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Via Christi Society Fr. Raymond Dzungwenen Tyohemba addresses participants in a June 29 discussion of Christian persecution in Nigeria held at San Francisco's Sts. Peter and Paul Parish. (Courtesy of San Francisco Archdiocese's Office of Human Life and Dignity/Debra Greenblatt)



by Dan Morris-Young

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The pastor of a parish near St. Ignatius Church in Ayar Mbalom in the Nigerian state of Benue, site of the [slaughter](#) of 17 parishioners and two priests April 24, described what he called "Christian genocide" in parts of Africa's most populous nation. In a [panel discussion](#) June 29 in conjunction with the U.S. bishops' week of prayer for religious freedom, Via Christi Society Fr. Raymond Dzungwenen Tyohemba told about 65 persons crowded into the rectory of San Francisco's [Sts. Peter and Paul Parish](#), "Why are they doing it? They want to chase the Christians away." Tyohemba has been in residence the past few months at San Francisco's traditionally African-American parish of [St. Paul of the Shipwreck](#).



Bethany Welch, founding director of the Aquinas Center in South Philadelphia, in the center's garden (CNS/CatholicPhilly.com/Sarah Webb)

More than 200 people were killed in [late-June violence](#) in central Nigeria's Plateau state. On July 2, Nigeria's bishops [issued a statement](#) calling on the president of Nigeria to address persecution of Christians.

[Founded five years ago](#) by parishioners of Philadelphia's [St. Thomas Aquinas Parish](#) in cooperation with nearby social service and educational organizations, [Aquinas Center](#) today operates out of a repurposed convent on the parish campus. It reaches more than 500 children, youth and adults weekly for "activities ranging from encounter experiences to community organizing to immigrant legal services to English classes," reports the ministry's website. Aquinas Center founding executive director Bethany Welch [recently advised](#) a Philadelphia Catholic Social Services gathering that outreach work to the refugee and immigrant communities requires "holy boldness, sacred chaos and grace."

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota, has [filed suit](#) against the diocese itself as the latter's planned bankruptcy moves forward. Catholic Charities is asking the diocese to transfer ownership of a children's home and its assets to the agency.

The impact of the failed federal [family-separation policy](#) at the U.S.-Mexico border has even been [felt in Alaska](#).

Meanwhile, the [Brother Francis Shelter](#) in Kodiak, Alaska, continues its [outreach](#) to the homeless and marginalized, bolstered in large part by efforts of parishioners from [St. Mary's Parish](#) there. [Another Brother Francis Shelter](#) operates in downtown Anchorage, Alaska.

In 2008, parishioners of [Good Shepherd Parish](#) near Cincinnati, founded [Good Shepherd Supports Our Service Members](#), a nonprofit of active outreach to veterans and active military. The parish also fields an impressive variety of [other ministries](#) to those in need.

[Our Lady of the Mountains Parish](#) in scenic Whistler, British Columbia, started as a group who met in a tiny ecumenical A-frame in the 1960s at the world-famous ski resort. Now in its own church, the thriving congregation celebrated its [silver anniversary](#) June 2. Interestingly, there are a number of Catholic communities

named Our Lady of the Mountain(s) in North America, including ones in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Wyoming.



Worshippers attend an anniversary Mass June 2 at Our Lady of the Mountains in Whistler, British Columbia. (CNS/B.C. Catholic/Agnieszka Krawczynski)

Fr. Patrick Beretta, a pastor in Butte, Montana, says that in the current "climate of hyper-partisan rage ... it is the duty of the pastor to preserve the church as a refuge for peace and respect." His [recent op-ed](#) in the Missoulian newspaper was triggered by media coverage of four Montana priests wearing clerics [prominently seated](#) at a President Donald Trump July 5 rally in Great Falls, Montana. "One dives into the sea of incivility at one's own peril," observed Beretta.

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