



**PRO-LIFE WITNESS AND SPECIAL MASS.** Far left, 3,000 carnation flowers, left to represent the approximated 3,000 abortions that occur in the U.S. every day, lay in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington on Jan. 22. Pro-life gains made headway in 2019. Jim Watson/AFP via Getty Images At left, *The Mass of the Americas* was celebrated Dec. 16 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone presided. JeffreyBruno.com

# Impeachment, McCarrick, And the Real Presence

YEAR IN REVIEW

BY MATTHEW BUNSON  
SENIOR EDITOR

For Catholics, as for all Americans, the dominant news story as 2019 ended was the ongoing bid to impeach President Donald Trump — a process advancing in Congress as the nation enters the 2020 presidential election year.

How impeachment will play out remains to be seen, but in a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll in early December, Americans were evenly divided, 48% to 48%, on whether to remove the president from office.

Weeks earlier, an EWTN News/RealClear Opinion Research poll showed the nation in support of impeachment, including Catholics: 55% of Catholics and 54% of non-Catholics.

But support for Trump grows sharply among those more active in their Catholic faith, the EWTN News/RealClear Opinion Research poll found; 58% of Catholics who say they accept all Church teaching said they are “sure to vote” for him in 2020, compared to 34% of all Catholics.

The impeachment drama and the impending election weren't the only matters to draw intense Catholic interest in 2019. Other key headlines included abortion, which continues to be a flashpoint in culture and politics; continuing efforts by the U.S. bishops to address the fallout from the Theodore McCarrick sexual-abuse scandal; and an eye-opening Pew Research poll that indicated the majority of U.S. Catholics don't believe in the Real Presence of the Eucharist.

Alongside these developments, there were powerful examples of Catholic heroism and witness to the faith (see front-page story).

On the abortion front, 2019 was notable both for substantial pro-life gains in some states and substantial pro-abortion pushback in others. Alabama's Republican Gov. Kay Ivey signed the “Human Life Protection Act,” effectively banning abortion save for serious health risk to the mother or a lethal fetal anomaly. Other states followed suit, including Mississippi, Kentucky, Ohio, Georgia and Louisiana, where Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards, who is Catholic, unapologetically broke with his party's pro-abortion orthodoxy in signing the legislation.

Another Catholic Democrat, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, took the lead in pushing to advance abortion rights. At Cuomo's enthusiastic prodding, state lawmakers



**POLITICAL DUEL.** Newspaper front pages from Dec. 19 at the Newseum in Washington reflect the news of President Donald Trump's historic Dec. 18 impeachment by the U.S. House of Representatives. Olivier Douliery/AFP via Getty Images

removed numerous state restrictions and regulations, paving the way for abortion virtually up to live birth. Illinois subsequently passed equally extreme pro-abortion legislation. And in California, David Daleiden, founder of the Center for Medical Progress, was found guilty in a civil trial and ordered to pay \$870,000 in punitive damages to Planned Parenthood for his undercover videos exposing the abortion giant's gruesome business practices.

Regarding clergy sexual abuse, the first significant development came in February, when the Holy See laicized McCarrick. The U.S. bishops afterward initiated measures making bishops more accountable for their handling of abuse cases, approving a plan to implement Pope Francis' document, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, that established new standards for addressing clergy sexual abuse.

Another notable response to episcopal misconduct was the treatment given to Bishop Michael Bransfield of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, in the wake of numerous accusations of sexual and financial improprieties. Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore removed Bishop Bransfield from any priestly or episcopal ministry both in Wheeling-Charleston and in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Pope Francis reinforced those restrictions by banning Bishop Bransfield from living in the diocese and presiding over or partici-

patating in any public liturgical celebrations, and in November his successor, Bishop Mark Brennan, ordered the retired bishop to pay almost \$800,000 in restitution to the diocese (and \$110,000 to the IRS) and to issue an apology.

The following month, Bishop Richard Malone of Buffalo, New York, resigned as bishop after a year of massive criticism for his alleged mishandling of sex-abuse cases. Bishop Edward Scharfenberger of Albany, New York, was named Buffalo's apostolic administrator.

The Pew findings regarding the pervasive lack of faith in the Real Presence of the Eucharist — a foundational element of Catholic faith that only 31% of self-described Catholics in the Pew poll believed in — seemed similarly distressing to many of the American faithful. Others, however, noted that belief in the Real Presence was far higher among those who regularly attend Mass and highlighted the situation as a call to intensified catechetical effort, not cause for disappointment or despair.

Those looking for concrete signs of hopeful developments, as they survey the sometimes bleak religious landscape of contemporary America, could take heart from some U.S. Supreme Court decisions. In May, the justices upheld an Indiana state law that requires aborted babies to be buried or cremated. And in June, the court ruled that a 40-foot “Peace Cross” memorial in Bladensburg,

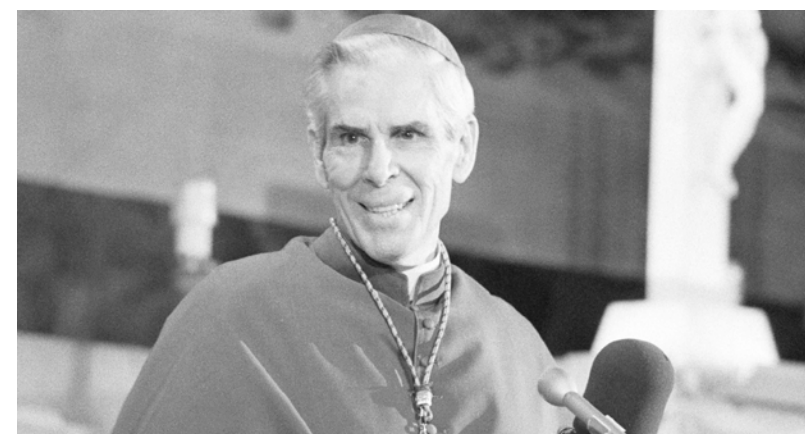
Maryland, did not violate the Establishment Clause and could remain in place.

Other moves at year's end hinted that further pro-religious freedom and pro-life decisions could ensue in 2020: Shortly before Christmas, the court agreed to take up the cases of two Catholic elementary schools in California that were denied the right to choose who can teach their religion classes by a recent decision of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeal.

Earlier in December, the high court declined to take up a challenge to Kentucky's ultrasound requirement for abortions. And in January it will hear arguments regarding a Louisiana law that requires abortionists to have admitting privileges at a local hospital — opening the door to a potential precedent in favor of a broad range of additional state limitations on access to abortion.



**ACTIVIST LOSES.** On Nov. 15, David Daleiden and co-defendants were found liable of trespass and illegal recording of conversations with Planned Parenthood staff, among other violations of state and federal statutes, and ordered to pay \$2.2 million in damages to Planned Parenthood. Daleiden's attorneys vowed to appeal ahead of a criminal trial. AP photo/Jeff Chiu



**BEATIFICATION DELAY.** The beatification cause of Venerable Fulton Sheen, who is shown Good Friday 1979 at New York's St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church, is at a standstill, after the Diocese of Rochester, New York, made a request for further investigations that prompted the Vatican to take the rare step of delaying the beatification. The Peoria Diocese announced Dec. 3 that the Vatican postponed the ceremony indefinitely. AP photo/Dave Pickoff

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**COMINGS AND GOINGS.** Left, Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia, shown speaking with Pope Francis at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, submitted his resignation to the Holy Father upon turning 75 in September. 2015 Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images Right, Bishop Mark Brennan replaced disgraced Bishop Michael Bransfield, who resigned in 2018, as the new shepherd of Charleston-Wheeling, West Virginia. Steph Chambers/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette via AP





**SHOCKING SIGHT AND VOICE FOR LIFE.** Flames and smoke are seen billowing from the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral April 15 in Paris (above left). Plans for rebuilding the iconic church are underway. Pierre Suu/Getty Images Above right, an anti-abortion protest organized by the group NI Voiceless takes place at Stormont on Nov. 30 in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Abortions were decriminalized following legislation introduced at Westminster in the U.K. Charles McQuillan/Getty Images

## YEAR IN REVIEW

# Easter Bombings, China, and Notre Dame

BY MATTHEW BUNSON  
SENIOR EDITOR



**DAYS OF MOURNING.** Father Jude Fernando displays bottle of a slain baby who was killed in the Easter Sunday bombing at the St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, Sri Lanka. ISIS-inspired suicide attacks by local militants killed more than 250 people at churches and hotels on Easter. AP photo/Dar Yasin Below, a priest leads prayers during the funeral of Father Joseph Hanna Ibrahim and his father at St. Joseph Church in the Syrian Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli on Nov. 12. The France-based association L'Oeuvre d'Orient, which supports Christian minority communities in the region, denounced the killings. 'We have learned with horror of the terrorist attack against Father Joseph Hanna Ibrahim and his father,' the association said in a statement on its website. Delil Souleiman/AFP via Getty Images



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The persecution of Christians across the globe was one of the most important and under-reported stories of 2019. The growing scale of religious persecution was documented in the release of an interim report commissioned by British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and headed by Anglican Bishop Philip Mounstephen.

The report found that persecution of Christians had reached near-genocide levels and that one in three people faced persecution for their religion around the world, with Christians the most persecuted of all groups.

Global persecution of religion in general and Christianity in particular was especially prevalent in parts of Asia, including Sri Lanka, China, Pakistan and across the Middle East, where Christianity is in danger of extinction.

The year's largest violent attack occurred on Easter Sunday, when Islamist militants killed 259 people and wounded 500 more in suicide bombings on churches and hotels in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

In China, the communist government has closed churches and persecuted any Catholics — especially priests — who resist worshipping at churches of the state-run Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association.

According to CNA, during the summer, at least five Catholic churches in the Yujiang Diocese were shut down by the government, and, in August, government officials threatened to arrest a priest and end all government subsidies to Catholics in the city of Yingtan after their parish refused to join the state-sponsored church.

In September, churches belonging to the Chinese state-run "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" Protestant denomination were ordered to replace the Ten Commandments with the maxims of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In November, *The New York Times* published leaked files from the Xinjiang region that documented the state's systematic oppression of ethnic minorities, especially the Uighurs and Kazakhs.

Also in China, in June, hundreds of thousands of protesters in Hong Kong took to the streets against a proposed bill by the Hong Kong government that would have allowed the extradition of criminal fugitives to mainland China.

Protests continued through the end of the year and expanded to a fight for greater freedoms, including religious freedom.

Some Catholics, especially students, have participated in the prayer vigils during the protests, encouraging nonviolence but also supporting protesters with material aid.

Elsewhere, on Jan. 29, Pakistan's supreme court upheld the acquittal of Asia Bibi, a Catholic woman who spent eight years on death row in Pakistan for blasphemy. She eventually found asylum in Canada in May.

In India, May 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party won the national election, sparking statements of caution among minority Christians and secular-minded citizens in the country about threats to religious liberty.

On Nov. 11, Father Joseph Hanna Ibrahim, an Armenian Catholic priest, and his father were killed in northeastern Syria by members of the Islamic State. Three explosions also took place in the Syrian Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli near Christian churches.

In other major news of 2019, the people and the Church of Venezuela and Nicaragua faced many hardships. In November, supporters of Nicaragua's leftist President Daniel Ortega attacked the cathedral in Managua.

On July 12, Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte of Trujillo, the president of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), sent a letter to express "solidarity with the people and Church of Venezuela" as the country continued to sink into political chaos under socialist leader Nicolás Maduro.

Northern Ireland pushed further into Western secularism by legalizing abortion Oct. 21. And, on the same day, legislation took effect that will allow same-sex couples to marry, starting in February.

And in one of the more dramatic moments of the year, on April 15, the world watched in horror as the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris was engulfed in flames, suffering extensive damage.

The Holy Eucharist was saved through the



**RESISTING CHINA'S CRACKDOWN.** Pro-democracy supporters wave their cellphone lights as they take part in a half-anniversary rally of the movement on Dec. 12 in Hong Kong. Anti-government protesters in Hong Kong continue their demands for an independent inquiry into police brutality, the retraction of the word 'riot' to describe the rallies, and universal suffrage. Anthony Kwan/Getty Images



**JUSTICE AT LAST.** India's Supreme Court granted bail Nov. 26 to five Christians who many say were wrongfully convicted of the 2008 killing of a Hindu leader during anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal. The men have been imprisoned for the last 11 years. Two others were freed earlier in the year. All seven have maintained their innocence. Anto Akkara photo



**CHAOS IN VENEZUELA.** A procession of Catholic faithful is trapped between supporters of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro and supporters of self-proclaimed interim president Juan Guaido during a rally in Caracas on March 29. This year saw a power struggle between Maduro and Guaido that resulted in violence against citizens and desecration of churches. Yuri Cortez/AFP via Getty Images

bravery of Father Jean-Marc Fournier, and while the plans to restore the cathedral have brought intense debate, it has also allowed for soul searching in the once-Catholic country.

As Father Pierre-Hervé Grosjean, a priest of the

Diocese of Versailles, told the Register, "This cathedral is part of our common history; it is the soul of France. It has always been a landmark in our history: In the darkest hours as well as in the most joyful ones, we gathered in Notre Dame."



YEAR IN REVIEW

## Pope's Pastoral Efforts Overshadowed by Scandal

BY MATTHEW BUNSON  
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For Pope Francis, 2019 was marked by a number of historic trips to Asia, Africa and Islamic countries, but much of the focus was on the Church's struggle with the clergy sexual-abuse crisis, the hotly debated Amazonian synod and another wave of financial scandals.

The Holy Father visited 11 countries outside of Italy in 2019, the most since 2015. His pastoral trips — including his fourth visit to Africa and to places where the Catholic community exists as tiny minorities, such as Japan, Thailand, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates — continue to show his pastoral emphasis on the peripheries.

Early in the year, Panama was his first destination as part of World Youth Day (Jan. 23-27). Pope Francis attended and presided over the closing Mass that drew hundreds of thousands of pilgrims. It marked the first time World Youth Day has been held in Central America.

In an address to prison inmates, where he heard confessions, the Holy Father told them, "The joy and hope of every Christian — of all of us, and the Pope, too — comes from having experienced this approach of God, who looks at us and says, 'You are part of my family, and I cannot leave you out in the cold; I cannot lose you along the way; I am here at your side.'" The Pope announced Lisbon, Portugal, as the host city for World Youth Day 2022.

Only a few days later, he made papal history when he became the first pope to visit the United Arab Emirates (Feb. 3-5), where he took part in the international interfaith meeting on "Human Fraternity" in Abu Dhabi. In March, he continued his outreach into the Islamic world with his visit to Morocco (March 30-31).

Heading to Central Europe, Pope Francis visited Bulgaria and North Macedonia (May 5-7) and then Romania (May 31-June 2). In North Macedonia, he prayed at St. Teresa of Calcutta's birthplace of Skopje. In Romania, he beatified seven Greek Catholic bishops who were martyred during the years of communist rule. In September, he flew to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius, three



**IN PRISON.** Cardinal George Pell hopes to have his sex-abuse conviction overturned. Edward Pentin



**APPOINTED.** Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle was named the prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in December. Noel Celis/AFP via Getty Images



**SAINT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.** St. John Henry Newman, canonized in October, ardently pursued the truth as an Anglican priest, which led him to the Catholic Church. Above, his relic is shown at a Mass of thanksgiving celebrated in the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome Oct. 14. Daniel Ibañez/CNA

strikingly different countries near each other in southern Africa. In Mozambique, he spoke against deforestation and ideological colonization in one of the continent's poorest countries. During the trip to Madagascar, he said Mass before a crowd of 1 million faithful. Pope Francis ended his year of travel with a trip (Nov. 20-26) to Thailand and then Japan, marking the first papal visit in nearly four decades to the tiny Catholic community. In Japan, he visited Nagasaki and Hiroshima and called for an end to the nuclear-arms race.

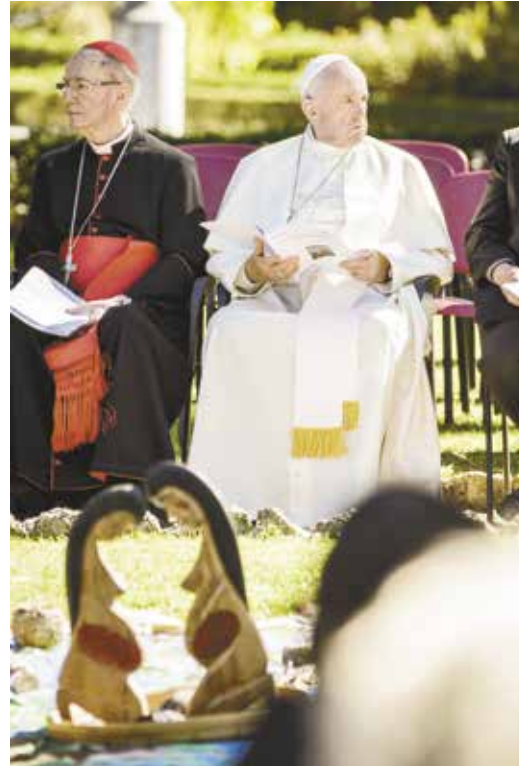
Overshadowing the papal journeys was the ongoing sexual-abuse crisis. From Feb. 21 to 24, Pope Francis convened a special summit on the clergy sexual-abuse crisis at the Vatican. Participants from around the world heard from experts and victims of abuse. In his closing remarks, Pope Francis declared abuse is "utterly incompatible with [the Church's] moral authority and ethical credibility." He also pledged further steps in the coming months.

The first of the promised actions was revealed on March 26, when Pope Francis promulgated several decrees requiring Vatican and Curial officials to report cases of abuse and to establish comprehensive structures for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons. Even more significant, on May 9, the Holy Father published *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, mandating reporting of sex-abuse cases and establishing the so-called metropolitan model to hold bishops accountable. At the end of the year, the Pope abolished the "pontifical secret," the highest form of confidentiality in the Church, when it pertains to clergy sexual-abuse cases.

In the area of accountability, Pope Francis' ongoing efforts to reform the Roman Curia, the central government of the Church, met further challenges this year when new financial scandals came to light, including the use of Holy See money for London real estate transactions and other questionable investments.

On Nov. 14, Pope Francis named Spanish Jesuit Father Juan Antonio Guerrero to succeed Cardinal George Pell as prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy to oversee Vatican financial reforms. The Pope defended the financial-reform process on the flight back to Rome from Japan on Nov. 26, saying that reforms begun by Pope Benedict XVI are working. "This is the first time the lids have been taken off the pots by someone inside and not outside," he said.

Like previous synods of bishops under Pope Francis' leadership, the gathering of synod fathers for the Pan-Amazon region that met in the Vatican from Oct. 6 to 27 caused significant debate. The synod's final report called for an Amazonian rite of the Mass, the ordination of married men (the *viriprobat*) and an "ecological conversion" for the



**UNCOMFORTABLE CEREMONY.** Pope Francis and Cardinal Cláudio Hummes, the archbishop emeritus of São Paulo, Brazil, sit in front of a statue representing *pachamama* (Mother Earth) as they celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi at the Vatican Gardens. The statue generated much criticism during the Pan-Amazon synod in October. Giulio Origlia/Getty Images

Church in the Amazonian region. During the synod, disagreement erupted over the presence of the *pachamama* statues at various events.

The Holy Father also sparked questions over his declaration to participants at a conference on criminal justice Nov. 15 that he plans to add the sin against ecology, ecological sin against the common home, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, keeping a promise made at the Amazonian synod. Similarly, he said on the flight back from Japan, "The use of nuclear weapons is immoral, which is why it must be added to the Catechism of the Catholic Church."

Far happier was Pope Francis' canonization of five new saints, including St. John Henry Newman, on Oct. 13 during the synod. Chicagoan Melissa Villalobos, the recipient of the second miracle that led to the canonization of Newman, attended the ceremony. Newman was honored as a saint for our times. And on Nov. 30, the Church marked the 50th anniversary of the formal introduction of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, or "Mass of Paul VI," as the ordinary form of the Roman Rite of the sacred liturgy.

On the first day of Advent, the German bishops began their formal "synodal way," a controversial two-year process to consider "key issues" arising from the clerical sex-abuse crisis. The German bishops and the influential German lay group the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) are poised to question the Church's teachings on priestly celibacy, human sexuality and the role of women in the Church. In early December, the German bishops announced their commitment to "newly assessing" the universal Church's teaching on homosexuality, sexual morality in general, as well as the sacraments of ordination and marriage. The chairman of the Marriage and Family Commission of the German bishops' conference, Berlin's Archbishop Heiner Koch, declared that the bishops agreed that homosexuality is a "normal form" of human sexual identity. "The sexual preference of man expresses itself in puberty and assumes a hetero- or homosexual orientation," the archbishop said in a statement. "Both belong to the normal forms of sexual predisposition, which cannot or should not be changed with the help of a specific socialization."



**NEW CARDINALS.** Cardinal Michael Czerny, undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, embraces Pope Francis after receiving the red biretta during an ordinary public consistory for the creation of new cardinals in St. Peter's Basilica on Oct. 5. Daniel Ibañez/CNA



**PAPAL EMBRACE.** Pope Francis greets a pilgrim during his weekly general audience in October in St. Peter's Square. Tiziana Fabi/AFP via Getty Images



**OFFERING SOLACE.** Pope Francis and a student, one of three disaster victims to make a speech as part of their testimony, hug each other during a meeting in Tokyo on Nov. 25 during the Holy Father's papal trip to Japan. Kazuhiro Nogai/AFP via Getty Images



**PANAMANIAN PILGRIMS.** Although attendance was down, World Youth Day in January in Panama drew hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to the Central American country. Above, Pope Francis meets with volunteers before departing Panama City Jan. 27. Johan Ordonez/AFP via Getty Images

### 2019 Canonizations

July 5



\*St. Bartolomeu Fernandes dos Mártires (1514-1590), Portuguese Dominican archbishop and theologian



■ St. Mariam Theresia Chiramel Mankidiyan (1876-1926), Indian Syro-Malabar Catholic mystic, religious sister and founder of Congregation of the Holy Family

Oct. 13



St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890), English convert, theologian and intellectual who founded the Birmingham Oratory



■ St. Dulce Lopes Pontes (1914-1992), Brazilian Franciscan sister who founded the Charitable Works Foundation of Sister Dulce



St. Giuseppina Vannini (1859-1911), Italian religious sister who co-founded the Daughters of St. Camillus



■ St. Marguerite Bays (1815-1879), Swiss Franciscan tertiary and mystic

\*Equipollent canonization, which occurs without the verification of a miracle and by express order of the pope, when, "in practice, this person is venerated as a saint."

Source: Vatican.va; Images: Public domain and courtesy of Obras Sociais de Irma Dulce Divulgacao via CNA