News



Paulist Fr. Michael Evernden speaks online with Karen Hopkins during a February session of "B- Catholics," his internet ministry for "drifting Catholics." (Photo by Christina Gray/Catholic San Francisco)



by Dan Morris-Young

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The Seattle archdiocese's annual Inclusion Ministry Mass & Dance for persons with special needs and their families and friends will be celebrated at 11 a.m. April 21 in St. James Cathedral. Archbishop Peter Sartain will be the mass celebrant. O'Dea High School will host the reception and dance on site. The archdiocesan Office of Discipleship coordinates the event.

Speaking of good things happening in the Northwest, the Seattle archdiocese's director of pastoral care and outreach describes a grassroots, straight-forward ministry for parishes and parishioners to facilitate incarcerated persons' extraordinarily challenging re-entry into community life. Joe Cotton writes that the archdiocese has partnered with Underground Ministries to launch pilot projects at three congregations — one Methodist, one Presbyterian, one Catholic. Each will welcome a newly released person and provide multiple levels of support from housing and financial aid, to employment and healthcare assistance. Cotton says he was struck by a statistic "that, roughly speaking, there are about as many prisoners in Washington state as there are churches."

Affordable housing is not just a challenge for the formerly incarcerated. Operating with support from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative in New Orleans is operating its first permanently affordable four-unit apartment and is working on development of eight more units, reports Catholic News Service observer Dennis Sadowski in an overview of the U.S. affordable housing crisis.



A row of houses is seen boarded up in downtown Washington, D.C. The city, like most urban areas of the country, faces an affordable-housing shortage. (CNS/Tyler Orsburn)

Sadowski notes that Catholic Charities USA also "has made affordable housing one of its top priorities in recent years." The National Low Income Housing Coalition, he adds, "said March 13 in its annual assessment of housing availability that the country is 7.2 million rental units short for extremely low-income (ELI) households. The coalition said there are 35 affordable and available rental units for every 100 U.S. households in need."

Spanish-speaking families in Little Rock, Arkansas, will be encouraged and enabled to enjoy "fun, creative moments with their kids" while also learning how to navigate their children's school system and amplify English language skills through Project LIFT: Literacy Inspiring Family Transformation," reports Arkansas Catholic newspaper. A recent $1,500 grant from Little Rock's Our Lady of the Holy Souls Parish supports the program, which is overseen by the non-profit Literacy Action of Central Arkansas. In the same vein, Little Rock's St. Edward Parish and St. Theresa Parish over recent years have had a total of nearly 650 people go through English as Second Language classes.

"I run into a lot of priests who don't really know what to do with an inactive Catholic," Paulist Fr. Michael Evernden recently told Catholic San Francisco newspaper, adding: "And they don't really know how to bring a non-Catholic into the church either. I don't think they have been trained."

Evernden has.

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A Paulist missionary at San Francisco's Old St. Mary's Cathedral and Chinese Mission in Chinatown, the 70-year-old priest puts that training to use through an internet ministry for "drifting Catholics." An online extension of a project first launched in Portland, Oregon, "B- Catholics" is an any-question-is-OK forum "for people trying to find a way back to the church," reported Christina Gray. The title refers to "B-minus" Catholics seeking a higher grade in knowledge about the church.

Evernden also records a regular podcast, "Moments in Faith, Prayer and Spirituality." Evernden told NCR that persons seeking more information or how to join the "B-Catholics" forum may email him directly at Frmike@paulist.org.

From May 10-18, a cooperative effort of St. Joseph's/Candler health system, Georgia Southern University, and the U.S. Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training program will make free health, dental, vision and veterinary care available to an estimated 6,000-plus persons in southeast Georgia. St. Joseph's/Candler will be among organizations providing follow-up care for "Operation Empower Health — Greater Savannah."

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