



The

Criterion

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SIMPLY
CATHOLIC

New feature replaces
“FaithAlive!” on page 11.

CriterionOnline.com

February 3, 2023

Vol. LXIII, No. 16 75¢



With its clean lines, barely bowed front, large windows and minimal ornamentation, St. Rita Church in Indianapolis, built in 1958-59, is a prime example of Mid-Century Modern architecture. For this reason and for the parish's spiritual, social and historical impact, the parish has received several preservation grants, including a matching grant to restore its bell tower, seen at left in this photo. (Submitted photo by Caleb Legg)

‘Hidden jewel’ St. Rita Church receives recognition for historical, cultural impact

By Natalie Hoefer

St. Rita Parish on Indianapolis' east side is a community of firsts and of unique contributions—starting with its founding in 1919 as the first designated Black Catholic parish in Indiana.

It was the first archdiocesan parish to offer kindergarten and accredited day care. It sponsored Indianapolis' first interracial, parochial versus public high school football game. Its boxing club produced three-time light heavyweight world champion Marvin Johnson.

“Nationally recognized architectural and artistic significance” can now be added to that list. The

parish's church stands not only as an important example of Mid-Century Modern architecture, but also as what is possibly the world's largest collection of art works by Peter Recker, a globally renowned Catholic artist of the mid-1900s. (See related article on page 9.)

“We're a hidden gem,” says Caleb Legg, a historian, architecture expert and member of St. Rita.

He is not the only one who thinks so.

Recently, the parish has been selected to apply for—and received—several elite preservation grants and is under consideration to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

See ST. RITA, page 8

Legislation would expand mental health services for those in crisis

By Victoria Arthur

A bipartisan measure with far-reaching support statewide would offer a lifeline to those experiencing a mental health crisis and help address the crippling human and



economic costs of untreated mental illness in Indiana.

Backed by the governor's office and a growing coalition of Hoosiers, Senate Bill 1 would boost local implementation of the 988 national suicide and crisis hotline launched last year and continue building an infrastructure to provide for the mental health needs of people in the most urgent situations.

With untreated and undertreated mental illness costing Indiana an estimated \$4 billion a year, the time is now to address these challenges, according to the bill's author, Sen. Michael Crider (R-Greenfield). As former director of disaster management and security at Hancock Regional Hospital in Greenfield, the lawmaker has seen firsthand the pressing need for better mental health services in Indiana.

“In that role, I often watched individuals in mental health crisis, and I often had to personally calm down situations in the emergency room,” said Crider, who has a background in law enforcement. “This is an issue that captured my attention, and I knew there had to be improvement in that space. I firmly believe that if we can get help to people when they need it, they won't end up in our emergency rooms and in our county jails.”

Senate Bill 1 would allocate \$30 million to build on the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline number introduced nationally in July, establish mobile crisis intervention teams that are trained to respond to mental health emergencies across Indiana's 92 counties, and fund additional community-based mental health clinics statewide. Crider noted that in 2020 and 2021 alone, more than 7,000

See ICC, page 8

Pope Francis expresses ‘great sorrow’ over ‘spiral of death’ in Holy Land

JERUSALEM (OSV News)—Religious and world leaders condemned the violence that engulfed Jerusalem and the West Bank over the weekend, leaving 10 Palestinians and seven Israelis dead. The violence pushed tensions to an all-time high in recent years and created fears of yet another wave of reciprocal attacks.

Landing in Israel on a pre-scheduled trip, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken condemned the “shocking” Jan. 27 terrorist attack that took place outside of a Neve Yaakov synagogue in Jerusalem following Sabbath prayers on International Holocaust Memorial Day. He called on Israelis

See HOLY LAND, page 2

Friends and family mourn at the funeral of Rafael Ben Eliyahu, who was killed in a shooting attack in a synagogue by a Palestinian gunman, at a cemetery in Jerusalem on Jan. 29. (CNS photo/Ronen Zvulun, Reuters)



HOLY LAND

continued from page 1

and Palestinians to not inflame tensions amid the deadly surge of violence. Blinken met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and planned to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah on Jan. 31.

The shootings took place following days of violence in the West Bank and Gaza, and another attack left two Israelis injured just outside of the Old City in the Palestinian village of Silwan where Jewish settlers have established themselves and an archaeological site. Nine Palestinians—who according to Israel were members of an Islamic Jihad terrorist cell—and one civilian, an older woman, were killed.

A 13-year-old Palestinian boy was identified as the shooter in the Silwan attack, and a 14-year-old Israeli boy was among those killed in the Friday shooting.

Pope Francis expressed his “great sorrow” on hearing the news of the attacks. “The spiral of death that increases day after day does nothing other than close the few glimpses of trust that exist between the two peoples,” he said following his weekly *Angelus* prayer on Jan. 29.

“From the beginning of the year, dozens of Palestinians have been killed during firefights with the Israeli army. I appeal to the two governments and to the international community so that, immediately and without delay, other paths might be found that include dialogue and a sincere search for peace,” the pontiff added.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres strongly condemned the synagogue attack in a Jan. 27 statement, noting that it was “particularly abhorrent that the attack occurred at a place of worship” and on the commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

“There is never any excuse for acts of terrorism,” he said. “They must be clearly condemned and rejected by all.”

In the wake of the attacks, Netanyahu, who was just sworn into office for the sixth time in December with the most extreme right-wing and

religious government in Israel’s history, vowed punitive measures. Israeli police have sealed off the home of the Palestinian gunman identified as Alqam Khayri and are preparing to demolish the family house. Members of Khayri’s family also were summoned by the police.

Amid the heightened tensions, Palestinians reported alleged revenge attacks by vigilante settlers in the West Bank. Palestinians posted videos of a torched car and burning house and said other Palestinian cars had been damaged by settlers. Israeli police said they were investigating the incidents.

In a Jan. 29 statement following the bloody weekend, the patriarchs and heads of Churches in Jerusalem called on all parties to practice restraint and self-control.

“Everyone must work together to defuse the current tensions and to launch a political process based upon well-established principles of justice that will bring about a lasting peace and prosperity for all,” they said in the statement.

“Consonant with this, in these most difficult of times we call upon all parties to reverence each other’s religious faith and to show respect to all holy sites and places of worship,” they added.

Armenian residents of Jerusalem’s Old City posted on Facebook information about two altercations that took place on the night of Jan. 28. They involved confrontations between radical settlement youths and Armenian residents of the city, including an incident of some Jewish settler youths trying to climb an Armenian convent’s wall. They allegedly wanted to take down the monastery flag as a group of mourners were leaving a memorial event at the convent. A confrontation ensued and the settlers attacked the Armenians with pepper spray and sticks, according to the report.

The post on the Jerusalem’s Armenian Quarter Facebook page includes a video showing police beating and arresting one of the Armenian young men—including sitting on him—and noted the attack came shortly after racist graffiti was scrawled on the convent walls a few weeks ago.



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

February 3–14, 2023

February 3 – 2 p.m.
Virtual National Eucharistic Revival
Bishops Advisory Group meeting

February 4 – 10 a.m.
Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting
at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus

February 5 – 2 p.m.
Annual Scouts Award Ceremony at
SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral,
Indianapolis

February 6 – 6 p.m.
Mass and dinner with Fiat House
Community, Indianapolis

February 7 – 11 a.m.
College of Deans meeting at
Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara
Catholic Center, Indianapolis

February 8 – 8:30 a.m.
Mass for students of St. Jude School at
St. Jude Church, Indianapolis, followed
by school visit

February 9 – 8:15 a.m.
Virtual Judicatories meeting

February 9 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at
Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara
Catholic Center

February 9 – 1 p.m.
Visit to Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High
School, Indianapolis

February 10 – 5:30 p.m.
Legacy Gala Dinner in Support of
Catholic Charities, Catholic Schools
and Bishop Simon Bruté College
Seminary at JW Marriott, Indianapolis

February 14 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board meeting at
Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara
Catholic Center

“The Israeli police are treating these attacks on our ancient religious community very lightly. The absence of any deterrence by the police is to be blamed,” the community group wrote. “We call on the Israeli government to take immediate action to stop these vandalistic attacks.”

A Christian-owned restaurant located at the New Gate of the Old City was attacked on the evening of Jan. 26 by a gang of radical settler youths as Jewish-Israelis, Arabs and tourists were dining at outdoor tables.

Wadie Abunassar, a prominent Christian activist and director of the International Center for Consultations which provides consultation services to diplomatic missions, pointed to the “radicalization” of the Israeli government

by its extremist members and to the ailing Palestinian Authority leading youths from both groups into radical actions. The Israelis, he underlines, are feeling empowered toward violence and the Palestinians lack hope and faith in their leadership.

“I fear we are witnessing a polarization within Israel, and between Israel and the Palestinians, while third parties are not really rushing in yet with alternatives,” Abunassar told OSV News. “With the absence of capable and willing third parties I feel we will continue witnessing some sporadic violence.”

However, he said, the violence will fall short of a third Palestinian intifada, or uprising, because Hamas in Gaza prefers not to engage with Israel in another war right now. †

Catholic pro-life activist Mark Houck acquitted of federal charges

PHILADELPHIA (OSV News)—A Catholic pro-life activist has been found not guilty of charges that he violated a federal law protecting access to abortion centers, thereby avoiding a possible 11-year prison sentence.



Mark Houck

Mark Houck, known for his sidewalk counseling outside a Philadelphia abortion facility, was tried in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on two charges under the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE Act, for allegedly assaulting an abortion clinic volunteer in October 2021.

The 1994 law prohibits intentional property damage of a facility that provides “reproductive health services,” including those related to abortion, and prohibits using “force or threat

of force or ... physical obstruction” to “injure, intimidate or interfere with” someone entering an abortion clinic.

Charges against Houck, who is co-founder and president of The King’s Men, a Catholic lay apostolate, stemmed from two separate incidents on Oct. 13, 2021, where Houck allegedly assaulted the victim—identified in the indictment as “B.L.” and named in trial proceedings as Bruce Love—who was acting as a volunteer escort at the reproductive health care center. Houck maintained he was instead defending his young son from harassment by Love.

Jurors in the trial, which began on Jan. 24, remained deadlocked on a verdict as of Jan. 27. By midafternoon on Jan. 30, however, they had reached a verdict resulting in Houck’s acquittal.

“We are, of course, thrilled with the outcome,” stated Peter Breen, executive vice president and head of litigation at the Chicago-based Thomas More Society,

which represented Houck in the proceedings. “Mark and his family are now free of the cloud that the Biden administration threw upon them. We took on the Goliath—the full might of the United States government—and won. The jury saw through and rejected the prosecution’s discriminatory case, which was harassment from day one.

The Biden Department of Justice’s intimidation against pro-life people and people of faith has been put in its place.”

Ashley Garecht, vice chair of the Pro-Life Union of Greater Philadelphia, told OSV News she and fellow pro-life advocates were “overjoyed” Houck has been acquitted.

“We are grateful that truth won out in Philadelphia,” she said. “Most of all, we just praise God for his protection and provision for Mark. We know so many people have been praying for him, and that courtroom was full of many rosaries.” †

See related article, page 7.

The Criterion

Phone Numbers:
Main office:..... 317-236-1570
Advertising..... 317-236-1585
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
Circulation / Subscriptions: .. 317-236-1425
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570

Price: \$22.00 per year, 75 cents per copy

Postmaster:
Send address changes to *The Criterion*,
1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

Web site: www.CriterionOnline.com

E-mail: criterion@archindy.org

Published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January.
Mailing address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2023 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

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The Criterion
(ISSN 0574-4350) is published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January.

1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367
317-236-1570
800-382-9836 ext. 1570
criterion@archindy.org

Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN.
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Criterion Press Inc.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
Criterion Press Inc.
1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

The Criterion

02/03/23

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Pope arrives in Congo after praying on flight for migrants

KINSHASA, Congo (CNS)—After flying across the equator, Pope Francis was welcomed warmly—in every sense—to Congo where Catholics make up the majority of the population and where, for decades, the Catholic Church has been at the forefront of efforts to bring peace, education and health care to the people.

With a small crowd cheering and a boy and girl offering him flowers, the pope arrived at the airport. But the real welcome came on the road leading into the city where thousands of people stood and cheered.

During the seven-hour flight from Rome to Kinshasa on Jan. 31, the pope told reporters he was happy finally to be able to make the trip, even though “I had wanted to go to Goma” in the east, “but with the war it was not possible.”

Before leaving his residence at the Vatican, Pope Francis met with nine refugees from Congo and South Sudan, where he will travel on Feb. 3. The refugees are assisted in Rome by the Jesuit Refugee Service’s Centro Astalli.

About two hours into the flight, when the chartered plane was flying over the Sahara Desert, the pope led everyone on the plane in a moment of silent prayer for all those who, “seeking a bit of well-being, a bit of freedom,” felt forced to try to cross the desert “but did not make it.”

Too often, he said, they end up being thrown into “lagers,” detention centers in Libya, “and suffer there. Let us pray for them.”

Leaving Italy, the pope sent a telegram to Italian President Sergio Mattarella explaining that he was making the trip “moved by a deep desire to meet brothers and sisters in the faith and the inhabitants of those dear nations, bringing a message of peace and reconciliation.”

In addition to cardinals from the Secretariat of State, the Dicastery for Evangelization and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, Pope Francis included in his



People cheer on Jan. 31 as they wait for Pope Francis to pass on a road near the international airport in Kinshasa, Congo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

official entourage Congolese Sister Rita Mboshu Kongo, a theologian and member of the Daughters of Mary Most Holy.

The pope has referred to Sister Rita as the “bishop” of the Congolese community in Rome “because the mission of a bishop is to serve,” and that is what she does.

A bishop’s role, she told Vatican News on the eve of the trip, “is not to command and give orders, but to say to the others, ‘Let’s get up and walk together.’”

She said she thought the pope invited her to join the entourage for some on-the-job training, as if to say, “‘Look, daughter, at how I act, and you must do the same with your brothers and your sisters.’ I have so much to learn.”

“For us, Pope Francis is an untiring missionary, a card-carrying evangelizer who is visiting our country to pray with and for the Congolese,” Sister Rita said. “He is like a father who has heard the screams and cries of his children and says, ‘Don’t give up. Continue. God is with you.’”

The wounds of Congo and its people are deep, she said. “There are criminals who continue to slaughter the innocent without pity. There are people without scruples who want to grab strategic minerals.

“The pope is going to denounce and announce,” Sister Rita continued. “He will denounce the evil so that those who foment war will renounce their diabolical ways, and he will proclaim Jesus Christ, light of the world.” †

U.S.-born bishop to lead Vatican body overseeing selection of world’s bishops

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has chosen Chicago-born Bishop Robert F. Prevost of Chiclayo, Peru, to succeed Canadian Cardinal Marc A. Ouellet



Archbishop Robert F. Prevost

as prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

The Vatican announced on Jan. 30 the retirement of Cardinal Ouellet and the appointment of Bishop Prevost, whom Pope Francis named an archbishop.

The archbishop, who is 67, holds degrees from Villanova University in Pennsylvania and the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a doctorate from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. An Augustinian friar, he joined the Augustinian mission in Peru in 1985 and largely worked in the country until 1999 when he was elected head of the Augustinians Chicago-based province. From 2001 to 2013, he served as prior general of the worldwide order. In 2014,

Pope Francis named him bishop of Chiclayo, in northern Peru.

As prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, Archbishop Prevost will lead the Vatican body responsible for recommending to the pope candidates to fill the office of bishop in many of the Latin-rite dioceses of the world. Recommendations made by the dicastery are typically approved by the pope. Archbishop Prevost has been a member of the dicastery since November 2020.

He will also oversee the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, established in 1958 by Pope Pius XII to study the Church in Latin America, where nearly 40% of the world’s Catholics reside.

Archbishop Prevost speaks English, Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese and can read Latin and German.

Cardinal Ouellet has been prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America since 2010. He had submitted his resignation from his curial positions as is required upon reaching the age of 75 in June 2019, but Pope Francis did not accept it.

In recent months, Cardinal Ouellet has

been accused of sexual misconduct by two women when he was archbishop of Quebec from 2003 to 2010. Cardinal Ouellet has denied both allegations and sued one of

the accusers for defamation in December 2022, seeking \$100,000 in damages.

Archbishop Prevost will take up his new roles beginning on April 12. †



Go, welcome the stranger.

Since 1975, Catholic Charities and Immigrant Services has resettled more than 20,000 immigrants in the Indianapolis area.

Once they arrive, Catholic Charities multi-lingual staff and many volunteers help them settle into housing and help them set up medical, welfare and Social Security appointments. They are also able to attend community and cultural orientation, English classes, GED tutoring, job-readiness courses and job placement programs.

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*Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope...
If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility
and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you
his forgiveness and his peace ...
~Saint John Paul II, The Gospel Life*



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Editorial



Holy cards of with the image of St. Theodora Guérin in English, Spanish and Tagalog, the language of the Philippines, are seen at her shrine on Oct. 6, 2016. (CNS photo/Katie Breidenbach)

Religious women and men are witnesses to courage, perseverance and deep faith

What strength the soul draws from prayer! In the midst of a storm, how sweet is the calm it finds in the Heart of Jesus. (St. Theodora Guérin)

More than a quarter century ago, in 1997, Pope St. John Paul II instituted the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. This celebration, which honors all women and men in religious orders, is attached to the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also known as Candlemas Day, the day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. So, too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples. This year, the celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life is observed on Feb. 4-5, in order to highlight the gift of consecrated persons for the whole Church.

Religious men and women in our archdiocese serve as educators, evangelists, pastoral leaders and witnesses to the power of prayer. When they are true to their vocations, they are undaunted by illness, physical obstacles, prejudice, poverty or petty jealousy. They discern God's will in their lives and then refuse to let anything get in the way of carrying out the mission entrusted to them by Christ.

The Church in central and southern Indiana is blessed to have a patronal saint who embodies all the gifts of consecrated life. Anne-Thérèse Guérin (1798-1856) entered religious life in her native France at the age of 25 after caring for her widowed mother and her family for 10 years. Several years later, she led a group of five sisters on a tumultuous journey from France across the Atlantic Ocean traveling by steamship, railroad, canal boat and stage coach only to discover that their destination was not a town but just a log cabin in the woods of west central Indiana. Once there, she encountered hostile anti-Catholicism, hunger and privation, and near complete destitution resulting from a fire that destroyed the community's harvest. In spite of everything, Mother Theodore (as she was known then) persevered. Under her leadership, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in the United States flourished, educating thousands of children throughout Indiana and the Midwest.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, who was archbishop of Indianapolis at the time Mother Theodore was

canonized in 2006, offered the following reflection on the saint's remarkable achievements:

Against all odds, in primitive circumstances, Mother Theodore founded schools for poor children because she had a vision of their value both academically and religiously. ... The courage, valor and generosity of the intrepid Mother Theodore are a timely and needed inspiration. I do not believe we could find a more fitting patroness for our challenged apostolate of Catholic schools and Catholic education in general.

Mother Theodore's accounts of her missionary activity describe the struggles that she and her small community experienced in order to find and provide the resources needed to serve Christ's primitive Church in Indiana. It was hard enough for the sisters to meet their own needs for food, shelter and life's most basic necessities, but they refused to abandon the needs of the people they had come to serve—especially young women.

Letters written by Mother Theodore describe the transatlantic trips she made in barely seaworthy ships. But as Archbishop Buechlein notes, "She crossed that stormy ocean several times in order to find resources to carry on Christ's mission in our part of the New World. She summoned the fortitude she needed to overcome her personal fears in order to seek help for the desperate missions in Indiana."

Pope Benedict XVI once described saints as "people who are close to God." Thousands of women and men in the woods of Indiana and throughout the midwestern United States recognized the nearness of God in Mother Theodore's prayer, in her leadership of the Sisters of Providence, and in the Catholic education she made possible, especially for young women.

May the courage and perseverance of St. Theodora Guérin inspire us to pray for all the women and men in our archdiocese, and throughout the world, who have dedicated their lives to following Christ as Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits, Sisters of Providence and other religious orders. And may all of us who have been called by our baptism to serve as disciples of Jesus Christ maintain the kind of missionary spirit (and trust in God's providence) that will enable us to serve those who need it most!

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Stephen Kappes

Feb. 11 program, Mass remember unborn children tragically lost to abortion

9/11 serves both to recognize and remember the terrorist attacks where 19 men hijacked four airplanes and killed more than 3,000 people on American soil on Sept. 11, 2001.

Many of you may not be familiar with the number 2,411—another atrocity that took place in the Midwest.

That figure—2,411—represents the number of aborted fetal remains discovered on property owned by the late Dr. Ulrich "George" Klopfer. The abortions took place between 2000 and 2003. Klopfer had performed abortions at his Indiana facilities starting in the 1970s before his medical license was suspended in 2016 for various violations.

After Klopfer died in Illinois in 2019, his family's attorney called the Will County, Ill., coroner, who called the sheriff's department and the county attorney for assistance with a collection of human remains, discovering bodies and medical records stating that all were from Indiana.

The remains of 2,411 unborn children were eventually returned to Indiana and interred in Southlawn Cemetery in South Bend, Ind.

Klopfer's story is not so much about abortion as it is about victimization; it is,

in my opinion, about one of the greatest atrocities ever to befall mankind.

That is why the Knights of Columbus of the State of Indiana has deemed an event called the "2411 Never Forgotten Project," and will continue to work so the number 2,411 is recognized beyond the National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children, which will be held on Sept. 9 this year.

2,411's significance is not just to document this tragedy or to prevent this from ever taking place again. It is also about retaining laws—currently being litigated—requiring the mothers or the institutions performing abortions, or elective miscarriages, to properly bury the fetuses.

All are invited to attend this year's 2411 Memorial Mass and program beginning at 12:30 p.m. on Feb. 11 at Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. Speakers will include Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita and Marc Tuttle, executive director of Right to Life of Indianapolis. The program will end at approximately 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 317-788-7127.

(Stephen Kappes, a member of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove, is also chapter president of CUF Holy Innocents.) †

Letters to the Editor

Let's do our part in helping God's big picture come to fruition in our world

Sometimes, we are so busy taking care of everyday tasks that we lose sight of the big picture.

What is the big picture? God sent his Son to teach us how to live, to die for us, and to rise for us. He sent his Holy Spirit to inspire us, to show us every day what we are to do and to bring us to him when our earthly life is ended.

We seek happiness in pleasure, fame or money, but we are wired to be happy in caring and giving and following the will of God.

We are sent to this world to grow—not just physically, but to grow in love, to be as much like our Creator as we can be.

We are sent here not to be afraid, but to

use our talents to help and care for others and for his creation.

We are sent to lead others to God, to teach them how to live. Only in giving of ourselves will we find happiness.

Our participation in God's plan of salvation of the world may be very small, but little contributions multiplied many times over become big changes for the betterment of the world.

Someday, long after we are gone from this world, God's big picture will come to fruition, and our world will be a place of peace and love.

**Mike Walro
Hanover**

Reader appreciates column focusing on Nicaragua; wants more coverage on persecutions in the universal Church

Thank you for sharing Sean Gallagher's reflection "Effective communication of the Gospel can awaken consciences, change the world" in the Jan. 20 issue of *The Criterion*.

To read, understand and learn what is happening in our Church in Nicaragua—the persecution, the oppression, the house arrest of Bishop Ronald Alvarez as well as numerous priests across Nicaragua being arrested, and how Catholic radio and TV stations are being closed down—was greatly appreciated.

This repression of free speech in Nicaragua is something we all need to hear

about so we can pray for all these situations.

Personally, I have not heard much about what's happening to our Church around the world in *The Criterion*. Articles to inform us of these persecutions and worse—like in Uganda, Ghana and other countries—are needed. I appreciate that Gallagher took the initiative to report these atrocities in Nicaragua.

We need to hear about these situations in the archdiocesan newspaper so we can pray and be aware of these needs.

**Eileen Paige
Franklin**

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar).

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to "Letters to the Editor," *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org. †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

The healing power of Christ our light is revealed in the saints

The publication date for this column, Feb. 3, is the memorial of St. Blaise, who was the Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia in the fourth century.

We don't know much about his life, but what we do know is that he was a physician renowned for his healing and that in the year 316 Blaise was martyred during a persecution ordered by the Roman Emperor Lucinius. According to the available records, after his interrogation and a severe scourging, Blaise was hurried off to prison and subsequently beheaded.

From 1346 to 1353, a bubonic plague commonly referred to as "Black Death" ravaged Europe, Asia and North Africa. It was the deadliest pandemic in human history, with conservative estimates of its death toll reaching more than 25 million people. Almost half of the people in Europe died in this pandemic. During that plague, many people prayed fervently. Out of that chaos, a new devotion to the "Fourteen Holy Helpers" emerged. Those holy helpers were 14 saints, who in addition to the Blessed Virgin Mary, were believed to be powerful intercessors, especially to cure illness. Among those 14 is St. Blaise.

Today, St. Blaise is especially remembered because of a particular incident related in the book of legends, the Acts of St. Blaise, written 400 years after his death. According to the Acts, while Blaise was being taken into custody, a distraught mother, whose only child was choking on a fish bone, threw herself at his feet and implored his intercession. Touched at her grief, Blaise offered up his prayers, and the child was cured. Consequently, St. Blaise is invoked for protection against injuries and illnesses of the throat.

In many places throughout the world, today's memorial is celebrated with the blessing of throats. Two candles blessed during yesterday's feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas) are either held in a crossed position by a priest over the heads of the faithful, or the people are touched on the throat with them while the following blessing is given: "Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness." Then the priest makes the sign of the cross over the faithful.

This popular blessing underscores the importance of healing in the Church's ministry. It also calls attention

to the light of Christ, whose presence dispels all darkness from a world that has been overshadowed by sin and death. These two themes, healing and light, are reflected throughout the Scriptures, and they are illustrated in the lives of many saints and martyrs, including St. Blaise.

After nearly three years of COVID-19 and its variants—which have caused enormous sickness and death worldwide, and which have been accompanied by serious economic difficulties and social unrest—we know the importance of healing, and we long for the light of Christ that can penetrate the darkness of sin in our individual lives and in our world. A simple ceremony like the blessing of throats takes on a new meaning when it is celebrated in a time of pandemic.

Jesus, whose name ("soter" in Greek) means savior or healer, comes into our daily lives in word, sacrament and service precisely to heal us from the physical, mental and spiritual ills that we all suffer from in one way or another. When we honor saints like Blaise, we acknowledge that we see in them the presence of Jesus Christ. When we resolve to imitate them,

we are imitating Jesus Christ who is revealed in their words and actions.

Every saint is an icon of Jesus, an expression of certain aspects of the Lord's life and ministry. The two patronal saints of our archdiocese, Francis Xavier and Mother Theodore Guerin, were missionaries who reflected the importance of proclaiming the good news to all nations and people. Similarly, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Benedict show us the contemplative dimension of Christian life, illustrating in their words and example our Lord's commitment to prayerful communion with the Father.

St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare of Assisi both gave powerful witness to Jesus' love for the poor. St. Blaise, St. Vincent de Paul and many other saints show us the healing power of Jesus, whose ministry was spent curing the sick, forgiving sins, and restoring life to those dead to sin.

Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver us from every sickness of mind, body and spirit. May we see in him the healing power of Jesus. And may we strive to imitate St. Blaise, and all the saints, in giving faithful witness to the truth of our salvation in Christ. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

En los santos se revela el poder curativo de Cristo, nuestra luz

El 3 de febrero, fecha de publicación de esta columna, se festeja el memorial de san Blas, quien fue obispo de Sebaste (Armenia) en el siglo IV.

No sabemos mucho de su vida, pero lo que sí sabemos es que era un médico famoso por sus curaciones y que en el año 316 fue martirizado durante una persecución ordenada por el emperador romano Lucinio. Según las crónicas que existen, tras su interrogatorio y fuertes azotes, Blas fue trasladado a toda prisa a la cárcel y posteriormente decapitado.

Entre 1346 a 1353, la peste bubónica, también llamada "peste negra," asoló Europa, Asia y el norte de África. Fue la pandemia más mortífera de la historia de la humanidad en la que pereció casi la mitad de los habitantes de Europa. Los cálculos conservadores estiman más de 25 millones de muertos. Durante la peste, muchas personas rezaban con fervor y de aquel caos surgió una nueva devoción: los "catorce santos auxiliadores." Se trataba de 14 santos que, junto con la Santísima Virgen María, se consideraban poderosos intercesores, especialmente para curar enfermedades. Entre ellos está san Blas.

Hoy en día, san Blas es especialmente recordado por un incidente particular relatado en el libro

de leyendas, los Hechos de San Blas, escrito 400 años después de su muerte. Según el libro, mientras detenían a Blas, una madre angustiada, cuyo único hijo se estaba ahogando con una espina de pescado, se arrojó a sus pies e imploró su intercesión. Conmovido por su dolor, Blas elevó sus plegarias y el niño se curó. En consecuencia, se invoca a san Blas para que proteja contra las heridas y las enfermedades de la garganta.

En muchos lugares del mundo la conmemoración de hoy se celebra mediante la bendición de la garganta. Para ello, un sacerdote sostiene dos velas bendecidas durante la fiesta de ayer de la Presentación del Señor (Candelaria) en posición cruzada sobre las cabezas de los fieles, o bien se toca a la gente en la garganta con ellas mientras se da la siguiente bendición: "Por intercesión de san Blas, obispo y mártir, que Dios te libre de toda enfermedad de la garganta y de cualquier otra enfermedad." A continuación, el sacerdote hace la señal de la cruz sobre los fieles.

Esta bendición popular destaca la importancia de la curación en el ministerio de la Iglesia. También pone de manifiesto la luz de Cristo, cuya presencia disipa todas las tinieblas de un

mundo ensombrecido por el pecado y la muerte. Estos dos temas, la curación y la luz, se reflejan en todas las Escrituras y se ilustran en la vida de muchos santos y mártires, entre ellos san Blas.

Después de casi tres años de COVID-19 y sus variantes—que han causado enormes enfermedades y muertes en todo el mundo, y que han ido acompañadas de graves dificultades económicas y malestar social—sabemos de la importancia de la curación, y anhelamos que la luz de Cristo penetre en las tinieblas del pecado de cada uno de nosotros y en el mundo. Una ceremonia tan sencilla como la bendición de la garganta adquiere un nuevo significado cuando se celebra en tiempos de pandemia.

Jesús, cuyo nombre (*soter* en griego) significa salvador o sanador, entra en nuestra vida cotidiana en Palabra, sacramento y servicio precisamente para curarnos de los males físicos, mentales y espirituales que todos padecemos de una u otra manera. Cuando honramos a santos como Blas, reconocemos que vemos en ellos la presencia de Jesucristo. Cuando nos proponemos imitarlos, estamos imitando a Jesucristo, que se revela en sus palabras y en sus acciones.

Cada santo es un icono de Jesús,

una expresión de ciertos aspectos de la vida y el ministerio del Señor. Los dos santos patronos de nuestra Arquidiócesis, Francisco Javier y la Madre Teodora Guérin, fueron misioneros que reflejaron la importancia de proclamar la buena nueva a todas las naciones y pueblos. Del mismo modo, santa Teresa de Ávila y san Benito nos muestran la dimensión contemplativa de la vida cristiana, ilustrando con sus palabras y su ejemplo el compromiso de nuestro Señor en la comunión piadosa con el Padre.

San Francisco y santa Clara de Asís dieron un poderoso testimonio del amor de Jesús por los pobres. San Blas, san Vicente de Paúl y muchos otros santos nos muestran el poder curativo de Jesús, cuyo ministerio se dedicó a curar enfermos, perdonar pecados y devolver la vida a quienes murieron por el pecado.

Por intercesión de san Blas, obispo y mártir, que Dios nos libre de toda enfermedad de la garganta y de cualquier otra enfermedad. Que veamos en él el poder sanador de Jesús. Y que nos esforcemos por imitar a san Blas, y a todos los santos, dando testimonio fiel de la verdad de nuestra salvación en Cristo. †

Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.

February 6

Virtual Mini-Retreat on Religious Life, 7:30-8:45 p.m., sponsored by Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, single Catholic women ages 18-42 exploring religious life, free. Registration and information: MiniRetreat.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505 or jluna@spswm.org.

February 9

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Bede Theater, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Cyprian Davis Lecture "Jazz is Love: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams,"** 7-9 p.m. CT, musician and author Deanna Witkowski presenting free. Information: Mary Jeanne Schumacher, 812-357-6501.

February 10

St. John the Evangelist Parish Hall, Pan Am Building, 126 W., Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Pro-life Film Series: Compassion and Choice Denied**, 6-9 p.m., documentary and panel discussion on legalized physician suicide, freewill offering. Information: 317-407-6881 or smdye1@gmail.com.

February 11

Sidewalk Advocates for Life

training, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., location and other details given by phone, \$10 for materials, register by Feb. 6. Information, registration: Sheryl Dye, smdye1@gmail.com or 317-407-6881.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, Parish Life Center, 399 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Wedding Reception for Married Couples**, 6:30-10:30 p.m., doors open 6:15 p.m., dinner 7 p.m., dancing, door prizes, \$80 per couple, \$240 per table of four couples, sponsored by Celebrate Marriage ministry. Information, registration: Marcy Renken, 317-489-1557, cutt.ly/CelebrateRomance, info@celebratemarriageministry.com.

Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **2411 Memorial Mass and speakers**, 12:30-3:30 p.m., Mass in memory of 2,411 aborted babies discovered in 2020 on properties owned by abortionist Ulrich Klopfer, explanation 12:30-1 p.m., Mass 1-2 p.m., speakers 2-3:30 p.m., including Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, Right to Life executive director Marc Tuttle and more. Information: 317-788-7127.

St. Malachy Parish, 9833 E. CR 750 N., Brownsburg.

Marriage on Purpose Conference, 8:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m., doors open 7:15 a.m., Benedictine College Theology Andrew and Sarah Swafford presenters, \$30 single, \$50 couple, includes lunch. Information, registration: www.marriageonpurpose.info, 317-852-3195 or info@stmalachy.org.

February 11-12

St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., Indianapolis. **Bruté Weekend**, Sat. 8:15 a.m. and 5 p.m., Sun. 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., Masses celebrated by Father Daniel Bedel, Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary spiritual director, talks on how the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or esanders@archindy.org.

February 12-13

St. John Paul II Parish, 223 W. St. Joe Rd., Sellersburg. **Parish Mission**, Sun. 1-2:30 p.m., Mon. 6-7:30 p.m., "Engagin' Cajun" national Catholic speaker Mike Patin presents "Jesus' Great Questions," free, babysitting and refreshments provided. Information: 812-

246-2512, ext. 4, or ktipker@stjohnpaulparish.org.

February 14

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Taizé Prayer at the Woods**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence, virtual option available. Information: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org or 812-535-2952.

February 15

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

February 16

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

February 17

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Ivy Tech Community College president Sue Ellspermann presenting "Learning, Loving, Trusting, and Leading through COVID," rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program

following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Feb. 14. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

February 18

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, assist with retired Providence Sisters. Information, registration: 812-535-2952, jluna@spsmw.org or spsmw.org/events.

East Central High School Performing Arts Center, 1 Trojan Place, St. Leon. **E6 Catholic Men's Conference**, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., doors open 6:30 a.m., presenters include author and podcaster Bear Woznick, former NFL player Matt Birk and Father Jonathan Meyer, online option available, clergy and religious free, \$15 high school and college students, \$40 general admission. Information and registration: 859-486-3289, e6catholicmensconference.com.

St. Ann Parish, 6350 S. Mooresville Rd., Indianapolis. **Mardi Gras Celebration**, 5 p.m., reverse raffle, \$1000 grand prize,

chicken dinner, beer and wine, ages 21 and older, \$40 individual, \$75 for two, \$20 raffle ticket only. Information: 317-821-2909, stannindybulletin@gmail.com.

February 19

St. Malachy Church, 9833 E. CR 750 N., Brownsburg. **Pipe Organ/Piano Duet Concert**, 4 p.m., featuring organist Hector Salcedo and pianist Linda Francisco, works by Paul Halley, Denis Bédard, Camille Saint-Saëns and Joel Raney, free. Information: 317-852-3195, info@stmalachy.org.

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Bluegrass Jam**, 5:30 p.m., free. Information: franciscansusa.org/bluegrass-jam.

February 20

Sr. Thea Bowman Black Catholic Women Monthly Prayer Gathering, via Zoom, third Monday of each month, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, 7 p.m. Join meeting: cutt.ly/SrTheaPrayer, meeting ID: 810 3567 0684 or dial-in at 301-715-8592. Information: Pearllette Springer, pspringer@archindy.org, 317-236-1474. †

Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/retreats.

February 17-19

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Franciscan Christology**, 6:30 p.m. Fri.-11 a.m. Sun., Franciscans

of the Immaculate Father Roderic Burke facilitating, \$50.70 adult, children ages 18 and younger free—must be accompanied by parent, includes lunch and dinner, accommodations additional

cost. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, or motheroftheredeemer.com.

February 22

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402

Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **From Ashes to Resurrection Joy: An Ash Wednesday Day of Reflection**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Benedictine Sister Heather Jean Foltz facilitating, \$75 includes lunch. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Watercolor Class**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., last of four standalone sessions, Conventual Franciscan Father Vincent Petersen facilitating, participants must provide their own paints, brushes and paper, \$25, 12-person limit. Information, registration: cutt.ly/WCClass2-22-23.

February 24

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Painting with Padre: Aaron Douglas**, 6-9 p.m., Conventual Franciscan Father Vincent Petersen facilitating, supplies and snacks provided, bring beverage to share, 12-person limit, \$40. Information, registration: cutt.ly/paintdouglas23.

February 28, March 7

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Coffee and Conversation**, 10-11:30 a.m., Patty Moore facilitating, series based on book *The Broken Way*, first two of six independent sessions (March 14, 21, 28, April 4), \$125 for all six sessions or \$25 per session, journals provided. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/

programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

February 28-March 2

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Freedom Through Forgiveness**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$300 single, \$425 double. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

February 28-March 21

Virtual: Letting Go Series, 7-8:30 p.m., four consecutive Tuesdays (Feb. 28, March 7, 14, 21), sponsored by Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Judy Ribar facilitator, \$50. Information: retreatcommunications@mountsaintfrancis.org or 812-923-8817.

March 1, March 8

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Sacred Portraiture: Holy Face**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., first two of four standalone sessions (March 22), Conventual Franciscan Father Vincent Petersen facilitating, bring paints, brushes and paper, \$25 per class or \$90 for all sessions, 12-person limit. Information, registration: cutt.ly/portrait-3-1.

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Contemplative Prayer**, in person or via Zoom, 2-3:30 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittekind presenting, freewill donation. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 3

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$70 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 3-5

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Life Along the Road—Reflections and Meditations on Our Life Journey Toward God: A Lenten Weekend Retreat**, 6 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun., Father Jeffrey Godecker facilitating, \$200 includes private accommodations, meals, snacks and program material, register by March 2. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681 or lcoons@archindy.org.

March 4

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Grieving Our Losses**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittekind and clinical psychologist Claire Sherman facilitating, \$30, \$45 with CEU. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 8

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Personal Day of Retreat**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$40, includes private room for the day and lunch; spiritual direction available for additional \$30, must be scheduled in advance. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org. †

Helping the homeless



Gabby Johns, a senior at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis, smiles on Dec. 17, 2022, with some of the 300 backpacks and bags she collected for the Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society's Beggars for the Poor homeless ministry through a backpack/bag drive she held at Chatard. Through her volunteer work with the ministry, she heard many requests from the homeless for durable backpacks and bags to carry their belongings. She decided to hold the backpack/bag drive at Chatard in response. (Submitted photo)

Relics of men who loved the Eucharist to be featured at men's conference

By Sean Gallagher

Since its inception in 2015, the E6 Catholic Men's Conference held in southeastern Indiana has drawn internationally known Catholic speakers to inspire men to grow in their faith.

This year, conference organizers are reaching into the communion of saints to accomplish this mission.

Relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis and St. Manuel Gonzales Garcia will be on display for veneration throughout the event that will take place from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. on Feb. 18 at East Central High School in St. Leon.

The "E6" in the conference title refers to the sixth chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle calls believers to take up "the armor of God" in the spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

Taking place during the first year of the three-year National Eucharistic Revival, this year's E6 Conference will have a special emphasis on the Eucharist, with the relics helping to sharpen that focus.

Blessed Carlo, who died at age 15 in 2005, was beatified in 2020. Known for his deep faith from a young age, Blessed Carlo combined his love for the Eucharist and his interest in computers by creating a website that provides information on eucharistic miracles that have occurred around the world.

St. Manuel Gonzalez Garcia was a Spanish bishop who died in 1940. Known as the "bishop of the tabernacle," he worked tirelessly to spread devotion to the Eucharist. When he died, he was buried near the tabernacle of Palencia, where he had served as bishop.

"I ask to be buried next to a tabernacle," he wrote before his death, "so that my bones, after death, as my tongue and my pen in life, are saying to

those who pass: There is Jesus! ... Do not leave him abandoned!"

Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, which sponsors the conference, sees a close connection between the Eucharist and the faith of Catholic men.



Fr. Jonathan Meyer

"We want men to be men of the Eucharist," he said. "We want them to be men who, first and foremost, attend holy Mass; worship our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; and then strive to live lives under the motto of 'This is my body given up for you.'"

"We learn from the Master, we learn from our Lord how to lay down our lives and to give ourselves away in beautiful love."

Father Meyer said that having the conference focused on the Eucharist will help the men attending live their faith more fully and concretely in their daily lives.



Matt Birk

"Our worship and reception of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is truly a call to be eucharistic men who offer their lives daily to their wives, their children, to the poor, to the struggling," he said. "It's beautiful. I'm excited about it."

For the first time, Father Meyer will be a keynote speaker at the conference.

Other speakers include Matt Birk, a former All-Pro and Super Bowl champion National Football League center. A devout Catholic husband and father, Birk received the NFL's prestigious Walter Payton Man of the Year Award in 2011 for his efforts to improve literacy among at-risk youths in Baltimore, where at the time he was a player for the city's Ravens football team.



Bear Woznick

Catholic author and speaker Bear Woznick will also be featured at the conference. A world champion surfer and host of shows on TV and radio for the Eternal Word Television Network,

Woznick is an author of several books on living the Catholic faith.

Added late to the conference's schedule will be an appearance by Mark Houck, who was acquitted on Jan. 30 by a jury in a federal court in Philadelphia of two charges that he had violated the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE Act, for allegedly assaulting an abortion clinic volunteer in October 2021.

Houck is the founder of The King's Men, a Catholic lay apostolate. A chapter of the apostolate at All Saints Parish in Dearborn County has been involved in organizing the conference since it began in 2015. Houck was a speaker at the conference in 2016.

The conference will include presentations by the speakers, the praying of the rosary, Mass and eucharistic adoration. The sacrament of penance will be available throughout the event.

New to the conference this year, eucharistic adoration will take place throughout the event in a room at East Central High School. The relics of Blessed Carlo and St. Manuel will be in that room for veneration. Those praying before the Blessed Sacrament will be able to hear the speakers giving presentations in the school's performing arts center.

Tickets to the conference are \$40 for men 25 and older. Those younger



A relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis, an Italian teenager who died in 2005 and was beatified in 2020, will be on display for veneration on Feb. 18 at East Central High School in St. Leon during the eighth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference, sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. (Submitted photo)

than 25 can attend for \$15. Clergy and religious can attend for free. Groups of 10 or more can purchase tickets for \$35 per person.

Lunch is included in the ticket price. "We now live in a post-COVID world," Father Meyer said, "and there is a great need for us to be with each other. All of us can listen to content online. That's a great gift that we have in our time."

"But there are also times to come together as brothers in the Lord for community, for prayer and to be men together for Christ. And I believe that that is something that God is inviting us to truly consider."

(For more information on the E6 Catholic Men's Conference or to purchase tickets, visit www.e6catholicmensconference.com.) †

Over protests, Minnesota lawmakers pass right to abortion law, send to governor

ST. PAUL (OSV News)—In a party line vote, Democrats in the Minnesota Senate passed a bill 34-33 in the early morning hours on Jan. 28 to place a right to abortion for any reason and without a limit on viability into state law. The House approved the measure on Jan. 19 and Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, is expected to sign the bill into law.

Pro-life and pro-abortion advocates gathered in large numbers outside the Senate chambers at the State Capitol in St. Paul shortly before the debate began about noon on Jan. 27. In that debate, which stretched more than 15 hours, Democrats rejected multiple Republican amendments to the Protect Reproductive Options, or PRO Act, before the final vote on Jan. 28.

Hoping to sway lawmakers and showing support for their cause, the song "Amazing Grace" from pro-life advocates rose alongside pro-abortion chants of "we say pro-choice," and "two, four, six, eight, separate Church and state." People holding signs that stated "Science says abortion kills a human being," "I am human," and "I regret my abortion" stood beside another group with signs stating slogans such as "Keep abortion safe and legal."

Standing behind the main gathering of opposing sides stood Angela Erickson, 30, with her five children, all age 7 and younger. A member of St. Anne Parish in Hamel, Minn., Erickson and her children drove an hour from their home to be present as the Senate took up the bill that had already passed the House 69-65 on Jan. 19.

"There's no scourge worse than abortion," said Erickson, a board

member of St. Paul-based Pro-Life Action Ministries (PLAM) and co-host of Relevant Radio 1330AM's "Living the Gospel of Life" with PLAM Executive Director Brian Gibson.

Asked how her presence with her children might be helpful at the Capitol, Erickson told *The Catholic Spirit*, "I want other people to see that children are a blessing and not a burden."

Not far away stood Jon Guden, 61, of the St. Joseph Community in Rosemount, Minn., quietly praying the rosary.

"We can't do it alone," Guden said in reference to changing the minds of abortion advocates. "It requires the Lord and Mary to intervene."

Measures to codify abortion in Minnesota—the House bill and its companion bill in the Senate—moved quickly as the 2023 legislative session opened on Jan. 3. The House saw its bill introduced on Jan. 4. The bills made their way through House and Senate hearings, with Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC) officials and Bishop Chad W. Zielinski of New Ulm among those testifying against them.

Democrats, who hold a majority in the House, gained a majority in the Senate in the November elections.

Only hours before the full House vote, Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda and Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Williams of St. Paul and Minneapolis, along with Bishop Zielinski and the state's four other Catholic bishops, wrote a letter protesting the bills and had it hand-delivered to every lawmaker.

Rep. Jim Nash, R-Waconia, referred to the bishops' letter during lengthy

floor debate before the House vote and quoted from it regarding responsibility to protect life: "The work to limit demand for abortion, however, does not absolve the legislator from the responsibility to protect the living human being in the womb. No amount of support for public assistance programs is sufficient to exonerate one from complicity and cooperation in creating legal frameworks that facilitate the death of other human beings through legal abortion."

"That's a lot," said Nash, who is not Catholic, emphasizing the moral weight of the bishops' words. He encouraged lawmakers to find the courage to vote no and "follow that friction in your heart."

As the Senate prepared to debate the measure that passed the House, Archbishop Hebda released a video and accompanying statement on Jan. 25, urging people to reach their senators to head off approval of the bill.

"The PRO Act is part of the most extreme abortion legislative agenda in Minnesota history, allowing for abortion for any reason and at any time without regulation," the archbishop said. "How disturbing that a pre-born child whose heart is beating, who can feel pain and who may even be viable outside the womb is treated with such disdain."

In their letter to lawmakers, released by MCC, the bishops said they were disappointed "to see the quick pace at which these destructive bills are moving, and we hope to give legislators pause."

Beyond codifying abortion, MCC said in a news release the PRO Act does not distinguish between minors and adults

as it directs state courts to protect the "fundamental right" to reproductive freedom, thereby opening the door to a host of fertility treatments, regardless of wisdom or ethics.

The bill states in part: "'reproductive health care' means health care offered, arranged, or furnished for the purpose of preventing pregnancy, terminating a pregnancy, managing pregnancy loss, or improving maternal health and birth outcomes. Reproductive health care includes, but is not limited to, contraception; sterilization; preconception care; maternity care; abortion care; family planning and fertility services; and counseling regarding reproductive health care."

In effect, the bill could lead to minors being able to access sterilization without parental notice or consent, as well as receive hormonal contraceptives, medical treatments and sex-transition therapies without parental consent, MCC warned.

The bill also could lead to lawsuits at the intersection of bioethics and new reproductive and fertility treatments and infringe on conscience and religious liberty rights of individual and institutional medical providers who don't want to provide such treatments, MCC officials noted.

Minnesota's Supreme Court found a constitutional right to abortion in the state in a 1995 ruling. Backers of legislation that would place a right to abortion into state law argue that codifying the right would add security, considering the U.S. Supreme Court in June overturned its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that had found a right to abortion in the U.S. Constitution. †

ST. RITA

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These accomplishments recognize the parish's religious, social, cultural, architectural and historic impact—an impact that began at a critical time for Black Catholics.

Forward thinking legacy

Times were troubled for Black Catholics in Indianapolis 100 years ago.

"Indiana was at the height of the segregation movement," says Legg. "The [Ku Klux] Klan was extremely powerful. Given that we were both Black and

Catholic, we had a double target on our backs."

And with many parishes of the time still affiliated by nationality like German, Irish and Italian, "there really was no place" for Black Catholics to call their faith home, he explains.

The creation of the parish by then-Bishop Joseph Chartrand in 1919 was "a tremendous show of Church support and sympathy to the needs of Black Catholics," says Legg.

Since its founding, the faith community has been building what he calls a "forward-thinking legacy."

Much of that legacy occurred under the leadership of Father Bernard Strange, the parish's administrator, associate pastor then pastor from 1935-1973.

According to Legg's research, some of the Caucasian priest's accomplishments at the parish and its former school include obtaining the right of Black girls to attend local Catholic high schools, instituting a tuition payment plan for financially challenged families, including roller skating lanes in the school's gym, and creating the archdiocese's first dedicated school library.

And he gave a boost to bingo, Legg adds.

Indiana's Hasbrook Anti-Gaming Law, passed in April 1953, listed an exception for churches. Nevertheless, when a St. Rita parishioner was arrested and found to have a ticket from a St. Rita bingo fundraiser, he was charged under the Hasbrook law.

"Father Strange realized the importance of that situation," says Legg. "He represented the parishioner in front of the courts. Ultimately St. Rita prevailed, and the charges were dropped. So, churches can thank St. Rita for playing bingo without the state breathing down their neck."

Pennies, nickels and dimes

Father Strange's greatest physical legacy is the parish's Mid-Century Modern church, built from 1958-59.

"He believed in working hard and earning your way," says Legg, who grew up in the parish during the Father Strange years. "He told us we could have a magnificent church, but we'd have to raise the money in pennies, nickels and dimes."

And they did. When construction was completed, the cutting edge, state-of-the-art church was paid for.

But true of any building, the cost of maintenance never ends. To help preserve the church and other campus structures built between 1919-1972, the parish sent a team from St. Rita to attend the Indiana Landmarks' Sacred Places workshops in 2019-20.

St. Joseph of Carondelet Sister Gail Trippett, then-parish life coordinator and now an assistant on the parish's preservation and grant projects, describes the workshops as "a yearlong process of teaching congregations about development, looking at facilities, looking at how to repurpose or reenergize them. They did a facilities assessment of our buildings and looked at value-assessing ways we can reach out and help in the community."

After attending the workshops, Sister Gail applied for and received four grants for the parish totaling \$41,000 from Indiana Landmarks.

By now familiar with the structures on St. Rita's campus, Indiana Landmarks urged the parish to apply for

a National Fund for Sacred Places grant to help restore its bell tower—a \$450,000 project.

The organization offers matching grants to select congregations that "contribute significant value to their communities" and whose "historic and cultural significance are essential parts of our national heritage," according to the fund's website.

A new grant team consisting of Sister Gail, Legg and parishioner Linda Johnson took Indiana Landmark's advice and applied for the grant. Out of more than 360 applicants nationwide, St. Rita was one of only 30 to qualify. If the parish raises \$300,000 by October 2024, the grant will contribute the remaining \$150,000 to restore the bell tower.

The facilities assessment found other causes for concern as well.

"The church needs tuckpointing and weatherproofing," says Sister Gail. "We need to renovate the Father Bernard Strange Family Life Center, upgrade the electricity and heat in the entire building. And the old preschool will need to be demolished" due to significant water damage, mold and mildew. The parish hopes to erect a small museum in its place.

The combined cost of these projects is about \$1.15 million, Sister Gail says.

"Instead of raising money by pennies, nickels and dimes, it's more like dollars, hundreds of dollars and thousands of dollars now," Legg quips.

Hence, St. Rita's ongoing grant-seeking efforts. In January, the parish received a \$100,000 Preserving Black Churches Grant through the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

"We were thrilled to be awarded," says Legg.

Space to continue our mission

The church is so notable in art and architecture that Indiana Landmarks included it on its holiday church tour last December.

"It's one of those hidden gems that nobody knows about," says Suzanne Stanis, Indiana Landmarks' vice president of education.

Her co-worker Eunice Trotter agrees.

"We have this desire to help support the preservation of iconic facilities such as St. Rita Catholic Church," says Trotter, director of Indiana Landmarks' Black Heritage Preservation Program. "There is this wonderful heritage there that we have a responsibility to preserve."

To help preserve that legacy, Legg undertook the arduous task of applying for the St. Rita campus to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

"We've been recognized by the state of Indiana as being eligible for inclusion. We've cleared all of the initial barriers, but it's a long process," he says. The final announcement will be made in 2024.

"Most people think being listed comes with all kinds of restrictions, but that's not the case," Legg adds.

According to the NRHP website, "National Register listing is an honorific and does not come with any restrictions as to what can be done to the property by its owners."

Rather, it states, being listed makes "applicable property owners eligible for grants like the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program ... and the Conservation License Plate Program."

Raising funds, applying for grants and seeking National Register of Historic Places status is about so much more than the upkeep of buildings, says Sister Gail.

"Our main purpose is to give us a worship space and space to continue our mission in spreading the good news, to really play a prominent part and be a positive force in the changes that happen in the community and neighborhood around us."

(To contribute to the Bell Tower Campaign, send a check made out to St. Rita Catholic Church, write "Bell Tower Capital Campaign" in the memo line, and mail it to St. Rita Parish, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46202. To contribute to the \$1.15 million campaign, go to stritaindy.org. All donations are tax-deductible.) †

St. Rita Church has possibly world's 'most complete collection' of Peter Recker works

By Natalie Hoefler

After years of research, Caleb Legg, a member of and historian for St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis, believes St. Rita Church is possibly the world's "most complete collection" of art by renowned mid-20th century German-born Catholic artist Peter Recker (1913-2003).

"I've researched all of his works in Europe, and I've researched his works here in the United States," he says. "I can't find a more complete collection anywhere."

Legg, an architectural expert, has done extensive research on the faith community and its structures. Much of his work was done for preservation grant applications, as well as for the inclusion of the parish's campus on the list of National Register of Historic Places.

Recker's pieces in the church include mosaics and bronze work. He also designed its stained-glass windows, tabernacle, most of the sanctuary furniture and more.

"He was very influential in Europe, and he was a person who was on the cutting edge of what was desirable at the time," says Legg.

"He cut his teeth [in his career] restoring the odious depiction of Christ called 'Sol Invictus' in the necropolis of the tomb of Saint Peter" under St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. "You can see his inspiration from that work in the large mosaic behind [St. Rita's] altar—the chariot wheels, the horses, the stylistic figure."

Pictured here are photos of some of Recker's pieces and designs in St. Rita Church, with explanations by Legg. †



Peter Recker created the mosaic work for the church's baptistry and the triangular bronze ambry installed in the right-side wall, and also designed the baptismal font. "The mosaic is of [St.] Philip baptizing the Ethiopian," as told in Acts 8:26-40, says Caleb Legg. "It's another nod to the African American, symbolizing that Blacks have been part of the Catholic faith from the very beginning of Christianity." As for the bronze ambry, Legg notes that Recker "created all the bronze works in the church."



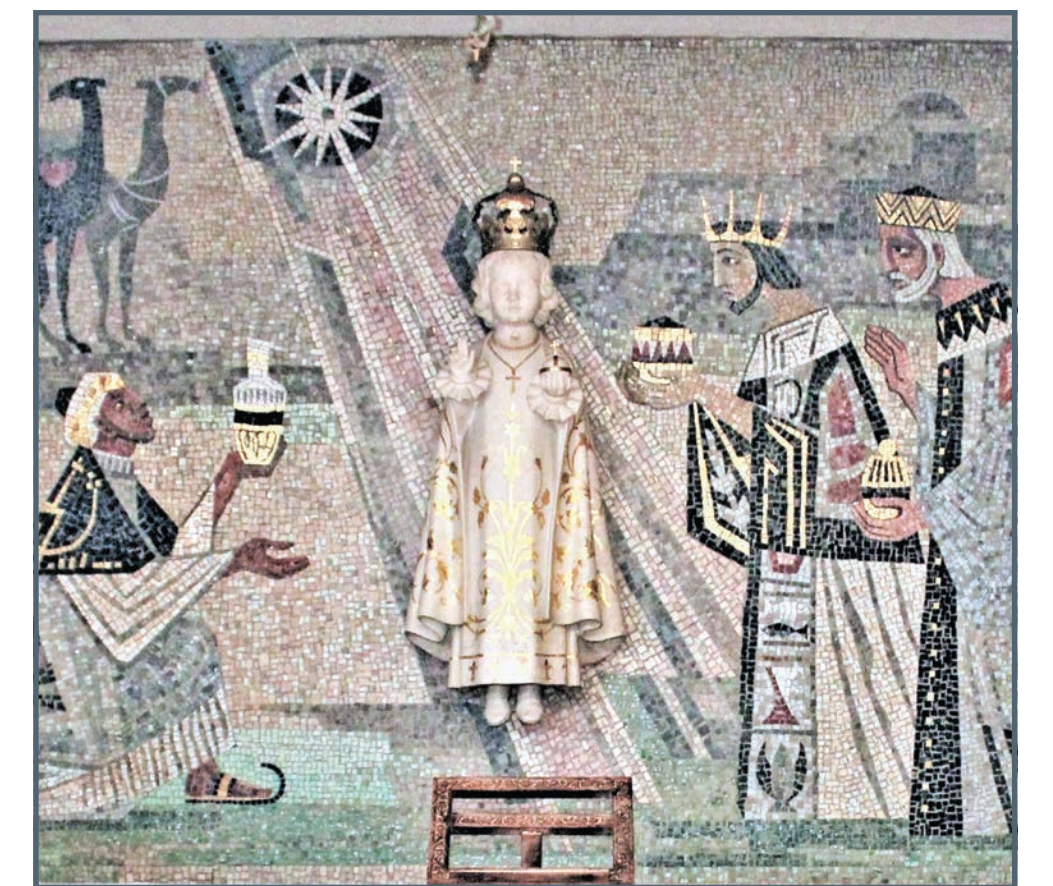
The tabernacle at St. Rita Church was designed by Peter Recker then fashioned and executed by a goldsmith in Cologne, Germany.



On the floor in front of the sanctuary of St. Rita Church is an emblem designed by Peter Recker representing a crown of thorns and a rose. The symbols represent two miraculous occurrences associated with St. Rita: a stigmatic wound on her forehead as if pierced by a thorn from Christ's crown, and the finding of a rose bloom in her parents' garden in Italy just as she said would appear, despite it being January. Beneath the emblem is a relic of St. Rita.



The mosaic behind the altar of St. Rita Church depicting the assumption of Elijah into heaven was designed and created by Peter Recker. Caleb Legg sees similarities between this mosaic and one from the late third-early fourth century called "Sol Invictus" Recker helped restore in the tomb of St. Peter in Vatican City (inset, courtesy of Wikimedia). "The gold and ropes that you see is swinging down and going back up," says Legg. "Recker intended for that to symbolize the Negro spiritual [hymn], 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.' It's a nod to African American spirituality." (Submitted photos by Caleb Legg)



For this Peter Recker-created Nativity mosaic in St. Rita Church, Caleb Legg explains the Infant Child of Prague statue was used instead of the Christ Child because the parish priest at the time the church was built, Father Bernard Strange, "was very much a proponent of praying to the Infant of Prague." He notes that including an African among the three wise men was another of Recker's nods in the church to Black Catholic culture.

ICC

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Hoosiers were lost to suicide and drug overdoses.

In his State of the State address in January, Gov. Eric Holcomb noted that Indiana ranks 43rd in the nation for access to mental health providers. Lawmakers recently heard a personal plea from Lieutenant Gov. Suzanne Crouch to help change that picture.

"We know that one out of five Hoosiers struggle with mental illness or addiction, and my family is no exception," Crouch told members of the Senate appropriations committee on Jan. 26 during a hearing on Senate Bill 1.

Crouch, a lifelong resident of Evansville, said she was raised by a mother who suffered from depression and that her sister died by suicide in her early 20s. She added that her daughter was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and that

just months ago, she lost her brother to alcohol-related causes.

"Hoosiers who inherit genes that predispose them to these conditions deserve an opportunity to be successful in life, and that's what Senate Bill 1 would provide," said Crouch, the founder and co-chair of the Indiana Mental Health Roundtable.

A graduate of Mater Dei High School in Evansville, Crouch has stated on numerous occasions that her Catholic faith has always guided her service in public life. The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) was among the numerous advocates for Senate Bill 1 testifying at the Jan. 26 committee hearing.

"The Church recognizes the great anguish of those who suffer from mental health challenges," said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "And while the Church's spiritual care can in some ways provide a source of hope for those in despair, we recognize that we cannot

do this alone—that qualified mental health services are of incredible value.

"We know firsthand through the work of our diocesan Catholic Charities agencies the great need for mental health services in our communities. Some of our agencies are trusted partners with behavioral health clinics, especially in southern and central Indiana."

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis employs a number of licensed counselors and social workers who offer services to people with mental illness and addiction issues. One example is a partnership with IU Health in Mooresville, where mental health professionals employed by Catholic Charities counsel patients on-site based on their ability to pay.

David Bethuram, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities, says that with passage of Senate Bill 1, the archdiocese and the other four Catholic dioceses in Indiana could broaden their scope in offering mental health services to individuals and families.

"What this bill does is put the right people together around the table and determine how we are going to provide mental health services to the people who most need them," said Bethuram, who has a background in spiritual and pastoral care.

In explaining the scope of what the Church is called upon to provide, he offers an analogy to a well-known parable.

"What we do in Catholic Charities and mental health is that we are sometimes both the Good Samaritan and the innkeeper," said Bethuram, a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. "Sometimes we have to go above and beyond and ask, 'What other services and help do you need?' Right now, we don't have the capacity to help everyone. We would love to have additional therapists, but with that we need additional funds."

In addition to funding more mental health professionals in clinical settings, Senate Bill 1 would establish and train crisis response teams that include law enforcement

professionals and other first responders. The need for such resources was brought into sharp focus last April in Indianapolis, when Herman Whitfield, a 39-year-old pianist and composer, died at his parents' home after suffering a mental health crisis and being taken by police.

During the committee meeting late last month at the Statehouse, lawmakers heard another dramatic example of a mental health crisis that ended in tragedy.

Jay Moser of Indianapolis described how his son, Adam, was killed by police outside his Florida home in 2021 following a frantic call by his wife to 911. One week shy of his 40th birthday, Adam Moser was a Navy veteran who had battled depression and alcohol-related issues and was suicidal.

"I don't blame the police, but I believe that with training and a proper person there to care for a person in such distress, this would not have happened," said Moser, who has turned his grief into advocacy for better mental health services.

His daughter, Jodie Moser, also testified at the hearing and thanked Crider for bringing Senate Bill 1 forward.

"This bill has the opportunity to not just change lives but save lives," she said. "Everyone in this state can benefit from this type of legislation, and we have the chance to not only help Hoosiers but to be a model and an example for other states."

At press time, the Senate appropriations committee was scheduled to vote on the bill on Feb. 2.

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church's position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †



Benedictine Brother Michael Reyes kneels in prayer during a Jan. 25 Mass at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln during which he professed solemn vows as a member of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. He also shows the traditional haircut, known in Latin as “corona” (“crown”) given to monks at the monastery when they enter the novitiate and profess solemn vows. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

Saint Meinrad monk professes solemn vows in Jan. 25 liturgy

Benedictine Brother Michael Reyes professed solemn vows on Jan. 25 as a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad during a Mass in the monastic community’s Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

Brother Michael, 46, is a native of Manila, Philippines. He is currently receiving priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, which is a ministry of the monastery.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in music from the University of the Philippines, a master’s degree in music composition and theory from the University of Nevada and a doctorate in music composition from the University

of Illinois in 2019.

He has received international recognition and awards in his work in music composition.

Before Brother Michael entered Saint Meinrad’s novitiate in 2019, he was a member of St. John Catholic Newman Center in Champaign, Ill.

In professing solemn vows of obedience, fidelity to the monastic way of life and stability in the community at Saint Meinrad, he becomes a full and permanent member of the Benedictine community.

(For more information on Saint Meinrad Archabbey, visit www.saintmeinrad.org.) †

Nicaragua’s government ups Catholic persecution with secret trial convictions

(OSV News)—Four clergymen, two seminarians and a diocesan journalist were convicted in Nicaragua on charges of conspiracy to undermine national integrity and spreading false information, according to local media—charges the men denied and which critics condemned as an escalation of the persecution of the Catholic Church in the Central American country.

The seven individuals—three priests, two seminarians, a deacon and a cameraman—were found guilty on Jan. 26 in a secretive trial, in which they were denied representation by lawyers of their choice.

Fathers Ramiro Tijerino, José Luis Díaz and Sadiel Eugarríos; Deacon Raúl Antonio Vega; seminarians Darvin Leiva and Melkin Centeno; and cameraman Sergio Cárdenas are expected to be sentenced on Feb. 3, according to the Nicaraguan Human Rights Center. Prosecutors have asked the court for sentences of 10 years in prison.

The individuals were among 11 persons arrested in August 2022—along with Bishop Rolando Álvarez of



Bishop Rolando Álvarez

by President Daniel Ortega.

Bishop Álvarez has been held under house arrest since his arrest. He was

ordered to face similar charges as the newly convicted Catholics at a Jan. 10 hearing in Managua, the nation’s capital.

The bishop had previously decried human rights abuses in Nicaragua, where the Ortega regime has cracked down on dissent, rigged elections in its favor, and closed independent media outlets.

Another priest, Father Óscar Benavides Dávila, was convicted on Jan. 16 on charges of conspiracy to undermine national integrity and spreading false news. Nicaraguan media reported he was the first priest convicted on such charges.

The Catholic Church came into conflict with Ortega after providing spiritual support and protection to protesters taking to the streets in 2018, demanding the president’s ouster. Priests later accompanied the families of political prisoners.

Nicaragua has closed Church media outlets and charitable projects, while also expelling Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag in March 2022.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said in December that Nicaragua was holding 225 political prisoners, often in deplorable conditions.

“Human rights defenders, journalists, clergy or those perceived to be political opponents, are arrested, harassed, intimidated,” Türk told the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva. “Some are prosecuted for the offenses of conspiracy to undermine national integrity or for ‘false news.’ All part of a systematized effort to stifle opposition and dissent.” †

Knights of Columbus launch initiative to bring men to heart of Christ

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (OSV News)—The Knights of Columbus fraternal organization is launching a new initiative called Cor: Catholic Men’s Fellowship.

As part of the initiative, Knights of Columbus councils are being asked, in consultation with their pastor, to organize monthly meetings where Catholic men can gather to deepen their faith.

The details of the content and structure of the meetings are left to the individual councils to decide, but they should all have three elements: prayer, faith formation and fraternity, explained Jimmy Dee of Knoxville, Tenn., director of evangelization and faith formation for the Tennessee Knights of Columbus.

Cor meetings could take many forms, Dee said—including a Bible study group, a prayer group, a group that gathers to discuss spiritual books—depending on the interests of the participants. Councils could sponsor several Cor meetings, each with different content and structure, he said.

The meetings will be open to all men of a parish, not just Knights, Dee said, and they shouldn’t be seen as in competition with faith formation programs that already exist in a parish.

Cor is not designed to replace the many activities the Knights sponsor, according to Dee. “It is a new initiative to expand on the good things you’re already doing,” he told council leaders during a recent meeting at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Nashville.

The name of the initiative is drawn from the Latin word for heart, *cor*, and is inspired by the motto of St. John Henry Newman, “*Cor ad Cor Loquitur*,” which means “Heart speaks to heart.”

“When you think about the Cor initiative, I want you to think about heart,” Dee said. “I’m talking about an opportunity to get men together where they feel more comfortable to discuss difficult questions about their faith.”

The Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, which has more than 2 million members worldwide, developed the new initiative.

“Prayer, formation and fraternity all begin with the heart and direct the heart in relationship to God and each other in true charity,” says a Knights handout on the new initiative. “The goals of each Cor meeting are to provide

the opportunity for Catholic men to encounter Christ; to strengthen their bonds of brotherhood; to share their faith, as brothers, and bring souls to Jesus Christ.”

It aligns with the efforts of the Tennessee State Council during the last six years to put Christ and the Catholic faith at the forefront of all the Knights do.

“They shared their admiration for the work we have been doing,” Dee said of Supreme Council officials who developed the Cor initiative. “Many times, Tennessee has been called out as an example” for the rest of the order, he told the *Tennessee Register*, Nashville’s diocesan newspaper.

In outlining the initiative, Dee pointed to troubling trends in the Church, including surveys in recent years that found that nearly two-thirds of Catholics didn’t believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

He noted that 70% to 85% of council members don’t engage in council activities. “We’ve got to do something to start looking at new ways to reach those men,” Dee said.

“Our problems are not new,” he added. “These are the same problems Father [Michael] McGivney faced when he started the order.”

Blessed Michael McGivney established the Knights of Columbus in 1882 after witnessing men in his parish drifting from the Church.

In addressing council leaders at the meeting at the pastoral center, State Deputy Fred Laufenberg quoted from the remarks of Father J.H. O’Donnell in 1900 at a memorial service for Blessed McGivney:

“It was his aim to surround his proteges with an atmosphere of religion and to bring them into even closer relationship to mother Church. ... Father McGivney was actuated primarily by religious motives. Zeal for souls is the cornerstone of the superb organization.”

The Cor initiative is part of an effort “to bring the order back to its roots,” Laufenberg said. “The Tennessee Knights of Columbus are fully committed to seeing that Father McGivney’s vision is fulfilled and our mission is accomplished.”

But he said there is work to be done to keep “our Christocentric heritage at the forefront of all our endeavors” and to address “the challenges and influences that living in a secular world places on our mission to

serve Christ properly. We must be retrained in the ways of discipleship and how to lead others to Christ.”

The meeting included a leadership retreat for council leaders focused on leading with the heart of Christ, the mind of Christ, the will of Christ and the mission of Christ.

“Everything we do in the Knights of Columbus is built on God’s love for you, and for me, and for every man in our order, and how many men do we run across who don’t know this,” Dee told the leaders about leading with the heart of Christ. “What’s your job? Find that man to make sure he knows he is loved by God.

“The word of God ignites the heart,” he added. “How comfortable are you sharing the Gospel? ... I want you to let your heart become vulnerable to share it with other men.”

The goal of every Catholic is to be virtuous, said Joe McInerney, director of leadership and ethics education for the Knights’ Supreme Council. “To be with God means we have to be better than we currently are,” he said in addressing the mind of Christ.

“The reality is we are sinners. Sin is not something that can exist in the presence of God,” McInerney said. “But there is a way to fix that. ... Through God’s grace, through prayer, through the sacraments, we can be transformed.”

In Christ, people have the perfect model of a virtuous man, said Robert Nayden, director of the Catholic Information Service of the Supreme Council, who addressed leading with the will of Christ.

“We need to go back to the Gospel over and over again to see what Jesus actually did,” Nayden said. “The only way we’re going to know the will of Christ is if we spend time with him.”

The first step is to remove the obstacles to virtue in your life, Nayden said, “and then we need to commit ourselves to a disciplined life of daily prayer. ... The more time in prayer, the more we come in line with Christ.”

Greg Orr, one of the diocesan Cor captains named by the state council to help councils organize their Cor meetings, addressed leading men on a mission for Christ.

The mission is to put God first in our lives, get to know the Gospel and help as many other men as possible to know it, he said. †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Use extraordinary means to enliven faith during Ordinary Time

(Editor's note: This week, The Criterion begins a new feature offered by OSV News titled "Simply Catholic." Its weekly articles are intended to help readers learn more about their faith and to be inspired to live it more fully in their daily lives. It succeeds the Faith Alive! feature previously offered by Catholic News Service.)

By Woodeene Koenig-Bricker

Advent has its wreath, its candles, its hymns—all of which culminate in Christmas.

Lent has ashes, fasting, Stations of the Cross, which all lead to the Resurrection at Easter.

It's easy to be energized and excited about the faith during the high holy days. But Ordinary Time in the Catholic Church? It's just so, well, ordinary.

How do you stay involved and engaged when Sundays seem to run together and the next liturgical high point is weeks or months away?

There are, of course, the standard suggestions: attend daily Mass, pray the rosary and avail yourself more frequently of the sacrament of penance.

They are good ideas and can certainly help with a lagging faith, but many of us either already do these things or have done so in the past. What we long for is an infusion of ideas that are both a little different and yet still deeply rooted in our traditions.

So here are five suggestions to help make Ordinary Time a little less ordinary.

Pray a novena

A novena, nine days of private or public prayer intended to obtain a special grace, favor or blessing, has long been a part of the Church's devotions.

You can find novenas for everything from world peace to healing, most of which are directed to end on a particular feast day of Mary, Jesus or a prominent saint.

Sometimes non-Catholics, and even a few Catholics, may ask, "Why should we pray novenas?" The short answer is simply that Jesus Christ calls us to pray. In fact, he tells us to "pray always without becoming weary" (Lk 18:1), to pray with persistence. We'll never go wrong when we obey Christ. He promises that prayer works, and he often responds with electrifying results.

Make your Ordinary Time extraordinary by praying one (or more) novenas.

Keep a gratitude journal

Some scientific studies have shown that people who regularly "count their blessings" are happier than those who don't.

We are so often focused on the negatives in our lives



Dominican novices lead the way during a candlelight procession during an Our Lady of Lourdes novena Mass at St. Mary Church in Cork City, Ireland, on Feb. 11, 2022. Praying a novena is a good way to stay connected with the Church during Ordinary Time.

(OSV News photo/Cillian Kelly)

we overlook the positives. So, during Ordinary Time, take a small notebook and, once a day, write at least five things you are thankful for.

They don't have to be earth-shattering; a cup of coffee would suffice. Then, on Sunday, read aloud your list, saying before each item: "God, I thank you for..."

It seems like a simple activity, but it can literally be life-changing as a concrete, permanent record of the blessings of your life that is hard to overlook even when you are feeling down.

Act out

Our faith can become stale when it becomes too cerebral. Instead of "doing," we spend most of our time "thinking."

So, put your faith in action. No, that doesn't necessarily mean you have to start vigils at abortion centers or volunteer at soup kitchens—although those things are good and may be just what some people need.

You can act out your faith in smaller, more homey ways as well. For instance, Jesus told us if we had two coats, we should share with those who had none. Most of us probably have at least two coats in our closets, so paring down our clothes could be a great place to begin.

During Ordinary Time, simplifying, eliminating and giving away those things that we no longer use can become a great act of faith ... and a great faith-builder.

Read something with moral value

Have you ever read *Confessions* by St. Augustine of Hippo? *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales? *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky?

Or for more contemporary tastes: *Mr. Blue* by Myles Connolly or *In This House of Brede* by Rumer Godden?

In the weeks when the Church is not preparing for something special, we have the time to read what others have written about God, faith and the meaning of life.

We don't have to agree with everything we read, but reading morally-engaging literature is one of the best ways to keep our faith vital and vibrant.

Keep the Lord's Day

The weeks of Ordinary Time are ideally suited to creating family rituals that keep the Lord's Day as a special day.

Without the pressure of holidays and holy days, we can design our own personal practices that make Sunday a day to anticipate. As with most things, these don't have to be elaborate.

Perhaps stopping at a doughnut shop on the way home from Mass and letting everyone pick their favorite could become a "tradition." Or reinstitute a sit-down family dinner Sunday evening, even if you are sitting down to eat take-out. Or read aloud or listen to an audiobook.

Just find something you and your family can enjoy and save that activity for the Lord's Day.

Ordinary Time is only ordinary if we think of it that way.

If we consider these weeks not as the long boring stretches between the good stuff but as a time to try new things and refocus our energies on our spiritual growth, Ordinary Time can become one of our favorite—and most rewarding—times of year.

(Woodeene Koenig-Bricker is an author and editor from Oregon. She was the editor of Catholic Parent magazine from its inception and has written extensively on spirituality, especially saints. Her latest book is *Dinner Party with the Saints* from Paraclete Press.) †



Franciscan Sister Therese Carew poses in the clothing store of Christian Help, a ministry in Kermit, W. Va., that provides to people in need free clothing, food, furniture, household items and financial assistance with utilities, rent, medication, gasoline, propane and kerosene. Ordinary Time can be a period to put faith in action by giving away excess items such as clothing to ministries like Christian Help. (CNS photo/Colleen Rowan, The Catholic Spirit)

For the Journey/Effie Caldarola

We must recover those ‘recovering’ Catholics

“I’m a recovering Catholic,” our contractor announces jauntily, apropos of what I can’t remember. I think we were trying to decide on flooring for the front deck. It’s a phrase with which we’ve become familiar, so common that this guy we know only because he’s overseeing some basic repairs to our old house can throw it out casually.



Another common phrase in today’s parlance: “I was raised Catholic.” I can’t count the number of interviews with famous people in which I’ve read that statement. Often, it’s said with fondness. The people being interviewed are ascribing their beliefs in social justice, charity and right order to the years they spent at Mass or in a Catholic school classroom or gathered around the table for grace.

But let’s be clear, their comment implies, “I took the good part and left.” In many circles, to declare one is still a “practicing” Catholic is to admit to being old-fashioned, to still believing in Santa Claus, especially if Santa has been credibly accused of abuse. They’ve left that behind with the avocado appliances and shag carpeting of their childhood.

For those of us who still place their faith

in this community of saints and sinners, it can feel lonely. Many people around me are not going to church at all, and some of the stalwart Catholics I knew from my youthful days as a Jesuit volunteer and young wife and mother are dropping out or experimenting with Christian denominations.

I have a young friend who threw up his hands at the Church because he saw our leadership failing to embrace Catholic social teaching. The abuse cover-up was the last straw.

“But what about the sacraments?” I asked. “Don’t you miss the Eucharist?”

His answer was vague. Those other things were very important to him. OK, those things are important to me, too.

But don’t you miss the Eucharist? Don’t you want to be part of the change, part of the synodal process?

At a book sale, I found a used copy of Henri Nouwen’s book, *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith*. This Dutch priest and theologian, who died in 1996, was a prolific writer. The book was published in 1997, before the abuse scandal hit the news.

Nevertheless, in his entry for Oct. 20, he writes, “Over the centuries, the Church has done enough to make any critical person want to leave it.”

He recounts “violent crusades, pogroms, power struggles, oppression, excommunications, executions,

manipulation of people and ideas, and constantly recurring divisions.”

Whew. And he hasn’t even touched on more recent headlines.

But then he asks if we can believe “that this is the same Church that carries in its center the Word of God and the sacraments of God’s healing love?”

He speaks of the human brokenness of the Church, which presents the broken body of Christ to the world. Human promises are broken; God’s promise “stands unshaken.”

I love the Church because I love the communion of saints. I love the sacraments, the sacraments, the mystics and monasteries, the heroes from Teresa of Avila to Thea Bowman, from Ignatius of Loyola to Dorothy Day, from Francis of Assisi to Edith Stein. Would this cloud of witnesses want me to leave?

I wish that young man would stay. We need him. We need him involved in the conversation, we need him prodding his pastor and his bishop. We need him finding the promise among the brokenness of an imperfect Church. We need the community of each other.

Peter’s plaintive words in the Gospel of John echo: “Lord, to whom would we go?” (Jn 6:68)

(Effie Caldarola writes monthly for OSV News.) †

Journeying Together/

Hosffman Ospino

Why we need Hispanic teachers in Catholic schools

(Celebrate Catholic Schools Week is Jan. 29-Feb. 4.)

It’s been a year since Boston College released the results of “Cultivating Talent: A Summary of Findings from the National Study Examining Pathways to Increase the Presence of Hispanic Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools.” My colleague Dr. Melodie



Wytenbach and I served as the principal investigators for the project.

Much has happened during this time. More than 100 Catholic leaders met last October at Boston College for a national summit on Hispanic Catholic educators. In December, the *Journal of Catholic Education* published a special issue based on the study (accessible without cost).

Blogs, podcasts, interviews, presentations, magazine articles and many conversations have engaged the results of the study during this time. The conversation is just beginning.

Why must the conversation about the need to increase the number of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools continue? Why should we support these educators? Here are three main reasons, which are spelled out in more detail in the “Cultivating Talent” report.

First, demographics. Yes, knowing who we are today can help us plan better for tomorrow. About 45% of Catholics in the United States are Hispanic. So is nearly 60% of the school-age Catholic population. Catholic school populations need to keep working at mirroring the population in our Catholic parishes and neighborhoods. In many corners of the country, that population is Hispanic.

Increasing the Hispanic population in Catholic schools cannot be limited to student enrollment. We need more Hispanic teachers and leaders as well. They serve as role models for all students, particularly Hispanic students.

Any Hispanic student should be able to say, “One day I want to be a teacher—or a leader—like my Hispanic teacher.” Seeing oneself reflected in those we admire is important. That includes finding connections on matters such as race, ethnicity, culture and language.

Second, Hispanic teachers and leaders naturally embody important intercultural competencies necessary to educate the next generation of Catholics and citizens to succeed in a diverse society. Most of these teachers are bilingual and bicultural. They enter the classroom as cultural brokers who connect well with children who are Hispanic, as well as children from other cultures and races and their families.

Living amidst diversity requires that our children in Catholic schools learn skills and attitudes that help them to appreciate difference. They also need to learn how to live amid tensions and disagreements. Most Hispanic teachers and leaders learned these competencies growing up in the U.S. or adapting to this society as immigrants. Their wisdom enhances the Catholic educational experience in unimaginable ways.

Finally, most Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools are practicing Catholics. They value the richness of the Church’s sacramental and spiritual life and are sincerely committed to strengthening the Catholic identity of our schools. They often draw from the vibrancy that identifies practices of popular Catholicism. Their presence is positive for our schools.

The “Cultivating Talent” report shows that Hispanic teachers and leaders have

See OSPINO, page 14

Guest Column/Elizabeth Scalia

Is technology discreetly rendering parents expendable?

About 10 years ago, my younger son stopped me in my tracks with a thoughtful observation.

I wasn’t surprised that he could be thoughtful—he often is—but this time his thought seemed momentous to me: “Parents don’t get to teach their children anymore. When I was little,” he explained, “if I wanted to know almost anything, my first instinct was to go to you or Dad about it: ‘What’s a bowline knot? Why does everything get dusty? What is a shillelagh?’ We would always talk it through. Now, if I’m curious about something I just go to Google. Younger kids don’t even develop the habit of going to their parents for answers. They’ve been googling since they could reach a keyboard.

“Parents have become expendable,” he concluded. “They aren’t even in the equation.”

He went about his business unbothered. I, on the other hand, spent the rest of the day in a horrified sort of daze. Pondering just how numerous and fruitful were the meandering conversations that fill our lives, I realized my son had identified a real threat to ordinary family dynamics. Our children’s questions often became openings not just for discussion but for mutual learning and creative engagement. If my husband or I could not answer something off the top of our heads, we’d join in the research—searching a dictionary or an encyclopedia with them, or heading to the library if that’s what was required. We learned together, and more than once a child’s question turned into a personal or family project.

Did you ever notice that in a jar of mixed nuts the cashews and Brazil nuts are always on top while pistachios and broken pieces are on the bottom? One son noticed and asked about

it. Soon we were putting rocks of varied sizes into a can and shaking it, finding that—what do you know—smaller things sink to the bottom as space availability relegates bigger stuff to the top. This wasn’t an earth-shaking realization (although one son eventually used it for a grade-school science project to good effect), but the question sparked discussion and then activity. In varying degrees, the whole family participated in the discovery and together we managed to be curious, entertained, informed and—perhaps most important—impressed with each other.

It’s a slight thing, yes, but—as our little experiment demonstrated—small things are what the big things ultimately rest upon. Family structure, sibling reliance, mutual respect, parental humanity and vulnerability—all of that big stuff rests upon the little questions and answers, the ever-widening discussions, the trivial but sweetly-recalled moments of shared exploration and curiosities satisfied. Going to a search engine for an answer might be expedient, but it delivers none of that vibrant interaction. A question quickly resolved brings no encouragement to throw a curve into one’s thinking, or to puzzle out new ideas while laughing or maybe even crying, if that’s where the human part of it leads.

These memories came rushing back to me thanks to news stories about artificial intelligence and an AI tool called ChatGPT—GPT stands for “Generative Pre-trained Transformer”—which can write lively, human-sounding speeches, poems and school papers. Recently, Rep. Jake Auchincloss, D-Mass., took to the House floor and delivered a 100-word speech written by ChatGPT; anyone listening would never have suspected it wasn’t written by a human. In an “explainer” article, the Associated Press actually asked the

See SCALIA, page 14

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Be on watch for little lessons from God in your everyday life

I have a special needs son with autistic tendencies and limited mental capacity. He is approaching 37. I tell you this not



for sympathy, but so that I might share just a couple of religious truths that he has taught me.

First, I vividly remember carrying him up to Communion with me when he was still quite young and apt to dart away when

left to his own devices.

I remember receiving Communion and Eric asking, “Daddy, medicine?”

I could not help but think: what a wonderful image.

Isn’t the Eucharist that we consume

like the medicine that he had taken nearly every day for his behavioral needs?

On another occasion, there was the lesson that he taught me on the meaning of true prayers of petition. That night, when I had knelt down next to his bed to pray with him and tuck him in, I asked him, “Who do you want to pray for?”

He immediately responded, “Hank?” Hank and the additional names that follow are my wife’s brothers, his uncles. “Who else?” “Mike.” “OK, who else?” “Chip.”

“Anyone else?” “Brad.” At this point, he yelled, “Hank, Mike, Chip, Brad, cook?”

Now, you have to understand that to my son’s understanding of the world, this was “as good as it gets!” He loves to grill with his uncles. This experience is the joy of all holidays rolled into one activity. And

isn’t that how we ultimately spend much of our prayer time with God—in prayers of petition—letting God know what we want?

Lastly, Eric is known to shout the name of each person who arrives at a gathering. “Zach!” “Hank’s here!” I believe he would make a wonderful town crier in heaven.

In Scripture, we hear Jesus say, “Let the children come to me ... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mk 10:14).

My point is that we each have to constantly be on watch for little lessons from God in our everyday life. What lesson did God prepare for you today?

(Richard Etienne has a degree in theology from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and resides in Newburgh, Ind.) †

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msg. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 5, 2023

- Isaiah 58:7-10
- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
- Matthew 5:13-16

The Book of Isaiah's third section is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Scholars believe that this section was written perhaps in Jerusalem for the Hebrew remnant that had returned from Babylon.

This would put this section of Isaiah at a date after the epic Babylonian captivity. As political fortunes turned, the Persian ruler Cyrus had overtaken Babylon. A decree by him allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland after an absence of four generations. Indeed, few had probably ever seen their homeland.

Nevertheless, release from Babylon brought utter exhilaration to the exiles. They were free to go home!

This seemingly wondrous opportunity was bittersweet. When the exiles reached their ancestral homeland, they found deprivation and want, conditions worse than anything that they had experienced in Babylon.

Imagine their disappointment and anger. But the prophet reaffirmed God's goodness, calling upon the people themselves to provide for those in need. Then they would experience the fullness of vindication, the fullness of God's promise to give them life and peace.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the second reading. This epistle was addressed to Christians living in Corinth, then one of the major cities of the Roman Empire. Rich and sophisticated, Corinth was a virtual center of the culture at the time. It also was a cesspool of vice.

Paul's message ran directly opposite to all that mattered in Corinth. Of course, skeptics scorned him, asking if the Christian Gospel made any sense. The Lord was an obstacle for many. After all, importantly for so many, the founder of Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth, had been legally executed as a common criminal and as a traitor to the empire.

The Apostle's proclamation of Jesus in itself put mere human knowledge in its place.

In response, Paul insisted that he relied upon a source greater and more dependable than human wisdom, namely the Holy Spirit.

St. Matthew's Gospel furnishes the last reading, a collection of two brief statements by Jesus, given in highly descriptive and clear imagery.

In the first statement, Jesus tells the disciples that they are the "salt of the Earth" (Mt 5:13). In the second, the Lord admonishes followers to be the "light of the world" (Mt 5:14). The images of salt and light are common today, but an ancient aspect of each of them is unknown in this culture.

At the time of Jesus, salt was precious. Roman soldiers were paid in salt. ("He is not worth his salt." "Salary" derives from this practice.) Salt also was unrefined. Dust or sand usually mixed with salt. The less the dust and sand, the better the salt.

Today, people are accustomed to seeing bright lights at night. Darkness was a serious obstacle at the time of Jesus. Light, then, was precious in its own sense.

Jesus urges his disciples to uplift the earthly society by being "salt" and "light."

Reflection

Gently, but deliberately, the Church is guiding us onward from its introduction of Jesus of Nazareth as son of the human Mary, Son of God and Redeemer of the sinful human race, as given at Christmas, Epiphany and the feast of the Lord's Baptism. It challenges us to respond to Jesus.

These readings are clear. Discipleship is no mere lip service. It is the actual and intentional resembling of Christ in our daily lives.

Matthew makes clear that believers have a strength upon which to draw as they illuminate the world. It is within the grace of their faith. As disciples, they are empowered by God. Being a disciple is demanding, but it is possible with God's help.

Of course, to be pure, worthy and therefore as genuine as salt free of impurities, disciples must rid themselves of sin and fortify their Christian resolve. This will be the task of Lent, soon to begin. †



Daily Readings

Monday, February 6

St. Paul Miki and companions, martyrs
Genesis 1:1-19
Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 24, 35
Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday, February 7

Genesis 1:20-2:4a
Psalm 8:4-9
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday, February 8

St. Jerome Emiliani
St. Josephine Bakhita, virgin
Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-17
Psalm 104:1-2, 27-30
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday, February 9

Genesis 2:18-25
Psalm 128:1-5
Mark 7:24-30

Friday, February 10

St. Scholastica, virgin
Genesis 3:1-8
Psalm 32:1-2, 5-7
Mark 7:31-37

Saturday, February 11

Our Lady of Lourdes
Genesis 3:9-24
Psalm 90:2-6, 12-13
Mark 8:1-10

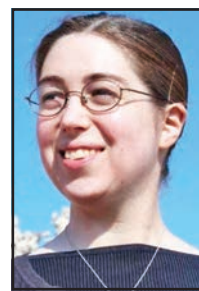
Sunday, February 12

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sirach 15:15-20
Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-37
or Matthew 20:22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Sacramentals are means to help people be open to the work of grace in their lives

Q What are sacramentals and why must they be burned or buried? (Minnesota)



A The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines sacramentals as "sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments," which make us more "disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments" (grace),

and through which "various occasions in life are rendered holy" (#1667).

There are different kinds of sacramentals, including sacramentals that are not material objects at all. The catechism goes on to note that our most important sacramentals are prayers of blessing, from simply daily meal blessings up to more solemn, lasting blessings, such as the dedication of a church building, religious professions or the consecration of virgins (#1671-72). Interestingly, prayers of exorcism are also considered sacramentals (see #1673).

However, it is clear that your question is addressing our tangible sacramentals—rosaries, holy medals, religious statues and images or other blessed objects. Canon law doesn't mention specific disposal methods for material

sacramentals that are no longer useful or have fallen into disrepair, but the general idea is that blessed objects need to be disposed of in a respectful manner.

This is the same principle behind our etiquette for the proper disposal of an American flag. A worn-out flag is to be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning, because of what the flag represents. A sacramental—blessed and recognized by the Church as an aid to receiving grace—should be disposed of with honor and respect.

Burning a blessed object so that it no longer exists intact, or returning it to the Earth via burial, are both intrinsically more reverent acts than simply adding a sacramental to the trash.

Practically speaking, if you have sacramental objects which you no longer need but which are still in relatively good shape, the best and easiest thing to do is pass them along to someone else who could use them. Many parishes have something like a "free table" where parishioners can leave their no-longer-needed Catholic books and small religious articles for anyone who might like them.

If you have sacramentals at home that are broken beyond repair and you are truly unable to burn or bury them yourself, you can call your local parish for advice.

Incidentally, there is one time every year when many parishes go out of their way to burn an old sacramental for you: prior to the start of Lent each year, when last year's Palm Sunday palms are collected and burned to create the ashes used on the upcoming Ash Wednesday.

Q Why do Catholics bless themselves with holy water? (South Carolina)

A A distinctive feature of any Catholic church are the holy water fonts usually found at the entrances to the worship space. Catholics customarily dip the fingertips of their right hand in the blessed water and make the sign of the cross upon entering and leaving the church.

We do this because holy water is, first of all, a reminder of the waters of our baptism. But holy water is also a sacramental frequently used as a means of blessing persons, places and objects. Catholics bless themselves with holy water as a means of invoking God's grace and protection.

Although we most often see holy water in churches, it is also possible to use holy water in other places and situations. For instance, many Catholics observe the beautiful custom of keeping personal holy water fonts inside the doors of their own homes.

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.) †



Father Aldrin Tayag from Lexington, Ky., poses with Filipino members of the archdiocese in Holy Angels Church in Indianapolis on Jan. 21 after celebrating a Mass in the Tagalog language for the Filipino community's *Sinulog*—or *Santo Niño*—Festival. The *Sinulog* Festival is an annual religious tradition in the Philippines held on the third weekend of January. The festival commemorates the introduction of Christianity to the Philippines when, in 1521, a small statue of the child Jesus was given to the king of Cebu by Ferdinand Magellan. The Mass and following celebration at Holy Angels was sponsored by the archdiocese's Philippine Ministry. (Submitted photo)

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

ALGER, Karen K., 76, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Dec. 9. Mother of Deb Alger.

AULL, Margaret M., 99, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Jan. 10. Mother of Nancy Decker, Mary Gatens, Irene King, Kathy McClaine, Janet Tobin and Laura Zell. Grandmother of 18.

BAKER, Hilary I., 89, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Dec. 23. Wife of David Baker. Mother of Avril Schutte and Karl Baker. Grandmother of seven.

BARNES, Thomas E., 93, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Jan. 4. Husband of Mary Ellen Barnes. Father of Kathy Traube, Andrew, Christopher, Matthew, Thomas and Vincent Barnes. Grandfather of 19. Great-grandfather of seven.

BERTOL, Angela, 47, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Dec. 28. Daughter of Adelfio Bertol. Sister of Antonio and Carol Bertol.

BISHOP, Joy, 94, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Dec. 7. Mother of Joy Cardinal, Stephanie Jones, Annie Petty, Betsy, Helen, Mary, Ed, James, John, Joseph, Max and Tom Bishop. Grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother of several.

BRIGHAM, Sandra J., 76, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Jan. 3. Mother of Jean Rydberg, Jim and John Brigham. Sister of Kim VanArsdall. Grandmother of four.

BUCKMAN, James E., 82, St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County, Jan. 12. Husband of Mary Frances Buckman. Father of Kim Perry, Tammy

and Todd Buckman. Brother of Pat Abel and Kelly Buckman. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of four.

BURTON, Floretta A., 89, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Dec. 10. Aunt of several.

CANULL, Natalie (New), 73, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Jan. 9. Wife of Douglas Canull. Mother of Maggie Hopkins. Sister of Elizabeth Dillon and Nancy Finch.

DALGLEISH, Rick, 74, Prince of Peace, Madison, Jan. 12. Husband of Connie Dalgleish. Brother of Rose Ann Seidl, Chester and Jack Dalgleish. Uncle of several.

DIGIOVANNA, Charles V., 83, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Jan. 5. Father of Tara Rose. Brother of Augustine DiGiovanna.

DOYLE, Suzanne, 79, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Jan. 4. Wife of Morey Doyle. Mother of Victoria, Andrew and Morey Doyle. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of one.

EVANS, Francis J., 82, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Jan. 16. Husband of Kathy Evans. Father of Angie and Scott. Brother of Jim, John and Leo Evans. Grandfather of two.

GREELEY, Norma J., 97, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Dec. 30.

GRISSMER, Thomas, 84, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 27. Husband of Alma Grissmer. Father of Cristina Grissmer. Brother of Jan and David Grissmer.

GROSS, Harriett, 82, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Jan. 21. Mother of Bridgett McDaniels-Russell, Mollee and Andrew McDaniels and Jason, John and Josh Fletcher. Grandmother of 22. Great-grandmother of 15. Great-great-grandmother of two.

HARDY, Orlando, 56, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Jan. 11. Husband of Lucia Hardy.

HARRELL, Gregory P., 67, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Jan. 2. Brother of Joe Harrell. Uncle and great-uncle of several.

ISTERLING, Gary, 84, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Nov. 11. Father of Diana Guynn. Brother of Marjorie Smith. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of three.

JASSO, Ricardo Salinas, 85, St. Anthony, Indianapolis, Jan. 8. Father of Claudia, Virginia, Alejandro, Efrain and Omar Salinas. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of 11.

KOLTER, Evelyn K., 79, St. Louis, Batesville, Jan. 7. Wife of Harry Kolter. Mother of Roseann Giesting, Nancy Ottier, Elizabeth, Christopher and Tony Kolter. Sister of Debbie Davis, Carolyn Hoff, Marilyn Rosenberger, Gary, Jerry, Kenneth, Robert and Tom Kuntz. Grandmother of 11. Step-grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of two.

LAUSTERER, Priscilla, 76, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Jan. 13. Wife of Dennis Lausterer. Mother of Jill Sisson and Denny Lausterer. Grandmother of three.

MCCARTHY, Sally A., 81, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Jan. 10. Mother of Kathleen Haberthy, Christopher, Michael and Timothy McCarthy. Grandmother of seven.

MCCARTIN, Rita, 84, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Jan. 14. Wife of Robert McCartin. Mother of Marcia Eddings and Douglas McCartin. Sister of Juanita Carter and Sue Dowdell. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of four.

MCPHERSON, Elizabeth A., 94, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Jan. 16. Mother of Katherine Hite, Dr. Linda Kern, Elaine, Charles, David, Gregory, James, Kevin, Michael and William McPherson. Grandmother of

32. Great-grandmother of 40. Great-great-grandmother of three.

MILLER, Patricia A., 94, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 25. Mother of Nancy Barber, Linda Crump, Diane Endres, Deacon Jim and Mike Miller. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of nine.

PEARSON, Lucille M., 88, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Dec. 17. Mother of Jon and Kevin Luttrell. Grandmother of nine. Great-great-grandmother of 25. Great-great-grandmother of nine.

PEYTON, Etta Mae (Chambers), 85, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Nov. 16. Mother of Angela Peyton. Sister of Joyce Baker.

PIEDRA, Manuel Martinez, 19, St. Anthony, Indianapolis, Jan. 7. Son of Bernardo Martinez and Socorro Piedra. Brother of Alejandra, Marisela, Juan and Luis Martinez Piedra.

PREWITT, Frank E., 87, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Jan. 10. Father of Lisa Cline, Andrew, Craig and James Prewitt. Brother of Dennis Prewitt. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of 35.

RIEDEMANN, Dale A., 76, St. Mary, Greensburg, Jan. 4. Father of Jessica Hunter and Dana Riedeman. Brother of Roseanne Noah, Julie Reed, Missionaries of Charity Sister M. Sefapano, Joyce, Carl, David, Omer, Paul and Robert

Riedeman. Grandfather of three.

SPINA, Mildred R., 83, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Jan. 10. Mother of Gregory, Victor, Jr., and William Spina. Sister of Mary Ann Sullivan. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of eight.

SWAN, Jeffrey J., 53, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Jan. 13. Father of Samantha, Joseph and Joshua Swan. Son of Fred and Judy Swan. Brother of Julie Swan.

THOMAS, Essie, 84, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, Jan. 5. Wife of LeRoy Thomas. Mother of Derrick Simms-Thomas, Gregory and Kevin Simms. Sister of Cora Gholston and Redford Moore. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of 10.

TOBIN, Denise A., 63, St. Philip Neri, Indianapolis, Dec. 22. Wife of Michael Tobin. Mother of Nicole Wesling, Jonathan and Matthew Tobin. Sister of Diana Hay, Dennis and William Barrett III. Grandmother of five.

WILSON, Helen, 95, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 27. Mother of Kathleen Ferguson, Christine, Charles and Thomas Wilson. Sister of Carolyn Fitzpatrick. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of nine. †

Praying for Christian unity



Pope Francis is flanked by Orthodox Metropolitan Polykarpos of Italy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate's representative in Rome, left, and Anglican Archbishop Ian Ernest, the archbishop of Canterbury's representative in Rome, as he celebrates an ecumenical Evening Prayer service marking the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome on Jan. 25. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

1 Ethics Point Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810

2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
 P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

SCALIA

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tool how to discern its writing from human work and was given a perfectly reasonable response. The article then noted, "Open AI said in a human-written statement this week that it plans to work with educators as it learns from how people are [using] ChatGPT" Increasingly, we will see distinctions between human and machine-generated material become required, if we're to keep the

world honest. For a while, anyway.

Our children learn from their parents and the world around them—how humans speak, act, explain, think, hold and uphold. Artificial intelligence learns, too, from what it is purposely or unwittingly fed by the human element. But it has no limits and no boundaries; it is an empty vastness, offering no human consolations, upholding nothing.

How terrifyingly bleak and unholy that sounds.

(Elizabeth Scalia is culture editor for OSV News.) †

OSPINO

continued from page 12

a special commitment to advocacy and the Church's social teaching. They are aware of the struggles that large numbers of Hispanics face in our society, since many of them face similar struggles, and want to ensure everyone they engage lives with dignity.

For Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic

schools, the education of the next generation of Catholics, a largely Hispanic body, is a personal responsibility shaped by their cultural identity. They are leading the way. May the conversation about increasing the number of Hispanic teachers and leaders in Catholic schools continue with the same vibrancy as in the last year.

(Hosffman Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.) †

Teacher's challenge leads students to connect popular songs to their faith

By John Shaughnessy

As a teacher, Anton Wishik often calls on the Holy Spirit to help him find intriguing ways to connect his students to the Catholic faith. Still, Wishik had an extra smile when he received an unusual inspiration for his public speaking class.

The inspiration came near the beginning of this school year when Wishik's wife Tina was listening to the radio as it played a hit song from 1986 called "Keep Your Hands to Yourself" by The Georgia Satellites.

Wishik focused on the key lyric of the smile-inducing song, a line that a woman repeatedly tells her boyfriend—"Don't give me no lines, and keep your hands to yourself." And when he heard the singer belt out another line—"she started talking about true love, started talking about sin"—Wishik viewed the song as a reflection of the Catholic teaching that "sex outside marriage is a sin."

That thought led to the assignment in which he challenged his freshman and sophomore students at Lumen Christi Catholic High School in Indianapolis to deliver a speech about a mainstream song that relates to Catholic teaching.

"They rose to the occasion," Wishik says. "Music is big to teenagers, sometimes the biggest thing. Some of them commented that they didn't realize there were so many songs that supported Catholic teaching. We think of rock n' roll of having this opposite message. It's not all drugs and sex. I wanted them to come to that thought, and they did."

After choosing a song—"It couldn't be a hymn or a Christian song," Wishik notes—the 15 students in his class had to tie the song to Church teaching by referencing two Bible verses and another Catholic source.

While the school didn't share the names of the students involved in the project, here are some of the songs they chose and the connections to Catholic teaching that they saw.

"What I've Done" by Linkin Park

The student who chose this song believes it

demonstrates two major elements of the Catholic faith: forgiveness and mercy.

The student sees that connection in several lyrics, including one that declares, "'cause I've drawn regret from the truth of a thousand lies." He also focuses on the refrain, "So let mercy come and wash away what I've done."

The student concluded that the song shows "the importance of self-forgiveness and the significance of the sacrament of confession. 'What I've Done' is a great song that shows the mercy of God."

"What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong

Two sets of lyrics in this song stood out to the student who chose this song. The first one notes, "I see trees of green, red roses too/I see them bloom for me and you." The second one notes, "I see friends shaking hands/saying, 'How do you do?'/They're really saying/'I love you.'"

The student used these lyrics to conclude that the song "supports the Catholic beliefs that the world is a gift to us from God, that the world is good and holy, and that even when things aren't perfect, it helps to remember the beautiful things God has made." He also added that "friendship is another beautiful part of our world."

"Where the Streets Have No Names" by U2

The student who chose this song believes its title is "a metaphor for heaven." After connecting many of the lyrics to biblical references and Catholic teachings, the student concluded that the song "shows how our ultimate goal is heaven, and that's what we should always be striving for, and how our sin causes us to want heaven even more."

"Whatever It Takes" by Imagine Dragons

One reference in this song captured the attention of the student who chose it. It's the line in which the singer declares, "Never be enough, I'm the prodigal son."

In that reference, the student sees the connection to one of the tenets of the Catholic faith—repentance.

"The prodigal son sins against his father and squanders



Pope Francis talks with U2 singer Bono before a meeting of Scholas Occurrentes in Rome on May 19, 2022. The event was for the launch of the "Laudato Si' School," a yearlong project of scholas of young people to develop projects to promote protection of the environment. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

his inheritance," the student noted. "When the son returns and repents, his father is overjoyed and forgives him. God wants for us to repent when we have sinned and then welcomes us back."

"If We Have Each Other" by Alec Benjamin

In choosing this 2018 song, the student focused on the lyrics of the chorus: "The world's not perfect, but it's not that bad/If we got each other, and that's all we have/I will be your mother, and I'll hold your hand/You should know I'll be there for you."

Showing the lyrics' connection to Catholic teaching, the student concluded, "In the song, the ideas of helping one another and caring more about God than material goods are supported and elevated. In order to be good Catholics, we must also practice these ideas in our daily lives." †

Pope Francis clarifies remarks that he made about homosexuality and sin

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis reaffirmed that homosexuality is not a crime, and that any sexual act outside of marriage is a sin, in a written response to a request for clarification about his remarks during a recent interview with the Associated Press.

In an interview with the agency televised and published in Spanish on Jan. 25, the pope had said that "being homosexual is not a crime. It is not a crime." He defined as "unjust" laws that criminalize homosexuality or homosexual activity and urged Church members, including bishops, to show "tenderness" as God does with each of his children.

In the interview, the pope said, "We are all children of God, and God loves us as we are and for the strength that each of us fights for our dignity. Being homosexual is not a crime. It is not a crime."

Then, he voiced an objection to that

statement, followed by how he would respond to that objection, saying, "'Yes, but it is a sin.' Fine, but first let us distinguish between a sin and a crime.

"It's also a sin to lack charity with one another," he added.

U.S. Jesuit Father James Martin, who is editor of Outreach.faith, which provides news and resources for LGBTQ Catholics, wrote to the pope asking him to clarify his statement, which some media outlets had reported as the pope saying being gay is a sin.

Father Martin published the pope's written reply in Spanish on Jan. 27. The pope acknowledged, "In a televised interview, where we spoke with natural and conversational language, it is understandable that there would not be such precise definitions.

"It is not the first time that I speak of homosexuality and of homosexual

persons. And I wanted to clarify that it is not a crime, in order to stress that criminalization is neither good nor just," the pope wrote.

"When I said it is a sin, I was simply referring to Catholic moral teaching, which says that every sexual act outside of marriage is a sin. Of course, one must also consider the circumstances, which may decrease or eliminate fault," he wrote.

"As you can see, I was repeating

something in general. I should have said, 'It is a sin, as is any sexual act outside of marriage,' " he wrote. "This is to speak of 'the matter' of sin, but we know well that Catholic morality not only takes into consideration the matter, but also evaluates freedom and intention; and this, for every kind of sin.

"And I would tell whoever wants to criminalize homosexuality that they are wrong," the pope wrote. †

Employment

Food Services Manager Needed

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House is seeking a full time Food Services Manager to be responsible for all aspects of the daily food service operational needs at Fatima Retreat House. This position involves maintaining food cost and labor cost budgets; menu planning and ordering; inventory control; supervising, training and scheduling of kitchen staff; and cooking. With a team of part-time cooks, the Food Services Manager presents Fatima meals and refreshments attractively and in a spirit of hospitality. The successful candidate must be available for a flexible schedule of at least 40 hours per week. Days may vary throughout the week, Monday through Sunday, depending on the Retreat House schedule.

The successful applicant must have institutional foodservice experience, supervisory and management experience, have good time management and communication skills and be attentive to detail. Also, they must have a heart for ministry and the mission of Fatima Retreat House.

Compensation is commensurate with experience. Benefits include Comprehensive Health plan, Employer contributed HSA for medical plan participants, Dental Insurance, Paid Vacation, Sick, and Personal Days, Life and Disability Insurance and 403(b) matching.

Persons may send a letter or email of interest to:
Georgene Beiriger, Director
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House
5353 East 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46226
gbeiriger@archindy.org

Classified Directory

For advertising rates call
(317) 236-1585.

For Sale

CALVARY CEMETERY,
435 W. Troy, Indianapolis, One
plot, section 4, Lot 529, space
2, \$2000. Near office, call or
text 317-947-7112.

Employment

Marketing Manager for Video Company

Thing in a Pot Productions in Bloomington is seeking applicants for a part-time, remote position. We create mission-driven videos for Catholic and nonprofit groups. The Marketing Manager will be responsible for the public face of the company and for cultivating awareness among the target demographic, including creating social media content and marketing-related emails.

For details and to apply:
www.thinginapot.com/blog/marketing-manager

Employment

Now hiring! CYO Camp Rancho Framasa, located in Nashville, IN, is hiring a Life Assistant to work with Supported Employment at the camp. This position is part-time (25-29 hours per week). \$22 per hour. The Life Assistant will provide direct support to a camp Program Staff member who has Down syndrome. This position includes: assistance with daily living tasks, which includes shopping, cleaning, and cooking, scheduling his work and non-work time, training and working alongside the individual as a job coach in the camp environment (programs, food service, office). Applicants should have experience working with individuals who have disabilities, be first aid and CPR certified or be willing to obtain, and have reliable transportation. Training provided. Send resume to Angi Sullivan, angi@campranchoframasa.org.

Where in the world is Catholic Mass attendance highest?

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The nation with the best Catholic Mass attendance in the world could be Nigeria, according to a new study published by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA).

When asked the question “Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?” 94% of self-identified Nigerian Catholics surveyed said they attend weekly or daily Mass.

The poll was conducted by the World Values Survey (WVS), which began tracking the data in the 1980s and has statistics for 36 countries with large Catholic populations. CARA, which gathered the results, said it’s not known exactly which country has the highest Mass attendance rate, “because surveys have not been conducted on the topic in every country in the world.”

But among those surveyed by WVS, aside from Nigeria, weekly or more frequent Mass attendance is highest among adult self-identified Catholics in Kenya (73%) and Lebanon (69%).

Latin America and Europe

“The next segment of countries, where half or more Catholics attend every week, includes the Philippines [56%], Colombia [54%], Poland [52%] and Ecuador [50%],” stated the report by CARA, which is based at Georgetown University in Washington. “Fewer than half, but a third or more, attend every week in Bosnia and Herzegovina [48%], Mexico [47%], Nicaragua [45%], Bolivia [42%], Slovakia [40%], Italy [34%] and Peru [33%].”

It added that between three in 10 and a quarter of Catholics attend Mass every week in Venezuela (30%), Albania (29%), Spain (27%), Croatia (27%), New Zealand (25%) and the United Kingdom (25%).

Pre-and-post-pandemic

Catholics in the United States come

in next, with about 24% attending Mass every week or more often prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In our most recent poll in late summer 2022, 17% of adult Catholics reported attending Mass this frequently with 5% watching Mass online or television from home instead,” CARA said.

Other countries with similar Catholic Mass attendance to the United States are Hungary (24%), Slovenia (24%), Uruguay (23%), Australia (21%), Argentina (21%), Portugal (20%), the Czech Republic (20%) and Austria (17%), the center said.

The lowest levels of weekly attendance are observed in Lithuania (16%), Germany (14%), Canada (14%), Latvia (11%), Switzerland (11%), Brazil (8%), France (8%), and the Netherlands (7%).

Not necessarily “religious”

In a breakdown of the report for Aleteia.org, John Burger notes that, surprisingly, it’s not necessarily the case that Catholics who consider themselves to be very religious are more likely to be frequent Mass attenders.

Lebanon, for example, has high Mass attendance, but the share of



A woman prays during morning Mass at St. Charles Church in Kinshasa, Congo, on Jan. 22. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate gathered results of a poll conducted by the World Values Survey and reported findings on Mass attendance worldwide, noting that pre-and-post-pandemic factors and economic correlations affect those numbers. (OSV News photo/Justin Makangara, Reuters)

Catholics there considering themselves to be religious is substantially lower in comparison to other countries. And 97% of Catholics in Uruguay consider themselves to be religious, yet only 23% of Catholics there attend Mass weekly or more often.

Other than Uruguay, the countries where Catholics are most likely to consider themselves to be religious are Nigeria (95%), Albania (94%), Slovakia (93%), the Czech Republic (92%), Italy (92%), Lithuania (92%), Kenya (92%), Colombia (92%), Bolivia (91%) and Poland (90%).

Correlation with wealth

CARA also noticed some correlation between economic factors and Mass attendance and concluded that Catholicism is strongest in what is often called the developing world, where GDP per capita is lower.

“It appears to be contracting in wealthier ‘developed’ countries,” the center said. “The precise mechanisms associated with economic development and wealth that are impacting Catholics’ participation in the faith and identification as religious are unclear. Whatever they are, they matter significantly.” †

Speakers address protecting moms, their unborn children from domestic violence

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—In October 2022, the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM) reported a statistic both shocking and grim: “Homicide is the leading cause of pregnancy-associated death in the United States; pregnant and postpartum women are more than twice as likely to die from homicide as from either hemorrhage or hypertensive disorders.”

However, the journal invoked the statistic as part of its argument that state abortion restrictions, following the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision, would lead to negative consequences for pregnant women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV). “Studies show,” the NEJM article continued, “that abortion access plays an important role in reducing IPV.”

Addressing this all too common notion that protecting women from domestic violence requires abortion—as well as discussing the ways Catholics can accompany pregnant women failed both by their partners and those who counsel abortion—was the subject of a Jan. 29 session during the 2023 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (CSMG) on “Peace Starts Here: Healing Wounds from Abortion and Domestic Violence.”

Organized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, 10 other USCCB departments and 20 national Catholic organizations, the CSMG was held in Washington on Jan. 28-31.

Mary McClusky, assistant director of Project Rachel Ministry Development at the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, said that, despite the fact that the lives of both pregnant women and their children in domestic violence situations are often at risk, there is always hope.

Sharon O’Brien, co-founder and director of Catholics for Family Peace, echoed this saying that while the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as the World Health Organization, make it clear that while domestic violence is a “mental health issue” that

ends up being a “physical reality” and “oftentimes, a fatality,” the “good news is, it’s completely preventable.”

According to the CDC, about one in three women reports having experienced severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetimes.

Domestic violence signifies a pattern of behavior used to control an intimate partner through fear and intimidation. “When you’re in a domestic violence situation,” O’Brien told the audience, “you make some pretty scary decisions in order to keep you and your children safe.”

However, domestic violence isn’t limited to physical abuse. “Fifty percent of domestic violence is actually the emotional, psychological aspect,” O’Brien explained. Neurologists have observed the brain interprets verbal abuse and insults identically to a physical slap. There also is an impact upon spiritual health.

A woman with an abusive partner may be coerced to terminate a pregnancy; her refusal to do so can, statistically, lead to murder. “The relationship between abortion and domestic violence—they’re not two independent things—is deep, and it’s mind-boggling,” O’Brien reflected.

While previous generations of spouses may have believed they had to remain in an abusive situation for the sake of a marriage, “the Church actually has a long history of being crystal clear that domestic violence has no place in any family,” said O’Brien. “It has no place in a Catholic family.”

In 2002, the USCCB updated its statement “When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women.” In the opening paragraphs, it declares: “... we state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual,

psychological, or verbal—is sinful; often, it is a crime as well. We have called for a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence.”

Amy Erardi, coordinator of pastoral care in the Office of Life, Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, proposed the audience could help pregnant domestic violence victims protect their lives and the lives of their unborn children by asking three questions: “What?” “So what?” and “Now what?”

“What” should recognize that pregnancy is not always a happy event, especially for victims of violence. Pregnancy resource centers must be sensitive to the fact that patients, even when they arrive on their own, may still be tracked or monitored by an abusive partner. Erardi said that at the pregnancy resource center where she volunteers, “we’re seeing women come in with an earpiece, or their cell phone is just left on, for someone on the other end to listen to the entire conversation.”

To assist at the parish level, Erardi suggested the USCCB-designed program Walking with Moms in Need, as well as Project Rachel.

The “So what?” component of her model, Erardi said, asks why we should care. The answer is because we are messengers of God’s grace—people of peace—who “stand against violence. This includes domestic violence, and violence of abortion.”

Prevention underscores the third and final question, “Now what?” Education at the local level, Erardi added, is crucial. “That is our call to action,” she said. “To find resources—to share resources—so that we can educate within our dioceses.”

(If you are experiencing domestic violence, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.) †



This illustration depicts domestic violence. “The Centers for Disease Control as well as the World Health Organization make it very clear that domestic violence is a health issue—a mental health issue to begin with,” said Sharon O’Brien, co-founder and director of Catholics for Family Peace, on Jan. 29 during a workshop at the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington. (OSV News illustration/CNS file, Emily Thompson)