass., said staff at the Greater Boston Food Bank, a regional network of 600 distributors, have reported driver shortages recently.

Food continues on F2

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