

# The Catholic Journalist

CATHOLIC MEDIA ASSOCIATION

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## ‘Vaticanista’: Conclaves have changed in 50 years

By **CHRISTOPHER GUNTY**  
For the Catholic Journalist

John Thavis has been in St. Peter's Square for the election of the last four popes, from John Paul I through Francis.

He was a journalist working for an English-language newspaper in Rome, but not covering the Vatican, in 1978 when Pope St. Paul VI died, and Cardinal Albino Luciani was elected and took the name Pope John Paul I.

Likewise, when “the September Pope” died and the Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla — Pope St. John Paul II — was elected.

Thavis was not yet a “Vaticanista,” an expert on all things related to the Holy See, but for both conclaves in 1978, when he heard “white smoke,” he hopped on his bike and headed to the square and got right under the central balcony to watch it all up close — “no problem.”

“Nowadays, you won’t get close. I mean, the square is packed at all times during the conclave. Security, of course, is much tighter. But there’s so many more people; it’s become a global news event in the way that even in 1978, it was not.”

Back then, the crowd was much more local, almost all Romans. They cheered when they heard the name “Albino,” as Papa Luciani was from Venice. But the Romans were confused when they heard the name “Karol Wojtyla” a month later, thinking perhaps the name was African.

“And of course, John Paul II came out and spoke some Italian and made them feel good and everybody was happy,” Thavis recalled April 22, the day after the death of Pope Francis.

Thavis started as a reporter for Catholic News Service in Rome in 1982, becoming bureau chief in 1996.

The first conclave he covered as a



PAUL HARING | CNS

Pope Francis kisses a child while meeting with people with disabilities during his general audience in Paul VI Hall at the Vatican Jan. 20, 2016. Pope Francis, formerly Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, died April 21, 2025, at age 88.

# Regional updates

## Midwest

### Meet the St. Louis Engagement Team

From: Lisa Naeger Shea, director of Community and Media Engagement, Archdiocese of St. Louis

The Engagement Team helps ensure effective communication with all who seek to engage with the Archdiocese of St. Louis through its websites and social media channels; marketing and design services; community and media relations; and other support for archdiocesan offices, ministries, parishes and schools.

The Engagement Team is part of the Office of Communications and works collaboratively with their Publications colleagues, whose primary focus is the *St. Louis Review* weekly newspaper and *Catholic St. Louis* bimonthly magazine.

### Recent initiatives

Under the creative direction of Michaela Beaver, digital communications specialist, the Lenten video series *Feast + Fast*, featuring local priests and religious, resonated with social media followers in St. Louis and as far as Myanmar. Coming in May — Mental Health Awareness Month — is a mental wellness video series featuring subject matter experts affiliated with the archdiocese.

Thomas Berra, marketing and communications specialist, joined in January to help better serve the Office of Education and Formation’s marketing needs. He has already led the creative direction on a multimedia teacher recruitment campaign and is putting the finishing touches on a similar student enrollment campaign.

### We love babies

Two Office of Communications team members became first-time parents this year. Congratulations to:

Lydia (husband, John) Henke, internal communications coordinator, and Abigail (husband, Kevin) Buettner, graphic designer.

### St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minn.

Zach Jansen, digital content producer for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, not only edited the WHAMI invite videos for the 2025 CMC in Phoenix, but also wrote the song heard throughout the videos. “Cross on the Sky” by The Pier, the name of Zach’s music project, is now available to stream on numerous music platforms, including those at [tinyurl.com/crossonthesky](https://tinyurl.com/crossonthesky).

## Western

### Orange, Calif.

The Catholic Diocese of Orange is releasing a new documentary about the Our Lady of La Vang apparition in Vietnam and the landmark shrine made in her honor at Orange’s Christ Cathedral.

The feature-length film “Our Lady at the Center” has been in the works for two years. It was shot in four countries, four languages and features dozens of testimonies. It teaches about Our Lady of La Vang’s story from 1798 in the remote jungles of Vietnam and, how in the centuries since, she has become an icon revered and beloved the world over. It also tells the story of how Christ Cathedral’s Our Lady of La Vang Shrine was made.

Silicon Valley veteran Elysabeth Nguyen, CEO of the OLLV Foundation, is the executive producer alongside Scott Nguyen, an award-winning filmmaker and producer of the film. Christopher TL Tran, who was twice recognized as a top videographer by the Catholic Media Association, is the director of photography.

“Our Lady at the Center” was written and directed by Bradley Zint, the assistant director of communications



COURTESY DIOCESE OF ORANGE

A scene from “Our Lady at the Center” shows a Vietnamese drummer playing at the July 2021 dedication ceremony for the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine in the Diocese of Orange.

at the Diocese of Orange and a former award-winning journalist. It the third documentary in recent years to come from creative teams within the Diocese of Orange.

The film will premiere May 11 on the Christ Cathedral campus, and screenings around the country are being planned. Tickets, trailers and more are available at [Ourladyatthecenter.com](https://Ourladyatthecenter.com).

### Watch the trailer

Go to [youtube.com/watch?v=-49-KNkWbXo](https://youtube.com/watch?v=-49-KNkWbXo).

## Eastern

### Catholic social teaching symposium

From: Bridget Cusick

Jesuit Refugee Services USA, headquartered in Washington, D.C., just wrapped up two major events: a symposium on Catholic social teaching and migration in Washington and an annual Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill and virtually.

The March 24 conference, “Catholic Social Teaching and Work with Migrants and Refugees at a Time of Uncertainty,” was co-sponsored by the Center for Migration Studies of New York. Speakers included Washington Cardinal Robert McElroy and Cardinal Fabio Baggio, undersecretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The advocacy day March 25 gave participants the chance to meet with member of Congress to discuss the future of U.S. immigration and asylum policies and to speak up for refugees and those forcibly displaced.

### And the winner is...

From: Tony Rossi

The Christophers, based in New York City, recently announced winners of its annual Christopher Awards honoring 21 films, TV programs and books. Winners include Steve Guttenberg (author of “Time to Thank”), Ted Danson (producer and lead actor, “A Man on the Inside”), Daisy Ridley (executive producer and lead actor, “Young Woman and the Sea”), and Jonathan Roumie (executive producer, “Heart of a Servant”). The awards celebrate writers, producers, directors, authors and illustrators whose work “affirms the highest values of the human spirit” and reflects the Christopher motto: “It’s better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”

### See the list

Find the winners at [christophers.org/awards](https://christophers.org/awards).



### Hallow bump for Opus Dei book

From: Brian Finnerty

At the start of Lent this year, “The Way,” a collection of points for prayer, written by Opus Dei founder St. Josemaria Escriva in 1934, was ranked on Amazon Charts as being the No. 7 most-sold and -read book of the week.

Finnerty, communications director for Opus Dei, with U.S. headquarters in New York, attributes the book’s rise in popularity from the attention it received from Hallow, the Catholic prayer-meditation app. The app used “The Way” as the theme for its Lent Challenge and released daily audio reflections, typically incorporating quotes or ideas from “The Way” or other writings of St. Josemaria.

The app’s Lent campaign this year also highlighted events from the life of Takashi Nagai, a Japanese doctor and Catholic convert, who survived the Nagasaki atomic bombing. “A Song for Nagasaki” by Paul Glynn, a book about the life of Nagai, also jumped to the best-seller lists after Hallow’s campaign started.

## South

### Condolences for Pope Francis

From: Kerting Baldwin

Provincial minister for the Franciscan Friars of Our Lady of Guadalupe province, Brother Lawrence J. Hayes, shares his words on Pope Francis: “With Catholics, Christians and people of good will worldwide, we join in offering prayers of gratitude for the life and witness of Pope Francis — icon of the compassion of God, defender of migrants and the poor, champion of ecological responsibility, reformer who sought to transform the church into a ‘field hospital’ at the service of the vulnerable at the peripheries, and friend of Christ who longed to “wake up the world” with hope and joy. In faith, we commend Pope Francis to God’s loving embrace. Through the power of the resurrection, may he now enjoy fullness of life with God in the communion of saints. Abide in life, good and faithful servant.”

# The Catholic Journalist

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John Thavis, former Rome bureau chief for Catholic News Service, poses in front of St. Peter's Basilica. A "Vaticanista" and a New York Times bestselling author, Thavis has a popular blog at [johnthavis.com](http://johnthavis.com).

VATICANISTA  
FROM PAGE 1

journalist was in 2005, after the death of Pope John Paul II. It was a challenge for all the reporters, since almost none of them had covered the last conclave 26 years earlier. They learned the rules of the conclave and read the documentation provided by the Vatican press office.

Pope John Paul II had been very good with journalists, even inviting some of them, Thavis included, to write reflections for the Good Friday Stations of the Cross one year. After the pope's death, Thavis was one of a very small group invited to pay his respects during a brief liturgy in the papal apartment where the pontiff's body was laid out in red vestments.

"His head was resting on three gold pillows, and he looked very peaceful. But, you know, he had suffered. He held a rosary in his hand and then in his left arm, he held that silver crosier that he had carried with him all throughout his pontificate, and so I noted all the details," he said.

Since his presence there essentially made him a pool reporter, he shared the details with others, including a reporter for the *New York Times* who called by phone. After Thavis recounted what he had seen, the reporter

rushed off to write his story.

"He wrote that the pope held in the crook of his arm a silver staff called a 'crow's ear,' and it found its way into print in the *New York Times*," Thavis said.

Such misunderstandings highlight the importance of journalists who cover the Catholic Church full time, and therefore know the correct terminology. "To their credit, (the *Times*) issued a correction later, but I always felt, maybe I should have spelled it out."

By that time, Thavis knew enough about the Vatican and the "papabile" — leading candidates for the papacy — to pre-write stories on two of the top contenders.

And while the election of John Paul II was an unknown, Thavis had a story about Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger ready to go with a few minor changes and the push of a button to send it when he came to the balcony as Pope Benedict XVI.

He also had one ready for Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, archbishop of Milan. "Even as I wrote that, I thought no, it's not going to happen. But I'll be prepared just in case. I thought they might turn back to an Italian after 26 years of the so-called 'foreign' pope, but they didn't"

By 2013, Thavis had retired and had come to Rome

to promote his new book, "The Vatican Diaries," stories about the inner workings of the Vatican. The book became an instant New York Times best-seller, in part because of its providential release at a time of papal transition. When Pope Benedict announced his resignation, Thavis worked as a commentator and expert for ABC News during the conclave that followed.

The anchors have script outlines, but their experts need to be ready for anything. Live TV requires filling a lot of time, and during one lull, Diane Sawyer asked him specifically about the number of buttons on the cardinals' cassocks. Fortunately, he was able to quickly relate that the garments have 33 buttons, one to signify each year of Christ's life on earth.

By that time, the Vatican officials in charge of conclaves had worked out a much more reliable system to turn the smoke black or white. When the white smoke announcing a successful election came, Thavis was pleased to hear a name unfamiliar to many but familiar to him — Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio.

"I thought, 'OK, this is good.' Two days earlier I had blogged that he might be the one to watch in this conclave, so I knew who he was. I knew details about his life, and I was able to talk about him."

He thinks the movie "Conclave," which came out in 2024, got some basic things right in terms of the election and the seriousness with which some characters took their decisions. And, since "after all, it's a movie, they exaggerated the politicking that goes on inside the conclave. ... I don't think cardinals are inside making deals like they are in the movies."

In fact, Thavis said, "Trading votes or trading a future office in exchange for support for a candidate is especially prohibited by the Vatican's rules under pain of excommunication."

Having been retired for 12 years, he doesn't expect to go to Rome for the conclave in 2025, as it's time for younger people to take on that role.

"If I don't go, I know I'll miss it and I probably won't enjoy watching it on TV as much as in person," he said.

*Gunty is associate publisher and editor of Catholic Review Media in Baltimore.*

# 5 PR insights from Pope Francis' pontificate

By DANIEL TORCHIA  
For the Catholic Journalist

"(My) word shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it."

This prophetic line from Isaiah 55:11 may prove to be applicable to many of the words and actions of Pope Francis, especially as it relates to the world of communications, media, and journalism. A pope of dialogue, soundbites, in-depth interviews, and vivid actions and imagery, Pope Francis leaves us with a rich legacy of insights as we continue the important work of spreading the good news — while taking stock of the many challenges we can expect along the way.

Like any leader or communications professional working behind the scenes, the Holy Father did not achieve a perfect score in PR, but he clearly did his best, and surely fruits will come from the wins and the losses.

## Top five PR insights:

**Media appreciate a good soundbite**  
In the world of news and social media, short and

punchy digestible content rules. Faced with noise, busy schedules and the omnipresence of small screens in the palm of one's hand, consumers have developed a very short attention span that has only accelerated the proliferation of a soundbite culture.

**A picture is still worth a thousand words — and more**  
Since time immemorial, humanity has relied on images to communicate. Even with the advent of video, images retain their great power in part due to the ease with which they can be consumed and understood. Images such as Pope Francis kissing the forehead of a kneeling leper or sharing meals with inmates will certainly outlast our lifetimes.

**The importance of knowing your key messages — and repeating them**  
The preferential option for the poor, the power of prayer, building bridges with faith leaders, and calling for peace, over and over again — these messages resonate all the more with an omnichannel and high-frequency approach, which is played out over time.

**Off-the-cuff remarks often lead to problems**  
In PR training workshops, students are taught to avoid giving too much time, or content, to media. There

is, after all, no such thing as "off the record" and offering media a buffet of messages almost always leads to an unfavorable quote that appears off the mark. All statements, however private, lighthearted or contextually relevant, are fair game for the media or content creator.

**Treating media equally — as much as possible — is always the best policy**  
Armand Torchia, a pioneer in the field of PR and my beloved father of blessed memory, often reminded us to treat all media equally in the most democratic, generous, cordial and transparent way — yes, even if you happen to disagree with them or their political stance. To glean any insights from Pope Francis' performance on this best practice we shall have to get the pulse from many of you — members of the Catholic and secular media — but that's going to have to be for another day.

*Torchia is managing director of Torchia Communications, an international PR consultancy, and Dialogue & Grace, the agency's division devoted to the Catholic Church. He will lead a Master Camp titled, "Upping our Collective PR Game," at the Catholic Media Conference in Phoenix.*



# Pope Francis and Catholic media



ANN M. AUGHERTON | COURTESY

Pope Francis waves to the crowd gathered on the campus of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., September 2015.

By **ROB DEFRADESCO**  
For the Catholic Journalist

Like many around the world, I received the news of Pope Francis' passing with a heavy heart and a deep sense of gratitude. As I reflected on his remarkable life and pontificate, I was reminded not only of his impact on the church as a whole, but specifically on those of us called to serve the church through Catholic media. In his words and witness, Pope Francis challenged us to be more than communicators. He called us to be missionary disciples and messengers of hope.

As executive director of the Catholic Media Association, I have the privilege

of working with teams of journalists, communications directors, social media experts, business professionals, content creators, and storytellers who strive to fulfill that mission every day. Pope Francis gave us a model to follow. He prioritized encounter, elevated the margins and called forth the virtue of hope, even in the most challenging times.

One of the earliest signs of this came in 2014 with his World Communications Day message, "Communication at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter." He reminded us that good communication flows from encounter, particularly from walking with others, especially those on the periphery. As someone who

spent years in diocesan communications, I've seen firsthand how this principle can shape everything from news stories and social media, to podcasts and websites. Communication is not merely about announcements; it is about evangelization. The way we share the Good News can either invite people into the life of the church or push them further away.

Pope Francis dove deeper in his most recent message for the 59th World Day of Social Communications, urging all of us to "share with gentleness the hope that is in your hearts" (1 Pt 3:15-16). That passage, which instructs believers to give a reason for their hope but to do so "with gentleness and reverence," is a powerful reminder that truth should never be wielded as a weapon. It must be shared in a way that encourages and uplifts. In today's often-contentious media landscape, that message is urgently needed.

Too often, we see social media interactions, even among Catholics, devolve into argument and division. Pope Francis warned against communication that is confrontational, harsh or lacking in charity. His invitation to "disarm" communication resonates deeply with those of us who have worked to make Catholic media a source of light rather than noise.

Pope Francis reminded us that how we communicate matters just as much as what we communicate. He asked us to walk alongside others and to tell stories "steeped in hope." He called on Catholic journalists and media professionals to "communicate goodness with

hope and with heart."

Perhaps no moment captured this better than his solitary "Urbi et Orbi" blessing in the early days of the pandemic. On a rain-soaked evening in St. Peter's Square, he stood alone and prayed for a world frozen in fear. It was a powerful act of presence and spiritual leadership. Catholic media played a critical role in that moment, carrying the image into homes and hearts around the globe through livestreams and social sharing. In a time of physical isolation brought on by spatial distance, Catholic media helped the church stay connected.

Pope Francis reminded us that hope is always a community project. That is a call the Catholic Media Association takes to heart. Whether through professional development, recognition programs, or the sharing of best practices, we exist to support those who proclaim the Gospel through media, whether in print, on screen, or behind the scenes.

We give thanks to God for the life and leadership of Pope Francis. He taught us to see the face of Jesus in the poor and to communicate with gentleness and reverence. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

May we continue his call to be witnesses to hope. And may Catholic media professionals in every corner of the church carry forward that mission.

*DeFrancesco is executive director of the Catholic Media Association.*

## The vocation of Catholic journalism

By **GRETCHEN CROWE**  
For the Catholic Journalist

At 4 p.m. April 24, a group of 100 or so journalists gathered outside the Holy See press office. They lugged still and video cameras, and wore backpacks full of gear. Photographers, reporters, editors, producers — they were all there. Anderson Cooper also was there, taking selfies with other reporters.

It was hard to tell what language was being spoken amid the cacophony. French, English, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, German and — I'm pretty sure — Hindi bounced off the stone walls.

We were waiting to be accompanied into St. Peter's Basilica, where for the second day in a row, Pope Francis, who had died only three days before, was lying in state.

It's a strange thing to be a journalist at a time like this, and even stranger still to be a Catholic journalist. As many of you know well, journalists by nature and learned experience tend to be of hearty stock. They've seen a lot, and they're there to get the job done. Not much fazes them, especially secular journalists.

I remember covering Pope Benedict XVI when he visited Washington, D.C., in 2008. He was giving his homily for a huge

crowd in the freshly minted Nationals Park, and pools of photographers were rotating to make images. After a while, most of them filed and hung out in one of the park's tunnels until they could exit the stadium. I took a seat in the stands to participate in the rest of the Mass.

But visiting Pope Francis with a group of journalists was a different experience — almost a moving one. After taking an appropriate amount of B roll and photos, many of the giornalisti left the risers and got in the pilgrim line to shuffle past the casket among thousands of other pilgrims. I don't know the percentage of the throng that was Catholic, but I do know there were many who took a moment to personally pay their respects to the 88-year-old Jesuit who had been such a force in the church and the world for more than 12 years.

No cameras were allowed to snap shots of the body, which was under the watch of four Swiss Guards and kept in prayer by Vatican employees sitting or kneeling in reserved seating. But that didn't stop many journalists from snapping photos of St. Peter's in general, both inside and out, especially as we walked in. I wondered how many of them were walking through the massive doors of the biggest Catholic basilica in the world for the first time.

There are not many events that invite



GRETCHEN CROWE | COURTESY

Journalists gather in St. Peter's Basilica to cover the death of Pope Francis April 24.

this type of global media response. A papal death is one of them. Pope Francis, even in death, was inviting people on the peripheries to come and see.

For a little while, in even a more amplified way than usual, Catholic media are both observing the story and part of it. We take the photo from the risers and then make the sign of the cross at the casket. We report and offer a prayer for the Holy Father's eternal rest. It's a priv-

ilege to observe and believe. It's what makes our job a vocation.

By the time this is published, we likely will have a new pope. A new chapter will have begun, and there will be new stories to tell. Let us always remember the responsibility we have to do it well — and what a blessing it is.

*Crowe is president of the Catholic Media Association.*



# Finalists for 59th Gabriel Awards

Acclaimed filmmaker Sean McNamara to receive inaugural Voice of Gabriel Award.

Special to the Catholic Journalist

The Catholic Media Association announced the finalists for the 59th Annual Gabriel Awards, a premier program honoring excellence in film, broadcast, and digital media productions released in the United States and Canada.

The Gabriel Awards have been a beacon of inspiration since their inception in 1965, encouraging media professionals to create works that serve, enrich, challenge and uplift audiences. This year’s finalists, representing productions released during the 2024 calendar year, showcase the breadth and depth of talent across the U.S. and Canada.

### Reserve tickets

Space is limited. Reserve your ticket at catholicmediaassociation.org/events/59th-annual-gabriel-awards-reception/register.

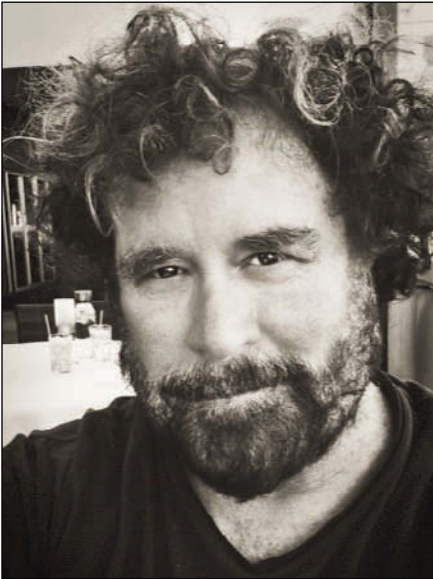
Winners will be revealed during a special evening celebration Thursday, June 26, at the Renaissance Phoenix Downtown Hotel in Phoenix as part of the Catholic Media Conference.

This year also marks the debut of a new distinction: the Voice of Gabriel Award, honoring a media professional whose career reflects the Gabriel values through an unwavering dedication to storytelling that uplifts and unites.

Sean McNamara, an acclaimed director, writer and producer, will be the first recipient of this prestigious honor. McNamara is known for his emotionally resonant films such as “Soul Surfer,” “Spare Parts,” “The Miracle Season” and “Reagan,” which bring to life powerful stories of faith, courage, and perseverance.

“Sean McNamara has spent his career telling stories that move hearts, lift spirits, and bring light to the human experience,” said Rob DeFrancesco, executive director of the Catholic Media Association. “His work consistently reflects the values we hold dear: dignity, courage, compassion and faith. We’re honored to recognize him as the first-ever recipient of the Voice of Gabriel Award, and to celebrate the impact his storytelling has had on audiences.”

In 2025, McNamara brings two major releases to theaters:



COURTESY

Sean McNamara, acclaimed director, writer and producer, will receive the inaugural Voice of Gabriel Award June 26 at the CMC in Phoenix.

“Soul on Fire” (Sony AFFIRM), the inspiring biopic of John O’Leary, starring William H. Macy and John Corbett, debuting Oct.10, 2025.

“Bau, Artist at War” (Paramount), a true story of survival and love during the Holocaust, premiering Sept. 26, 2025.

McNamara’s storytelling legacy spans 45-plus feature films and more than 500 episodes of television across major networks and platforms, including Netflix, Disney Channel, Hulu and CBS. He is a BAFTA winner, five-time Emmy nominee, and has received accolades from the DGA, Imagen Awards, and numerous film festivals.

He co-founded Brookwell McNamara Entertainment in 1998 with producing partner David Brookwell. Now in its 27th year, the company continues to develop acclaimed content for global audiences.

The Voice of Gabriel Award celebrates professionals in film, broadcast or digital media whose work exemplifies leadership that fosters community and understanding; creative excellence that challenges and inspires; a steadfast commitment to dignity, justice, and compassion; and media that elevates the human spirit and reflects a true vision of life.

“The Gabriel Awards exist to highlight the kind of storytelling that changes hearts and minds,” said DeFrancesco. “This year’s finalists exemplify that mission in extraordinary ways. We’re also thrilled to introduce the Voice of Gabriel Award and to honor Sean McNamara for a body of work that speaks directly to the values we strive to lift up in the media.”



### Finalists

(listed alphabetically by organization)

- Backflip**  
Dare to Believe Series Episode 1  
**BMG-Global**  
Grace by Night  
**Busted Halo**  
Inside the Vatican: Former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See Mary Ann Glendon Reflects on Her Time with Three Popes  
The Busted Halo Show with Father Dave Dwyer  
**Canadian Broadcast Corporation**  
Someone’s Son: Repatriating Newfoundland’s Unknown Soldier — CBC Newfoundland and Labrador  
As It Happens: Hurricane Helene Evictions  
**CBC Ottawa**  
Betrayal of Faith: The Story of Pastedechouan  
**Catholic Faith Network**  
Venerable Pierre Toussaint  
**Cherry Mountain Media**  
Faith Full Podcast  
**Coronation Media**  
Firebreaker  
**Estrella TV**  
Otra Oportunidad — Segment Buenas Noticias by Estrella Noticias  
Estrella TV, World Refugee Day Chicago  
**Goya Productions**  
Guadalupe: Mother of Humanity  
**Guadalupe Radio Network**  
The Spirit World — Praying for the Dead  
**Hallow**  
Daily Reflections with Jeff Cavins  
**Hundredfold Video**  
Diocese of St. Cloud Annual Appeal Video

- Josephine Lombardi**  
A Great Symphony of Prayer  
**KET – The Kentucky Network**  
Becoming Bell Hooks  
**KMUW 89.1FM**  
Relative and friend of Emmett Till reflects on why his story is important now more than ever  
**Knights of Columbus**  
Warrior for Christ: The Life of Joe Reali  
Warrior to Lourdes: Kim Crosby Story  
**NPR News**  
Gospel-focused Racial Reconciliation in the Deep South  
**Our Sunday Visitor**  
Hope Stories — Bishop Conley Episode  
Like a Mother  
**Pensé Productions**  
Hard Miles  
**Quiver Distribution**  
Irena’s Vow  
**Spirit Filled Hearts**  
Jesus Thirsts: The Miracle of the Eucharist  
**Spirit Juice Studios**  
Feast Day Celebration Recap  
**The Merry Beggars**  
The Saints: Josephine Bakhita  
The Saints: Adventures in Faith and Courage  
**Uriel Media**  
The House of the Lord  
**Voice of America**  
The Fighting Cooks  
VIKTOR-IA  
Café contrata meseros con Síndrome de Down para dar ejemplo de inclusión  
Crossing the Darién: In the Footsteps of Migrants in the Jungle  
**Western Dominican Province**  
Sleigh Ride  
**WZTV Fox17 News Nashville**  
Combination Heartbeat





# Top 10 Phoenix must-sees



COURTESY

By **CHRISTOPHER GUNTY**  
For the Catholic Journalist

If you're heading to the Catholic Media Conference in Phoenix in June, come early or stay an extra day or two. There's lots to do in the Valley of the Sun.

Of course, the conference is reason enough to visit: three days of informative workshops, beautiful liturgies and plenty of opportunities for networking. You never leave a CMC without learning a thing or three, and coming home with ideas to make your journalism, business and communications efforts more effective.

That said, you might even sneak away from the conference for an afternoon to sit by the pool or some other activity; we won't tell.

As someone who lived in the Valley for almost 20 years, I can tell you that it can be hot in June. Expect highs in the 100s — so dress in light colors and fabrics and layers. Be comfortable.

The fact that "it's a dry heat" helps a lot — even 110° in Phoenix feels a lot better than 90° in a place with high humidity. It will be important to stay hydrated. Carry a refillable water bottle and top it off throughout the day.

But the Phoenix area offers some really great places to visit with unique vistas.

**The Phoenix Zoo** (about a 15-minute drive from the conference hotel) covers about 125 acres on the east side of town. One of the largest nonprofit zoos in the country, it features more than 3,000 animals of more than 400 species, including many threatened or endangered species. Wear a hat and sunscreen and bring water (there's that hydration again), and don't feed the animals. 455 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, 602-286-3800, phoenixzoo.org.

**The Heard Museum** (six-minute

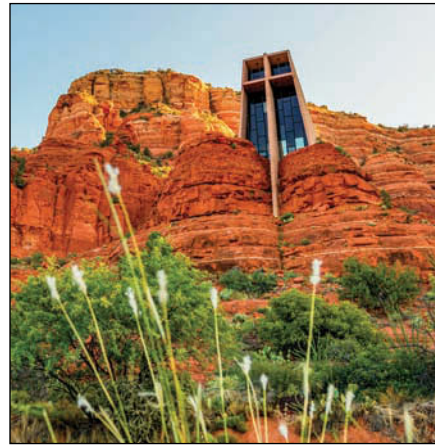
drive, about an hour by foot), one of the finest repositories of indigenous artifacts, can help you "discover the rich and vibrant world of American Indian art, from traditional artworks to contemporary creations," according to its website. Several special exhibits will be available during late June. 2301 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, 602-252-8840, heard.org.

**Burton Barr Central Library** (four-minute drive, 35-minute walk) offers a special treat if you get into Phoenix the Thursday before the conference. Due to architectural genius, at solar noon on the summer solstice, each of the public library's tapered columns lights up like candles topped by a flame, through the unique alignment of windows on the fifth floor. This year, the solstice celebration is June 20, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. 1221 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, phoenixpubliclibrary.org.

If you are bringing the family, the **Children's Museum of Phoenix** will be a delight (two-minute drive, 20-minute walk). It's intended for kids from birth to age 10 and includes 300 play-and-learn experiences where visitors are encouraged to "touch everything" and engage. There's even a "Build It!" camp the week of the convention, June 23-27. Museum is open Tuesdays-Sundays 9 a.m.-4 p.m. 215 N. 7th St., Phoenix, 602-253-0501, childrensmuseumofphoenix.org.

Close by is the **Arizona Science Center** (two-minute drive, 15-minute walk), one of the premiere science centers in the nation. There's a lot to see and do, from exploring bubbles to physics, technology and the intricacies of the human body. It also offers a "Sky High Science" camp June 23-27. 600 E. Washington St., Phoenix, 602-716-2000, azscience.org.

**Jubilee churches** in the Diocese of Phoenix offer a chance for the indul-



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There are six Jubilee Pilgrimage Sites in Arizona for the 2025 Jubilee Year, including St. Mary's Basilica (far left) and Ss. Simon and Jude, both in downtown Phoenix, and the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Sedona (at left). The wildlife delights visitors at the Phoenix Zoo, about a 15-minute drive from the CMC hotel.



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gence for the Jubilee Year of Hope. We will visit one of them, **St. Mary's Basilica** (seven-minute walk), for Mass Thursday evening. Pope St. John Paul II had designated the church a basilica in September 1985. Just two years later, he addressed the people of Arizona from the south balcony of the basilica Sept. 13, 1987, and prayed inside the church. It is the oldest Catholic parish in Phoenix, and was, in fact, the only Catholic parish in the city until 1924. Gift shop open Sundays only. 231 N. 3rd St., Phoenix, 602-354-2100, saintmarysbasilica.org.

**The Chapel of the Holy Cross** in Sedona is another jubilee church in the diocese, but it will take some effort to get there (two-hour drive from the hotel). Built into the red rocks of Sedona, the chapel, affiliated with St. John Vianney Parish, offers stunning views from inside and outside. "Built to a twin-pinnacled spur, about 250 feet high, jutting out a 1,000-foot rock wall, 'solid as the rock of Peter,' the building of the chapel was completed in April 1956," according to the website. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., seven days a week; there's a gift shop here, too. 780 Chapel Rd., Sedona, 928-282-7545, chapeloftheholycross.com.

**The Arizona Diamondbacks** will be back in town June 27. Don't skip the CMC awards banquet to catch Friday's game, but there are afternoon games Saturday and Sunday against the Miami Marlins. The ballpark (15-minute walk from the hotel) hosted a diocesan-wide

confirmation ceremony in 1998 as one of the first non-baseball events at the newly built park, where about 3,000 people received the sacrament. Now Chase Field, it has a retractable roof and real grass — and air conditioning. 401 E. Jefferson St., Phoenix, mlb.com/dbacks.

**Hiking and horseback riding** are available in South Mountain Park (20-minute drive). Various levels of hiking can start from several different trailheads. The most convenient to the CMC hotel location would be the Central Avenue entrance to the park. That's also the best place to start with Ponderosa Stables, a private company that provides trail ride options through the hilly desert preserve. South Mountain Park: 10919 S. Central Ave., Phoenix, <https://tinyurl.com/2vzb322t>; Ponderosa Stables: arizona-horses.com.

**Southwestern food** abounds in Phoenix. I didn't know what a chimichanga was until I moved to the Valley in 1985, but I was immediately hooked. Ask the hotel concierge or some of our Phoenix CMA members for a recommendation. If I have time, I'll make a drive to a Carolina's Mexican Restaurant (locations in North Phoenix, Scottsdale and Mesa, carolinasmexicanfood.com) just to buy tortillas to bring home.

*Gunty, associate publisher and editor of Catholic Review Media in Baltimore, was the founding editor of The Catholic Sun newspaper in Phoenix in 1985.*



# Rome-bound?

## 'Sister Rose' has pro tips for Jubilee Year tourists

By ANN M. AUGHERTON  
Catholic Journalist Editor

If you are going to Rome for the Jubilee Year — or waiting till the following year after the throngs of tourists head home — you are going to want to get the scoop on the dos and don'ts. Daughter of St. Paul Sister Rose Pacatte to the rescue.

Sister Rose is the founding director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies in Los Angeles, and currently heads the center's international office in Rome. She is a media literacy education specialist, book author and an award-winning film critic. She is an adjunct professor at the Catholic University of America, School of Theology and Ministry ("Evangelization in a Digital Age"), and facilitates courses on communication for the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community of Faith Formation since 2001. In January 2025, she was part of the World Jubilee of Communications and spoke on the "Books & the Future of Traditional Media Formats" at a daylong session in the Vatican Library.

**Here are her pro tips, in her words:**

- It's useful to have a **paper map** of Rome when you plan your trip. Mark all the places you want to see and then visit by "zones" so you can save steps or taxi fares.
- Bring mosquito repellent, a hat and sunscreen; it's expensive here.
- Wear good walking shoes; break them in ahead of time.
- No shorts or sleeveless shirts allowed in basilicas and probably most churches.
- It's very hot in Rome in July and August (day after day of 100+ degree weather), and most of Italy shuts down

- in August (vacation month).
- If you use a washcloth or face cloth, bring your own. Only five-star hotels may provide them.
  - You cannot enter St. Peter's with a metallic water bottle; only clear plastic or other material.
  - If you have tickets to a papal audience, arrive early to go through security.
  - Don't bring a big backpack if you plan on visiting any of the four main basilicas; you may not be allowed to bring it in.
  - Don't order a "pepperoni" pizza. It will come with red bell peppers on it. Order with salami or salsiccia (sausage). A slice of pizza is called a "taglia" (tall-ee-ah) and you can tell them how big you want the square to be. You can never go wrong with a pizza margherita.
  - If it rains, just buy a plastic poncho for 2-3 euros. You may get two to three days out of it.

- There is a national strike at least once a month. It can last for 24 hours or longer and it may affect buses, trains or the airport. It may affect some bus lines and not others. Google "sciopero," or "strike," when you arrive to see what is being planned.
- Register your visit with the U.S. State Department. You get notifications of demonstrations here Americans may not want to be near. Also, if you lose your documents, it can help if they know you are in country.
- Almost all churches close between 1 and 4 p.m. though the basilicas are open 7 a.m.-7 p.m.



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- For tickets to papal events, or to visit museums, apply or buy tickets from Vatican websites ahead of time, as far in advance as you can. For papal events you will get an email confirmation and then you pick up the tickets the day before. Go to [pnac.org/visitorsoffice](https://pnac.org/visitorsoffice) for info.
- An App called DinDonDan will give you daily Mass times and opening hours in the Rome metro area. You have to check the morning of your planned visit. I have found it quite reliable; I give it a 9 out of 10.
- Handicapped access is the biggest challenge in Rome. There are ramps to

enter some of the churches and basilicas. It is very difficult to push a wheelchair across the cobblestones in Vatican City, though some of the main walkways are more navigable now with upgrades for jubilee. When I visit churches on my own, I always have to ask someone to help me up and down the ancient steps at some of the churches, and people always help. There is an elevator to enter St. Peter's but getting to the elevator, if you are in a wheelchair, is a challenge.

— Gelato? Every "National Day" (we would say federal holiday), we celebrate with gelato. Seems like there is at least one every month.



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Daughter of St. Paul Sister Rose Pacatte takes a selfie (at right) from a small hotel overlooking St. Peter's Square, holds a replica of the Infant of Prague (above) and lights a candle, as she often does for her friends on Facebook.

