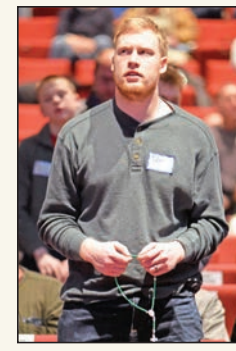




The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



'Go for it, men!'

Conference attendees find joy in sharing the faith, page 7.

CriterionOnline.com

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Head coach Dan Wagner shares a moment of joy with the players on the girls' varsity basketball team of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis during the 2023-24 season. (Photo courtesy of Angie Tragesser)

The story of a coach, a team, brothers, a family—and the love that grew in 8 days

By John Shaughnessy

There are times when death comes to a family member or a close friend—and a part of you dies too.

There are times when the people you have strived to build up, to help them reach their potential, become the people who lift you up, who are there for you as you struggle with your pain, your loss.

Dan Wagner experienced both of those times during a span of eight days in February, starting with a phone call that brought devastating news.

On the early afternoon of Feb. 5, Wagner—the head coach of the girls' varsity basketball team at Bishop Chatard High

School in Indianapolis—was preparing strategies for his team's upcoming regional game against Indian Creek High School in the Class 3A state tournament when his cell phone rang.

The face of his phone showed that the call was from one of his older brothers, Steve, a brother with a gift for making Dan laugh, especially when Steve shared some of their childhood moments.

Yet when Wagner answered the call with an enthusiastic "Hello, Steve!," his brother wasn't on the other end of it. Instead, it was Steve's wife, Nancy, and there was a deep sadness in her voice. She told Wagner that Steve had died unexpectedly earlier that day.

See **TEAM**, page 8

Contraceptive legislation raises moral issues, health concerns

By Victoria Arthur

A bill aimed at providing low-income women with long-acting contraceptives in the hospital immediately following childbirth has generated numerous



concerns for pro-life advocates, including the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC).

House Bill 1426 would require hospitals to offer a woman eligible for or receiving Medicaid assistance the option of having a long-acting, reversible contraceptive implanted before she is discharged from the hospital following delivery of her baby.

While acknowledging that faith-based hospitals with religious objections would be exempt from the requirement, the ICC expressed concerns about the legislation and requested an amendment to have natural family planning (NFP) offered to new mothers as well.

"We are grateful for the religious exemption so that a Catholic hospital could opt out of this requirement, but it's disappointing that our amendment to the legislation was not accepted," said Angela Espada, executive director of



Angela Espada

the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "If the goal is to prevent unwanted pregnancies, hospitals should also provide information about NFP—one of the most effective and least costly methods of planning a family, and the only one that does not pose health risks to the woman."

The bill was scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor at press time, just days before the conclusion of this short session of the Indiana General Assembly. The ICC's objections to the legislation go beyond the Catholic Church's well-documented arguments against artificial contraception.

See **ICC**, page 15

Awards, EWTN radio host mark Catholic Radio Indy's 20th anniversary banquet

By Natalie Hoefler

It started in 1999 with a nudge from the Holy Spirit prompting Bob Teipen to start a Catholic radio station in Indianapolis.

Now, two decades since the launching of its first station in 2004, Catholic Radio Indy has expanded to include five stations covering most of central Indiana and established a digital footprint with streaming via the Internet and other devices.

"We're here to celebrate 20 years of fulfilling our mission to bring souls to Jesus," said Gordon Smith, general manager of

See **RADIO**, page 9

During a banquet on Feb. 25 in Indianapolis celebrating 20 years of broadcasting, Catholic Radio Indy general manager Gordon Smith holds a San Damiano Cross award before presenting it to Bob and Sharon Teipen for their efforts in starting and supporting Catholic Radio Indy since its inception in 2004. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Jesus accepts a person's fragility so they can accept others, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Jesus did not teach his disciples to organize agencies and structures to help vulnerable people, but gave the example of encountering



Pope Francis

them, listening to them and helping them as individuals and not "categories" of people in need, Pope Francis said.

"Jesus wanted to form his disciples in a style of living in contact with the vulnerable, in the midst of them," the pope wrote in a

speech prepared for his meeting on March 1 with a group of Italians attending a four-day seminar on "Vulnerability and Community: Between Welcome and Inclusion."

While the pope met the group and took time to greet each participant personally, he had an aide read his prepared text because, he said, he continues to suffer from cold symptoms.

Participants in the seminar came from a variety of parishes, associations and movements that work with the poor, with migrants, with incarcerated people and with those who have mobility issues or different forms of disability.

Christians today, like Jesus' disciples 2,000 years ago, need to see how he encountered people and welcomed them—"his closeness, his compassion, his tenderness," the pope's text said. "And after the Resurrection, the Holy Spirit impressed that style of life on them."

But, the pope told them, "before anything else, in order to welcome my

vulnerable brothers and sisters, I must feel vulnerable and welcomed as such by Christ. He always precedes us. He made himself vulnerable all the way up to the Passion. He accepted our fragility so that, thanks to him, we can do the same."

In his text, Pope Francis encouraged participants to frequently read and pray with Mark 10:46-52, the story of Jesus' encounter with Bartimaeus and Jesus restoring his sight.

While people in the crowd were trying to hush the noisy Bartimaeus, Jesus "hears his faith-filled cry," the pope wrote. "And that man, who receives his sight again because of his faith in the Lord, sets out, follows Jesus and becomes his witness—so much so that his story is told in the Gospels.

"The vulnerable Bartimaeus, saved by the vulnerable Jesus, shares in the joy of witnessing his resurrection," he said.

His example and others in the Gospel and throughout the history of the Christian community demonstrate that "vulnerable people, encountered and welcomed with the grace of Christ and in his style, can be a presence of the Gospel in the community of believers and in society," Pope Francis wrote.

The list of Catholic saints is filled with men and women who became saints by "loving vulnerable people like Jesus did," he said. But that list is not exhaustive. In every community there are people who attained holiness by caring for "the little ones, the poor, the fragile and the marginalized. And it is important in our communities to share, with simplicity and gratitude, the stories of these hidden witnesses of the Gospel." †

Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson



March 9–21, 2024

March 9 – 10 a.m.
Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus

March 10-14
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Administrative Committee meeting in Washington, D.C.

March 15 – 11:30 a.m.
St. Patrick's Day Parade, Indianapolis

March 16 – 9:30 a.m.
Synod Listening Session at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Indianapolis

March 16 – 5 p.m.
Mass at St. Agnes Church, Nashville

March 17 – 8:30 a.m.
Mass at St. Agnes Church, Nashville

March 17 – 10:45 a.m.
Mass at St. Agnes Church, Nashville

March 19 – 9 a.m.
Mass and dialogue at Heritage Trail Correctional Facility, Plainfield

March 19 – 1 p.m.
Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

March 20 – 10 a.m.
Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

March 20 – Noon
Lunch gathering with priests, Indianapolis

March 21 – 11 a.m.
Mass for Archdiocese Employee Lenten Day of Reflection at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis

RTLII seeks youth applicants for essay, speech, art contests and senior scholarship

Right to Life of Indianapolis [RTLII] is seeking applicants for its essay, speech and art contests and its \$1,000 high school senior scholarship. The deadline for the essay and speech contests and the scholarship is April 1. The deadline for the art contest is April 15.

All applicants must live in Marion County or one of its seven surrounding counties.

The essay contest is for students in grades nine through 12. The winning essay of each grade level contest is published in the dinner program for the RTLII Celebrate Life Dinner in the fall. Winners could earn up to \$250 plus and an additional \$250 for their sponsoring organization.

The speech contest is open to students in grades 10-12. The winner receives a \$250 prize, plus a \$250 grant for their school, church or homeschool organization. The winner is also invited to speak at the Right to Life of Indianapolis Celebrate Life Dinner in the fall, and will represent RTLII at the state

oratory contest, with a chance to go on to the National Right to Life oratory contest.

The art contest is open to students in grades nine through 12. The theme for the art contest is "Celebrate Life!" The first-place winning artwork will grace the program cover for the RTLII Celebrate Life Dinner in the fall. Additionally, the winner will receive \$250 plus a \$250 grant for their art department, school, church or homeschool organization.

The Joan Byrum Pro-life Scholarship is open to graduating high school seniors who will be enrolled in a two- to four-year college by May 1. Applicants must have demonstrated dedicated pro-life activity and attitudes during high school and a commitment to a continued involvement in pro-life activities in college.

For more information and application forms, go to rtlindy.org/scholarship-contests.

For questions, call Right to Life of Indianapolis at 317-582-1526. †

Contribute your time and talent as a volunteer during the National Eucharistic Congress

Criterion staff report

Volunteers ages 18 and older are sought to help before, during and immediately after the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21.

An online form is available for those who wish to express an interest in helping. The form, which only takes about a minute to complete, offers options of volunteering with set up prior to the July 17 start; full time for the duration of the event; part time depending on availability; or packing up after the close of the event on July 21.

Volunteers must complete the archdiocese's online safe environment training, which is available 24/7.

To participate in the National Eucharistic Congress events and sessions, volunteers must register separately.

To express interest in volunteering, go to eucharisticcongress.org/volunteer.

To register for day, weekend or five-day passes, go to eucharisticcongress.org/register. †



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Cardinal, bishop share insights into ‘synodal bishops’ at Notre Dame

NOTRE DAME, Ind. (OSV News)—Synodality is an issue that everyone in the Church needs to understand and embrace, Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, told an audience at the University of Notre Dame.



Cardinal Mario Grech

The cardinal addressed “The Role of the Synodal Bishop” in a Feb. 26 talk at the Indiana university attended by bishops, university administrators,

members of the faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and laypeople.

Cardinal Grech, a native of Malta, came from Rome to join U.S. bishops gathered at Notre Dame to explore, discuss and pray about their own roles as bishops in the synodal Church.

The cardinal, as theology professor John Cavadini noted in his introduction, was both appointed as the Synod of Bishops’ secretary-general and named a cardinal by Pope Francis in 2020. Cavadini, director of the university’s McGrath Institute for Church Life.

“This has been a welcome development for many of us,” Cavadini said about the Synod on Synodality called by Pope Francis. The first global session took place in Rome in October 2023; a second and final session is scheduled for Oct. 2-27.

A synod, he explained, is a gathering intended for the bishops of the Church.

“Nonetheless,” he pointed out, “it’s

also a suitable instrument to give voice to the entire people of God via the bishops who are established as the authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses to the faith of the whole Church.”

Cardinal Grech began by saying that even in the few days he spent on campus with the bishops, some impressions about them were coming into sharp focus. “It’s clear that the Catholic Church in the United States has a lot of gifts to share with the whole Church,” he said.

Cardinal Grech explained he would discuss the all-important role of the diocesan bishop in the synodal Church from three different perspectives: first, through the Second Vatican Council’s teaching emphasizing the Trinitarian nature of the Church; second, in light of Vatican II’s teaching that the laity—like bishops and priests—participate in the threefold offices of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet and king; third, as an invitation to bishops from Pope Francis to engage in ongoing formation as “synodal conversion” in the light of St. John Paul II’s 1992 exhortation “*Pastores Dabo Vobis*” (“I Will Give You Shepherds”).

Regarding the Church’s Trinitarian nature, Cardinal Grech said that the bishops participating in Vatican II (1962-65) had carefully studied and clearly saw that “the Church comes from the Trinity and is meant to image the distinctiveness of each of the divine persons of the Trinity.”

That’s why, he continued, the last chapter of the Vatican II document “*Lumen Gentium*” (“The Light of Christ”), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, describes the Church in Trinitarian terms. The Church is called

“the people of God” to represent the Father, “the Body of Christ” to represent the Son, and “the Temple of the Spirit” to represent the Holy Spirit.

Because of this Trinitarian nature, Cardinal Grech continued, a diocesan bishop’s perception of his own ministry must match this theological reality of the Church he serves.

Bishops are, he stated, “successors of Jesus’ Apostles through the Holy Spirit. They are ordained to be mediators, facilitators and servants from within the whole Church,” who must understand and serve the Church as it truly exists.

The second theological reality or truth that diocesan bishops must constantly keep in their hearts and minds, the cardinal continued, is that baptized laypeople also participate in the three offices of Christ as priest, prophet and king.

This point is repeated in a preparatory document for the 2023 session of the Synod on Synodality, he noted. The statement declared: “Every synodal process, in which the Bishops are called to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church, not by themselves but by listening to the People of God, who ‘shares also in Christ’s prophetic office’ (“*Lumen Gentium*,” #12), is an evident form of that ‘journeying together’ which makes the Church grow.”

The third perspective that should be considered in examining the role of any synodal bishop, the cardinal said, is to look at the bishop’s need for ongoing formation and conversion.

“In the synthesis report of last October’s assembly,” he said, “the word ‘formation’ appears 55 times. So, it was clearly a critical issue.” But, he pointed out, “none of these instances of [the need for] formation refers to bishops. Isn’t that strange?”

Clearly, modern documents of the Church promote and illustrate the need for proper formation of every bishop, he said,

quoting again from “*Lumen Gentium*” that the bishop “invested with the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is the steward of the grace of the Supreme priesthood” (#26).

“We must be able to relate to others,” Cardinal Grech said. “This is especially important for a man who is called to be responsible for a community. This demands that the priest not be arrogant or quarrelsome, but be affable, sincere in his words and heart, proven to be discreet, generous and open to clear and brotherly relationships and capable of encouraging the same in others.”

After Cardinal Grech concluded his talk, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, head of the host diocese, Fort Wayne-South Bend, thanked the prelate and all who had come to hear him and offered a brief response.

Bishop Rhoades said he was grateful to serve as U.S. synod delegate at the 2023 synod session. He said that he certainly appreciated and agreed with Cardinal Grech’s highlighting of the crucial role of the Spirit in the synodal process.

“One of the best experiences I had there,” Bishop Rhoades added, “was experiencing the atmosphere of prayer, the conversations in the Spirit.”

“Our responsibility as synodal bishops,” he said, “includes being servants of the faith of the Church. We need to carefully discern the authentic manifestations of the ‘*sensus fidei*’ [sense of faith], distinguishing them from popular opinions, particular interests, political ideologies and the spirit of the age. This is especially true in our culture today, and especially in the United States where there is so much polarization.”

“We face a major challenge in the West today where so many of the baptized are being formed by currents of relativism and secularism,” observed Bishop Rhoades.

“We all need ongoing conversion—not just conversion to synodality, but, as Cardinal Grech noted at the end of his talk, conversion to the Gospel.” †

Vatican Year of Prayer resource is available for free online

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has asked Catholics to dedicate 2024 to intensifying their prayer lives in preparation for the celebration of the Holy Year 2025, and the Vatican has published a resource guide to help them.

“Teach us to Pray,” a 76-page volume prepared by the Dicastery for Evangelization, was published online in Italian in late February and made available in other languages in early March.

Pope Francis launched the year in late January, saying it would be “dedicated to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church and in the world.”

The Dicastery for Evangelization said the booklet is “an invitation to intensify

prayer, understood as a personal dialogue with God,” and can help people reflect on their faith and their Christian commitment in the various contexts of their lives.

It includes selections from the pope’s general audience talks about prayer and looks specifically at ways to strengthen people’s prayer experiences at home, in their parishes, at a local shrine, on retreat and by visiting a monastery. The booklet also has suggestions for encouraging teens and young adults to pray and for improving parish-based catechesis on prayer for both children and adults.

(The resource book can be downloaded in English, Spanish and other languages at: cutt.ly/yearofprayer.) †



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Meet Randy Schneider, a senior this year at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary.

“Randy is a great example of what four years of formation can accomplish - in the human aspect, in the pastoral aspect, in the academic aspect - when they open their life to God, what can take place.”

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Editorial



A poor box is seen at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on Jan. 26, 2020. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

Lent is a time to practice self-sacrificing love

In his book *Ethics for Beginners*, philosopher and Boston College professor Peter Kreeft provides an excellent summary of the ethical teachings of Jesus and 31 other religious and moral figures who, Kreeft says, have much more in common than we ordinarily think.

What is distinctive in Jesus' teaching is the fact that he embodies in his personal life everything that he professes as a religious and spiritual leader. Jesus *is* what he teaches, and he himself is the way, the truth and the life.

During the season of Lent, we are encouraged to "dig deeper" into the teaching and practice of Jesus as it has been handed on to us by the Apostles.

What we encounter in the Gospels is the amazing fusion of God's holy word in the daily life of a man who was like us in everything but sin. He is the perfect example of what we are called to become: faithful children of God who listen attentively to God's word and who strive to integrate it into everything we say and do.

This "fusion" of God's word into the stuff of our daily lives is called holiness, and every man, woman and child is called to become holy by following in the footsteps of Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life.

Lent provides us with a spiritual GPS system that can lead us along the path of holiness. In fact, the three familiar Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are designed to keep us from losing our way as we travel the road to holiness in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer is like Wi-Fi. It keeps us connected to God, and it helps us to discern God's will for us. Unless we pray, we are hopelessly cut off from the source, summit and goal of our life's journey. We cannot know who we are, where we are going or how we can get there unless we remain in conscious contact with God.

The Virgin Mary and all the saints help us stay connected to the Blessed Trinity through their intercessory prayers, but ultimately, it's up to us to establish and maintain a good connection with the God who knows us intimately and will show us the way to him.

Fasting is an exercise in self-denial.

Kreeft observes that nearly all religions and ethical teachings agree that egoism and selfishness are the primary obstacles to happiness and living well. A mature human being learns to deny his or her needs and desires in favor of the greater good. Self-denial for the sake of another is essential if we want to live as Jesus taught us. The forms of fasting that we practice during Lent are intended to remind us that as Christians we are called to be men and women for others.

Almsgiving is an expression of Christian stewardship. What God has given to us in his abundant generosity is meant to be cherished, used responsibly and shared generously with others—especially our sisters and brothers in need.

Lenten practices of almsgiving remind us that we dare not take for granted the gifts we have received from our loving God. These are meant to be shared, not hoarded, for the sake of all. Otherwise, we will become like the foolish people Jesus warns us about who have gained the world and its possessions but lost themselves along the way.

In the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the father of Western monasticism teaches that a monk's life should always have the character of Lenten observance. That means, of course, that monastic women and men should pray, deny themselves, and share generously with others 24/7. It's a challenging way to live, but its rewards are well worth the trouble.

As we continue this Lenten journey, let's continue to practice prayer (staying connected to God), fasting (denying ourselves for the greater good) and almsgiving (taking care of and sharing all God's gifts) for the sake of living well and growing in holiness. There is no better way to live or to experience the joy of life in Christ.

According to Kreeft, the lives of the saints show us that the way to holiness, the way that Jesus taught and exemplified, can be summarized in just one word: love (*agape*). Self-sacrificing love is the way to happiness and freedom. It is the way of Jesus that we are invited, and challenged, to practice during this holy season of Lent.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Michael R. Heinlein

Another blessing of the Eucharist: providing food for the final journey

The days of the COVID-19 lockdown were a great opportunity to show love for those around us. And that was particularly



true in the face of so much suffering and so many difficulties we encountered.

Like so many others, my family had its share of crosses to share at that time. My grandpa faced death with bladder cancer,

spending almost a year at home in hospice care. My grandma began her own Calvary of sorts as she carried the cross of rapid cognitive and physical deterioration from Alzheimer's disease. The circumstances of her situation made taking up residence at a care home necessary, made worse by the lockdowns and the distance we had to keep from her and those with whom she lived. My grandparents certainly carried great crosses from 2020-22, as did so many in the world. And for those of us around them, it was a gift to help carry those crosses.

For me, it was a special privilege and joy to help them carry their crosses by bringing them the Eucharist in their infirmity. Given the inability for clergy to enter homes and institutions for regular distribution of the sacrament, I made provisions with proper authorities to ensure my grandparents would not entirely do without holy Communion as they journeyed to death. Those occasions were certainly an opportunity for them to be strengthened and nourished by the sacrament's graces. They were a gift for me too, as those surrounding the sick and dying are recipients of the Church's care and ministry too.

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day," Christ said (Jn 6:54).

Given the centrality of that reality for the sick and dying, the Church has long prioritized the distribution of holy Communion for them. Family and friends should take special care to ensure the local parish or institution's pastoral care staff is alerted to this purpose. If nothing

else, one's pastor can be asked to permit the family to bring holy Communion to their loved one.

Each of us will receive holy Communion one last time. In the course of sickness and death, the final reception of holy Communion before death is called viaticum, which means food for the journey.

Viaticum unites the dying person intimately with Christ in his passover from death to life. In ordinary circumstances, this should be arranged with attentiveness to the person's condition when there is at least a little time to spare. When it can be difficult for the dying person to receive holy Communion, it is a consolation to remember that the fruits of the last Communion we've received do not have an expiration date and remain living, effective and fruitful still. A spiritual communion could be recited with or for the dying person. Given its importance, greatest care should be taken that family and friends don't wait too long to request viaticum.

Even amid my grandma's own cognitive decline, it always amazed me to see how hardwired the faith remained internally. Even as receiving holy Communion became difficult for her at the end, there were glimmers of her awareness that shone through the darkness of her illness, such as when she instinctively made the sign of the cross before receiving the sacrament or would respond "Amen" unprompted.

As I had the gift of witnessing that, it was hard not to grow in awe of our faith and the deep-rooted reality for believers that we cherish and desire the life Christ offers us in his body and blood. And he brings his grace to those who cling to that hope as they make their final push carrying his cross. And I found that grace came to those of us, who, like Mary, Simon or Veronica, were privileged to help them along the way.

(Michael R. Heinlein is author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.*) †

Letters to the Editor

Article beautifully captured essence of Father Mark Weaver, subscriber says

I'd like to say "thank you" for the wonderful obituary about the passing of Conventual Franciscan Father Mark Weaver written by Natalie Hoefer in the March 1 issue of *The Criterion*. I have been with the Hispanic choir at St. Mary of the Annunciation Parish in New Albany for a dozen or more years, and knew Father Mark for the entire time he was there. The article captured his essence perfectly.

The parish's music director Ryan Ward told me I needed to be at the English-speaking Mass on Feb. 11. Looking back, I'm sure that Deacon Martin Ignacio already knew that Father Mark would not return as pastor, but I am not the only

person who was stunned to hear Father Mark's goodbye homily that day, which still brings me to tears.

Truthfully, I haven't been tear-free since then, though that does not in any way dilute or deny our faith that he passed from this life into the arms of Jesus.

He was a good example to all who met him—a gentle but firm man whose sole purpose in life was to be Christ to everyone he encountered.

Thank you for the blessing of your words which are a beautiful remembrance of Father Mark.

Leslie Lynch
Lanesville

Praise for the winner of the Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award winner

Please pass on our compliments to John Shaughnessy on the wonderful article he wrote about Roncalli High School art teacher Mark Stratton, this year's winner of the archdiocese's Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award. My wife taught many years with Mark,

and I've known him and his family as well. Mark is a wonderful man, and Mr. Shaughnessy is an extraordinary writer.

John and Mary Jaffe
Indianapolis

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Radiate God's love, bringing hope and healing to all

“Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast” (Is 66:10-11).

Midway through the penitential season of Lent, the Church reminds us that joy, not sorrow, is the meaning of Christian life. This holy season prepares us for the pain of our Lord's passion and death, but more importantly, it leads us to the inexpressible joy of Christ's resurrection and his return to his Father in heaven.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is called Laetare Sunday. *Laetare* is a Latin word that means “rejoice.” The Gospel reading for Year B describes the reason for our rejoicing: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

God's great love for us has been revealed in Jesus, and while our Redeemer suffered many hardships leading to his death on the cross, his ultimate victory over sin and death is the reason for our great rejoicing.

The responsorial psalm for this Sunday (Ps 137) sings of the sorrow

experienced by God's chosen people while they were in exile in Babylon:

By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. On the aspens of that land we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs, and our despoilers urged us to be joyous:

“Sing for us the songs of Zion! How could we sing a song of the Lord

in a foreign land? (Ps 137:1-4) Joy cannot be commanded. It springs from the hearts of people who have been liberated from their enslavement to sin and evil. It pours forth like a stream that is no longer blocked but rushes freely to its final destination.

The season of Lent prepares us for the great “rush” of joy that we will experience during the Easter Vigil. It teaches us to endure six weeks of relative darkness in order to appreciate joyfully the light of Christ, which shines most brilliantly on Easter morning. As St. John's Gospel tells us:

And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people

preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God (Jn 3:19-21).

Living in truth, the light of Christ, is what brings joy to our individual hearts and to the world we live in.

In the Second Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, Cycle B (Eph 2:4-10), St. Paul reminds the Ephesians (and all of us) that God's merciful love is stronger than every evil. Paul writes:

God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ—by grace you have been saved—raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4-7)

This is why we rejoice even in our penitential practice. God's love for us is boundless. It far surpasses any sorrow that we feel either because of our own

sins or because of the pain that results from the human condition that we share with all our suffering brothers and sisters.

St. John's Gospel makes it clear that, as Christians, we should not be people who live in fear: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3:17). Our joy must shine in spite of the world's darkness and despair. We should radiate God's love and, so, bring healing and hope to all who are suffering in any way.

Laetare Sunday gives us an opportunity to look beyond our penitential prayer, fasting and almsgiving to the triumphant joy of Easter.

As we continue to observe this holy season, let's remember that the only way to the joy of the Resurrection is the way of the cross. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

May all our sadness be dispelled by the songs of rejoicing that we will sing together on Easter morning. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Irradiar el amor de Dios, llevando esperanza y sanación a todos

“Alégrate, Jerusalén, y todos los que la aman. ¡Llévense de regocijo por ella, todos los que por ella se han entristecido! Porque ella los amamantará en sus pechos, y los consolará y dejará satisfechos” (Is 66:10-11).

Ahora que arribamos a la mitad de la temporada penitencial de la Cuaresma, la Iglesia nos recuerda que la alegría es lo que da sentido a la vida cristiana, no la tristeza. Este tiempo santo nos prepara para el dolor de la pasión y muerte de nuestro Señor, pero lo que es más importante, nos conduce a la alegría inefable de la resurrección de Cristo y su regreso a su Padre celestial.

El cuarto domingo de Cuaresma se llama *Laetare*, una palabra latina que significa “regocíjense.” La lectura del Evangelio del Año B describe el motivo de nuestro regocijo: “Porque de tal manera amó Dios al mundo, que ha dado a su Hijo unigénito para que todo aquel que en él cree no se pierda mas tenga vida eterna” (Jn 3:16).

El gran amor de Dios por nosotros se ha revelado en Jesús, y aunque nuestro Redentor sufrió muchas dificultades que en definitiva lo llevaron a morir en la Cruz, su victoria final sobre el pecado y la muerte es el motivo de nuestro gran regocijo.

El salmo responsorial de este domingo (Sal 137) canta el dolor experimentado por el pueblo elegido de Dios mientras se encontraba en el exilio en Babilonia:

“Junto a los ríos de Babilonia nos sentábamos y llorábamos acordándonos de Sion. Sobre los sauces de la ciudad colgamos nuestras arpas. Los que nos capturaron, nos pedían que cantáramos.

Nuestros opresores nos pedían estar contentos. Decían: “¡Canten algunos de sus cánticos de Sión!” ¿Y cómo podríamos cantarle al Señor en un país extranjero? (Sal 137:1-4).

La alegría no se puede ordenar sino que brota de los corazones de las personas que han sido liberadas de su esclavitud del pecado y del mal. Se derrama como un arroyo que ya no está bloqueado sino que se precipita libremente hacia su destino final.

La temporada de Cuaresma nos prepara para el gran estallido de alegría que experimentaremos durante la Vigilia Pascual. Nos enseña a soportar seis semanas de relativa oscuridad para apreciar con alegría la luz de Cristo, que brilla con mayor resplandor en la mañana de Pascua. Como nos dice el Evangelio según san Juan:

Y ésta es la condenación: que la luz vino al mundo, pero los hombres

amaron más las tinieblas que la luz, porque sus obras eran malas. Porque todo aquel que hace lo malo, aborrece la luz y no se acerca a la luz, para que sus obras no sean reprendidas. Pero el que practica la verdad viene a la luz, para que sea evidente que sus obras son hechas en Dios. (Jn 3:19-21)

Vivir en la verdad, la luz de Cristo, es lo que trae alegría a nuestros corazones individuales y al mundo en el que vivimos.

En la segunda lectura del cuarto domingo de Cuaresma, ciclo B (Ef 2:4-10), san Pablo les recuerda a los efesios (y a todos nosotros) que el amor misericordioso de Dios es más fuerte que todo mal. Pablo escribe:

Pero Dios, cuya misericordia es abundante, por el gran amor con que nos amó, nos dio vida junto con Cristo, aun cuando estábamos muertos en nuestros pecados (la gracia de Dios los ha salvado), y también junto con él nos resucitó, y asimismo nos sentó al lado de Cristo Jesús en los lugares celestiales, para mostrar en los tiempos venideros las abundantes riquezas de su gracia y su bondad para con nosotros en Cristo Jesús. (Ef 2:4-7).

Por eso nos alegramos incluso en nuestra práctica penitencial. El amor de Dios por nosotros es infinito; supera con creces cualquier pena que sintamos

por nuestros propios pecados o por el dolor que resulta de la condición humana que compartimos con todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas que sufren.

El Evangelio según san Juan deja claro que, como cristianos, no debemos ser personas que vivan con miedo: “Porque Dios no envió a su Hijo al mundo para condenar al mundo, sino para que el mundo sea salvo por él” (Jn 3:17). Nuestra alegría debe brillar a pesar de la oscuridad y la desesperación del mundo. Debemos irradiar el amor de Dios y, así, llevar curación y esperanza a todos los que sufren de alguna manera.

El domingo de *Laetare* nos brinda la oportunidad de mirar más allá de nuestra oración penitencial, el ayuno y la limosna, y posar la mirada en la alegría triunfante de la Pascua.

Mientras seguimos observando esta temporada santa, recordemos que el único camino hacia la alegría de la Resurrección es el camino de la Cruz. “Porque de tal manera amó Dios al mundo, que ha dado a su Hijo unigénito para que todo aquel que en él cree no se pierda mas tenga vida eterna” (Jn 3:16).

Que toda nuestra tristeza se disipe con los cantos de júbilo que entonaremos juntos la mañana de Pascua. †

Events Calendar

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

FISH FRIES

For a complete list, go to www.archindy.org/fishfries.

EVENTS

March 10

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Ancient Order of Hibernians St. Patrick's Day Celtic Cross Blessing, Mass**, 10:15 a.m. Celtic cross blessing in church courtyard followed by 10:30 a.m. Mass. Information: aohindy.com/spc.

McGowan Hall Knights of Columbus, 1305 Delaware St., Indianapolis. **Mary Berry St. Patrick's Day Celebration**, 3-8 p.m., live music by The Irish Stew 4-7:30 p.m., Indianapolis Rogue Pipes and Drums 5 p.m., corned beef and cabbage, soda bread, drinks, bakery items for purchase, pull tab game, \$5 admission. Information: 317-695-5421.

March 10-12 or 13

St. Malachy Church, 9833 E. County Road 750 N., Brownsburg. **"The Word Became Flesh" Bible Marathon**, eucharistic

procession after 10:30 a.m. Mass on March 10 followed by perpetual adoration and proclamation of the entire Bible, ending possibly March 12 or 13, regular Masses and confession will continue as scheduled, people of all faiths invited. Information: 317-852-3195.

March 12

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, 812-535-2952.

March 13

St. Michael Church, 101 St. Michael Dr., Charlestown. **Holy Spirit Night**, 7 p.m., bilingual event, prayer and preaching led by Father Jerry Byrd, includes adoration, live music by Angie Meyer, confession available in English and Spanish. Information: 812-256-3200.

March 15

Northside Events and Social

Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, archdiocesan chancellor Christopher Walsh presenting "National Eucharistic Congress in Indy: A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity for YOU," 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 March 13. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

March 20

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

March 21

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

March 23

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Faithful Citizens Rosary Walk**, 10:45-11:45 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: holyroary.prolife@gmail.com.

March 24

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Tenebrae**, 7 p.m., Liturgy of the Hours of Holy Week, music by archdiocesan schola *Vox Sacra*, free. Information: 317-236-1513, amotyka@archindy.org.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Outdoor Stations of the Cross**, 2:30-3:30 p.m., led by Father Keith Hosey, for inclement weather meet in chapel. Information: 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

March 25

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Leave the Light On**, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., priests available for sacrament of reconciliation, no appointment needed. Information: 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

Marian University, Marian Hall Chapel, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **Tenebrae Service**, 8-9 p.m., readings, prayers, choral pieces. Information: 317-955-6000, jgarcia@marian.edu.

March 28

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Cor Jesu: Holy Thursday Altar of Repose**, 7-8 p.m., night of communal prayer, adoration, Benediction and fellowship, free. Information: megt2014@gmail.com.

Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Simple Soup and Bread Luncheon**, 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m., fundraiser for Catholic Charities Crisis Office, \$10, register online by March 22, cash accepted at the door. Information, registration: 317-236-1411, cbush@archindy.org, tinyurl.com/ccsoubread24.

March 29

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Way of the Cross**, noon. Information: 317-784-4439, catholiccemeteries.cc.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Way of the Cross**, noon.

Information: 317-574-8898, catholiccemeteries.cc.

Sisters of Providence, 1 Providence Pl., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Way of Cross for Justice**, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

April 5

Women's Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-6800, womenscarecenter.org.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 6 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, msross1@hotmail.com.

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Friday Devotion**, 11:40 a.m., litany, consecration to the Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by noon Mass. Information: 812-246-2512. †

Retreats and Programs

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

March 22-24

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Ponder and Proclaim! A Lenten Weekend Retreat**, 6 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun., Father James Farrell and Deacon Richard Wagner presenting, \$220, includes accommodations, program materials, breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday

and breakfast on Sunday. Registration: archindy.org/fatima, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

March 26, 27, 28

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Holy Week Days of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch

and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional \$32 per night, dinner additional \$11 per meal. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

March 27-31

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Living the**

Liturgy of the Triduum,

Benedictine Father Jeremy King presenting, \$465 single, \$735 double, commuter \$200. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

March 28-31

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Triduum Retreat**, 4:30 p.m. Thur.-1 p.m. Sun., \$375, includes meals and accommodations. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Easter Triduum Retreat**,

6 p.m. Thurs.-8 a.m. Sun., Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate facilitating, \$50.70 per adult, children free, includes lunch and dinner on Sat., overnight accommodations additional cost, call for details. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

March 29

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Good Friday Day of Silence**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$40, includes private room for the day and lunch. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

April 3

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

April 5

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

April 5-7

Sisters of Providence, 1 Providence Pl., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Open - Discover - Blossom: A Retreat for Women**, 7 p.m. Fri.-1 p.m. Sun., Providence Sister Mary Montgomery facilitator, \$300 includes meals, snacks, accommodations (limit of nine for overnight accommodations), \$225 commuter includes meals and snacks. Information, registration: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

April 6

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Holy Boldness: Women Who Have Encountered Jesus**, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Catholic author and storyteller Sandra Hartlieb presenting, \$75, includes lunch. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Creativity is a Form of Prayer: Cardmaking**, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Franciscan Sister Kathleen Branham presenting, \$50 includes materials and lunch. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

April 10

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.

April 12-14

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Forgiving as We Have Been Forgiven**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$300 single, \$425 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

April 16

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Flourishing in Seasons of Surrender: Day of Reflection**, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Teresa Venatta presenting, \$45, includes Mass and lunch. Registration: archindy.org/fatima, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

April 22-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Priests Retreat: The Gospel of Mark - Lessons in Rejection**, Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell presenting, \$465 single, \$200 commuter. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

April 23

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: archindy.org/fatima, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org. †

Get advice on starting or boosting parish evangelization at March 14 gathering in Terre Haute

The archdiocesan Office of Evangelization will offer an Evangelization Informational Gathering in Hellmann Hall at St. Benedict Parish, 118 S. 9th St., in Terre Haute., from 7-8:30 p.m. on March 14.

The gathering is for active parish evangelization teams, parish evangelization teams needing a boost and those interested in starting a parish evangelization team.

The event is an opportunity for those attending to discuss where their parish

is in terms of evangelization, how to develop and move forward with parish evangelization plans, and to hear ideas from active parish evangelization teams.

The event is free. Those interested are asked to register in advance at tinyurl.com/EvangInfoTH2024. However, walk-ins are welcome.

For more information, contact Anita Bardo, archdiocesan evangelization coordinator, at 317-236-1466 or abardo@archindy.org. †

Archdiocesan exorcist to offer free talk in New Albany on March 12

An evening with Father Vincent Lampert, archdiocesan exorcist, will take place at the Cardinal Ritter Knights of Columbus Council #1221 building, 809 E. Main St., in New Albany, starting at 5:30 p.m. and ending between 7:30-8 p.m. on March 12.

The event, which is sponsored by the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation in New Albany, will begin with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Father Lampert's presentation will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Father Lampert was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in 1991. He has been a priest for nearly

33 years. He currently serves as the pastor of St. Michael Parish in Brookville and St. Peter Parish in Franklin County.

In 2005, he was appointed the exorcist for the archdiocese. He received his exorcist training in Rome and is a member of the International Association of Exorcists. He is also the author of the book, *Exorcism: The Battle Against Satan and His Demons*, by Emmaus Road Publishing.

There is no cost for the event. For more information, call the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation at 502-291-3131. †

Men's conference attendees find joy sharing faith with others

By Sean Gallagher

ST. LEON—When Feb. 17 dawned in southeastern Indiana, temperatures were frigid, and roads were slick and icy from snowfall the previous day.

But that didn't keep more than 1,200 men from Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio from making their way to East Central High School for the ninth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference, sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County.

Ken Abell woke up before 5 a.m. that day to travel there with his son Jaysen and grandson Michael and other members of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville, more than a two-hour drive from St. Leon.

That was a small sacrifice, though, for him to spend a day with his son and grandson when they can all grow in their faith together.

"It's a dream come true to have everybody together like this," said Abell. "It's a struggle to make this happen. But when it comes together, you just bask in the glory of it."

He rejoiced, too, in praying with more than 1,200 other Catholic men.

"When I hear them say the Our Father or the Hail Mary, I just feel the thunder, the strength of that many men," said Abell. "You almost feel like the building moves a little bit. That thunder is so joyful. And I know that God is looking and saying, 'Go for it, men!'"

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).

'Made for strength'

Like previous conferences, this one featured nationally known Catholic speakers, Mass, praying the rosary, eucharistic adoration and Benediction. Several priests were available for the sacrament of penance. For most of the daylong conference, a line of men waiting to go to confession stretched to the top of East Central's cavernous auditorium.

Nathan Crankfield, producer and host of the popular Catholic podcast "Seeking Excellence," served as the conference's emcee.

He spoke at the start of the day about the leadership to which Catholic men are called.

Slightly adjusting a definition of what it means to be a man from Dr. Leonard Sax's book *Boys Adrift*, Crankfield



Tyler Myers, a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Muncie, Ind., prays the rosary on Feb. 17 during the ninth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference.

said that "being a Catholic man is using your God-given strength at the service of others."

"Our bodies are made for strength," he said. "Our souls are made for strength. We're emotionally made for strength. It doesn't mean we have to be perfect. It doesn't mean we can't be emotional. It doesn't mean we can't show weakness ever. But we're made for strength. And God gives us the strength. So, we rely on that to be at service of other people."

Tim Staples, senior apologist

at the El Cajon, Calif.-based Catholic Answers, reflected on how all the sacraments are ways for Catholics to participate in the dying and rising of Christ because he, as the Son of God, had become fully human in the incarnation. Staples related this reality in particular to marriage.

Many in the audience laughed when Staples told the married men among them that "you knew on your wedding day that you were in over your head."

But he meant those words in relation to the purpose of the sacrament of marriage.

"Your purpose is to basically get each other to heaven and to drag as many kids as you can with you," Staples said. "That's why I say you're in over your head. Because you can't get there. It's impossible. It's not just, you know, really hard. It's impossible."

"... But all things are possible with God. This is what we're talking about."

It's possible, Staples explained, because Christ, in his human nature with the help of grace, accepted God the Father's will for him in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died.

Describing that moment as "an explosion of grace ... communicated down through the eons of time to all humanity," Staples said that, in marriage, the spouses "are basically saying to each other, 'No longer my will, but your will be done.'"

'We all have clouds in our lives'

With many of the conference participants coming from the three-state region around Cincinnati, a big round of applause exploded when popular former Cincinnati Reds All-Star Sean Casey took the stage in the afternoon.

He recounted his journey from playing baseball as a child to making it to the majors. An important part of that journey was the choice by his father to allow Casey to work through some struggles as a young baseball player on his own.

Casey used a fitting analogy for the day, saying that some parents chose to "snowplow the way" for their children.

"How easy it is for us to want to snowplow the way for our kids," Casey said. "No pain, no struggles. Snowplow the road! Make sure you're on top of them. No pain, no struggle, snowplow the road."

"And I'm here to say that if my dad had snowplowed the road for me, I'm not here today. I don't play in the big leagues. I don't fulfill my dreams."

He also recalled how his father explained his decision to let him handle his struggles on his own, telling him about how buffalos out west gather together as a herd to withstand storms when they see dark clouds coming.

"I think sometimes we struggle as human beings because we think we're exonerated from those clouds," Casey said. "It turns out none of us are."

"... We all have clouds in our lives. Without the darkness, there is no dawn. Without the winter, there is no spring. And without the Crucifixion, there is no Resurrection."

Father Jonathan Meyer preached at a Mass celebrated during the conference. He serves in the four faith communities of Dearborn County, including All Saints Parish.

The Gospel reading proclaimed during the Mass recounted St. Matthew immediately becoming a disciple of Christ when the Lord simply said to him, "Follow me" (Lk 5:27).

Father Meyer told his listeners that, since all of them were called by baptism to invite people to follow them, they need to examine their lives to see if they're worth following.

"I want you to write down three habits in your life that you need to kick out and get rid of," he said, "so that you can actually, authentically say with courage, with masculinity, 'Hey, follow me, be an imitator of me,' because Christ calls us to do that."

'Don't be lukewarm in our faith'

All Saints parishioner



Father Jonathan Meyer celebrates Mass with concelebrating priests on Feb. 17 at East Central High School in St. Leon during the ninth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. More than 1,200 men took part in the event. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)



Abraham Schwartz, left, Theo Lovett and Gabriel Iadipaolo laugh on Feb. 17 during the ninth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference held at East Central High School in St. Leon. Abraham and Gabriel are members of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. Theo is a member of St. George Parish in Georgetown, Ohio.

Joe Yunger, who has helped organize the E6 conference for years, told *The Criterion* that the event is as important now for Catholic men as it was when it was started in 2016.

"Is the world messed up right now? Yes," Yunger said. "The question is as men, what are we doing about it? Don't be lukewarm with our faith and in our vocations, especially dads."

"That's something I needed to work on. Faith is more important than sports. So, let's be intentional and take the time to make it a priority. My hope is that through an event like E6, men realize this and make the appropriate adjustments."

Conference attendee Tyler Myers hopes it can help him live out his faith as a newly married husband.

Raised as a member of St. Louis Parish in Batesville, Myers, 23, is now a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Muncie, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese.

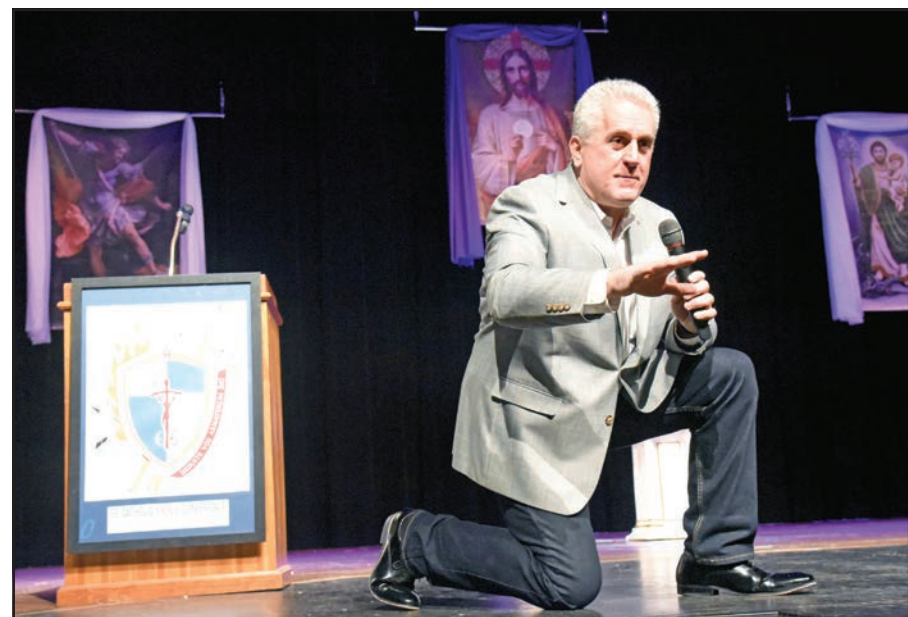
He has attended the last two E6 conferences.

"I love my faith," Myers said. "I just got married last October, so being a leader in my faith in our household is big for me. I want to make our faith our foundation, something we can both lean on together."

It was encouraging for Myers to see at the conference that the faith is also a priority for so many other men.

"It's awesome to see," he said. "In our society, you can feel alone. But to see 1,000 men come together on a Saturday is amazing. We join in our faith together. There are men who have the same mission together in life."

(For more photos from this year's E6 Catholic Men's Conference, read this article online at www.CriterionOnline.com.) †



Tim Staples, senior apologist at the El Cajon, Calif.-based Catholic Answers, talks on Feb. 17 during the ninth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference.

TEAM

continued from page 1

When the phone call ended, Wagner's wife, Joyce, was there by his side, sharing in the pain.

"At that point in time, there really weren't any tears," Wagner recalls. "It was shock."

In the eight days that followed that shocking news, Wagner would be overwhelmed by two realities: the impact of his brother's life and death on him, and the love and the strength that the girls on his team gave him during a time he needed those gifts most.

A gift amid a time of heartbreak

During the afternoon leading up to practice on that Monday, Feb. 5, Wagner learned some of the details of Steve's death from one of Steve's sons, Ben: How a mail carrier discovered Steve's body slumped against the steering wheel of his Volkswagen Beetle in the family's driveway, how the mail carrier called 9-1-1 and performed CPR on Steve, and how the efforts to revive him were unsuccessful.

As he replayed the details about his 70-year-old brother in his mind, Dan also thought about the ever-prevailing heart issues that have haunted their family for generations—with his father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather all dying of heart problems.

During that afternoon, Dan also thought about the girls on his team—how this upcoming game was so important to them, and how he wanted to help them keep their focus on it and not on him. He made the choice to not tell them about his brother's death, revealing a reality that often surfaces in times of loss and shock—we overlook that the people we've always tried to be there for, want to be there for us in our times of need.

"I did communicate to my coaches by way of text what happened, and that I didn't intend to tell the girls," Wagner recalls. "We had practice that night. At the end of practice, one of my assistant coaches, Grace Dury, did the right thing. She whispered in the ears of our captains about what was going on."

Tri-captains Anna Caskey, Addison "Addy" Duncan and Mary Mason stayed in the gym after their teammates left. Approaching their head coach as he put equipment away, they shared with him that they knew he didn't want them to know about his brother's death, but that Dury had told them. What happened next still leaves him overcome with emotion.

"A lot of hugging, a lot of crying, a lot of good words from them. A lot of assurances about their support, that they'll have my back," Wagner says. "We all agreed I should let the rest of the girls know."

"I sent them all a text. Immediately, I got all kinds of phone calls and text messages. The next day at practice, a lot of hugging and a lot of tears at the beginning of it. Then there was the assurance from everybody that we're going to win this game. Our practice was really good. After practice, they had a bouquet of flowers and a big envelope with notes in it. All the kids had written me a note. I read those all night when I got home. Their genuine love for me came through so clearly."

The notes were the players' way of letting their head coach know how much he means to them, Mary Mason says.

"He's a father figure to us," Mary says. "Seeing him suffer was really, really sad, so we wanted to do something special for him. Our team is a family. When someone is suffering in our family, you support them in any way you can. His struggles were our struggles."

Instead of being a distraction, all that emotion fueled the team's focus. It also uplifted the head coach.

"Through the week, we continued prepping," Wagner says. "We didn't talk about what happened except in our prayer after practice when we always gather in prayer and go through our intentions. Everyone was saying, 'for Steve, for me.'"

The emotion pours from him again as he adds, "It was very therapeutic for me to be there all week. The girls were very caring."

It all led to an unusual and emotional scene in the locker room that Saturday afternoon of Feb. 10, as the team went through its last-minute preparations for the game against the favored, sixth-ranked team of Indian Creek that had beaten Bishop Chatard in 2023 by a score of 76-47.

A team on a mission

Before the game that day, the Bishop Chatard girls followed a ritual that had been part of every game during the season. They each wrote "Grit" on one of their wrists, a reminder about the tough-minded attitude that had guided them to this moment. Then the girls added a touch that left no doubt about who were the two people they were playing for that day.

They also wrote on their wrists, PFS—shorthand for Play For Steve, and PFW—Play For Wagner.

Their head coach also had Steve in his thoughts, remembering how his brother had driven three hours from his northern Indiana home to watch the Bishop Chatard girls play in their regional state tournament game



The girls' varsity basketball team of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis celebrates its regional championship in the 2024 3A Indiana state tournament after beating the team from Indian Creek High School on Feb. 10. (Photo courtesy of Charlie Sullivan)

in 2023. Wagner also recalled a photo that had been taken that day of him, Steve and their sister, Dianne Wagner—the three siblings close together and smiling.

All those emotions lead to the unusual pre-game talk that Wagner shared with the girls in the locker room just before they went out onto the court—a pre-game talk about love.

"I've heard so many of you say how special this team is to you," the head coach began. "Last night, you heard from each other how much you like each other, how much you respect each other, and what makes each other good teammates. But most importantly, I've heard you say how much you love each other."

"That's the secret sauce in what we do. We not only respect each other and like each other, but we truly love each other. Love is a powerful emotion. You showed me that earlier this week. Show how powerful that emotion is today."

The players and coaches then paused for a pre-game prayer together, followed by the mother of a former player making the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the girls with holy water. From there, the team rushed onto the court, on a mission.

"Mary promised Coach Wagner that we would win the game for his brother," Addy says. "We know our love for him, and we know he loves us. We all knew this game was important to him and his family. We really wanted to do it for him and also for us as a team. That's what drove us to fight so hard."

The game came down to the frantic, nail-biting, final seconds with the talented, well-matched teams both having opportunities to win. In the end, the Lady Trojans of Bishop Chatard made the plays to earn the 64-60 victory.

As the girls hugged, danced and celebrated on the court, Wagner hugged one of his assistant coaches, Bob Susemichel, both of them crying. After getting long hugs from other assistant coaches, the tears continued to flow for Wagner when his wife Joyce raced down the bleachers and into his arms.

Following that embrace, Wagner focused on the girls on the court, watching their celebration.

"The love they had for each other was palpable," he recalls. "That love was palpable all week. It was palpable in the locker room. All the kids and parents and everybody knew about Steve. It was just a very, very strong emotion for me. And that's how I was looking at them—with a lot of love."

Memories of a brother, a tribute to a friend

The next morning—Sunday, Feb. 11—Dan and Joyce drove to the northern Indiana community of Bluffton for Steve's viewing that afternoon and the funeral Mass on Monday. On the two-hour drive, emotions and thoughts swirled in Wagner's mind—about the game, the team and especially Steve.

He thought about the road trips that he and Steve—and sometimes their sister Dianne—had made to Ohio to visit their brother, Donnie.

"Every time we got together over the years, nothing but laughter," Wagner says. "Steve's got an incredible memory for the most minute of details as far as our lives together—as kids in particular. We would tell stories from our childhood, goofy stories about what we did as kids. We'd just laugh."

He also thought about how Steve was an all-state football player at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis in the early 1970s, how he continued playing that sport at Wabash College, how he met his wife Nancy, how they had four sons together, how he was a high school biology teacher, how he and Nancy built their family and their lives on the foundation of their Catholic faith.

When he and Joyce reached the funeral home in Bluffton, it was their first time since Steve's death to share, in person, their love and their grief with Nancy and the four sons that she and Steve had—Josh, Ben, Peter and Sam.

While Donnie wasn't able to come to Steve's farewell because of health issues, Dan and Joyce were also soon reunited with two of his siblings, Dianne and Rick Wagner. All of them watched in appreciation as the



Siblings Steve, left, Dianne and Dan Wagner are all smiles after Dan led the girls' varsity basketball team of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis to a win in the regional game of the 2023 Indiana Class 3A state tournament. (Submitted photo)

funeral home soon became packed, with people waiting two hours in line to share their respect and sorrow with Nancy, her sons and with them. A strong contingent from Indianapolis came, including girls from the team, their parents and friends.

The crowds returned the next day, packing St. Joseph Church in Bluffton, where Steve and Nancy grew the roots of their faith.

There wasn't a eulogy shared as part of the Mass, but a longtime friend of Steve, Ken Ballinger, wrote a touching tribute that served as one. They had been teachers together at Bluffton High School.

"I met Steve as a fellow biology teacher in 1976. We were immediate friends," Ballinger noted in one part of his tribute. "When we discovered that our new wives were both artists, soon to be forever joined at the hip, we knew our tenure as friends was to be long. Forty-eight years as it stands."

Ballinger continued, "So how do you get hundreds upon hundreds of people of all ages and economic stripes, many from long distances, to come to your funeral visitation and wait in line over two hours to spend one minute of shared grief with his wife and family? Be like Steve."

"His style was as simple as it was unintentional. Treat everyone you meet with dignity. Listen as they speak. Respond with kindness. Maintain the common touch."

Wagner thought it perfectly captured the essence of Steve.

'Love makes you better'

The reality for nearly all sports teams is that their seasons rarely end in moments of pure joy and celebration—when all the hard work, all the sacrifices, all the commitment end in lifting a championship trophy.

Only one team gets to know, to experience that feeling.

And that reality struck hard for the Bishop Chatard girls' basketball team when the Lady Trojans lost a semi-state game the next Saturday—Feb. 17—to the team from Danville High School.

Still, there's another reality that can hold true for sports teams, for all varieties of families, for our lives: our bonds can endure, our shared experiences can create something powerful, meaningful and lasting, beyond our heartbreaking losses.

Wagner spoke of that reality when he returned to a familiar theme in his pre-game talk in the locker room before the Danville game, after going over the team's offensive and defensive strategies again.

"I said it last week that the love you have for each other is the most important intangible we have," he told the girls. "We talked about love being a powerful emotion. Love makes you laugh. Love makes you cry. Love makes every emotion stronger."

The love between teammates, between a coach and his team, between siblings, between friends, between a mother and her sons, between an extended family—they're all the ways that love grew during a stretch of eight days.

"You can't manufacture love," Wagner says. "You can only give it and receive it by being real, and genuine, and vulnerable, and empathetic, and good to each other. Love makes you better." †

RADIO

continued from page 1

Catholic Radio Indy, operating as Inter Mirifica Inc., at a banquet in Indianapolis on Feb. 25.

David Anders, host of the EWTN radio call-in program “Called to Communion,” served as the keynote speaker.

The celebration, attended by more than 270, also included special recognition for Deacon Ronald Pirau of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Deacon Paul Lunsford of the Diocese of Lafayette, and Teipen and his wife Sharon.

‘A prompting of the Holy Spirit’

While receiving Catholic Radio Indy’s Archbishop Fulton Sheen Evangelist of the Year Award, both deacons spoke of the impact of Catholic radio on their faith lives.

“I’m just eternally grateful for Catholic radio,” said Deacon Pirau.

He credits a program on Catholic Radio Indy with introducing him to the idea of spiritual direction, and another program that helped him confirm his discernment of a call to the permanent diaconate. He was ordained a deacon in 2012.

Deacon Pirau now serves as director of the permanent deacon faith formation program at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. He also ministers at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and at the Johnson County Jail.

As a traveling salesman in Indiana and Kentucky, Deacon Lunsford said he “lived on Christian radio,” but noticed “something was a little different between what I was hearing on the radio from what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.”

“Then entered Catholic radio 20 years ago,” said Deacon Lunsford, who ministers at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel. Ordained in 2013,



David Anders, host of the EWTN call-in radio show “Called to Communion,” delivers a keynote address during a banquet on Feb. 25 in Indianapolis celebrating 20 years of Catholic Radio Indy. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

he was president of Guerin Catholic High School in Noblesville, Ind., from 2010-2018. He now serves as the Lafayette Diocese’s director of the Third Option marriage program and oversees the diocese’s Pathways to Healing from Divorce ministry.

He said he is grateful “that the orthodoxy of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Church is represented beautifully” through Catholic Radio Indy.

On behalf of the Inter Mirifica board of directors, Smith honored the Teipens with an award for their efforts “to make sure that the airwaves have evangelized these past 20 years, and [to] do so through thick and thin.”

Bob shared with those present the journey that began 25 years ago with “a prompting of the Holy Spirit to do something in Catholic radio. It took five years before we finally came to the situation where we were able to acquire the station 89.1 [FM].”

He recognized the contributions of Jim Ganley, who served as general manager from 2004-2021, and acknowledged the “generosity and support of our underwriters, our benefactors, all the hard work of our employees and our volunteers and our board of directors.”

He also gave special credit to his wife of 53 years.

“Sharon was right there working with [Jim] all the time as a super volunteer,” said Teipen. “Without her support, this would not have happened.”

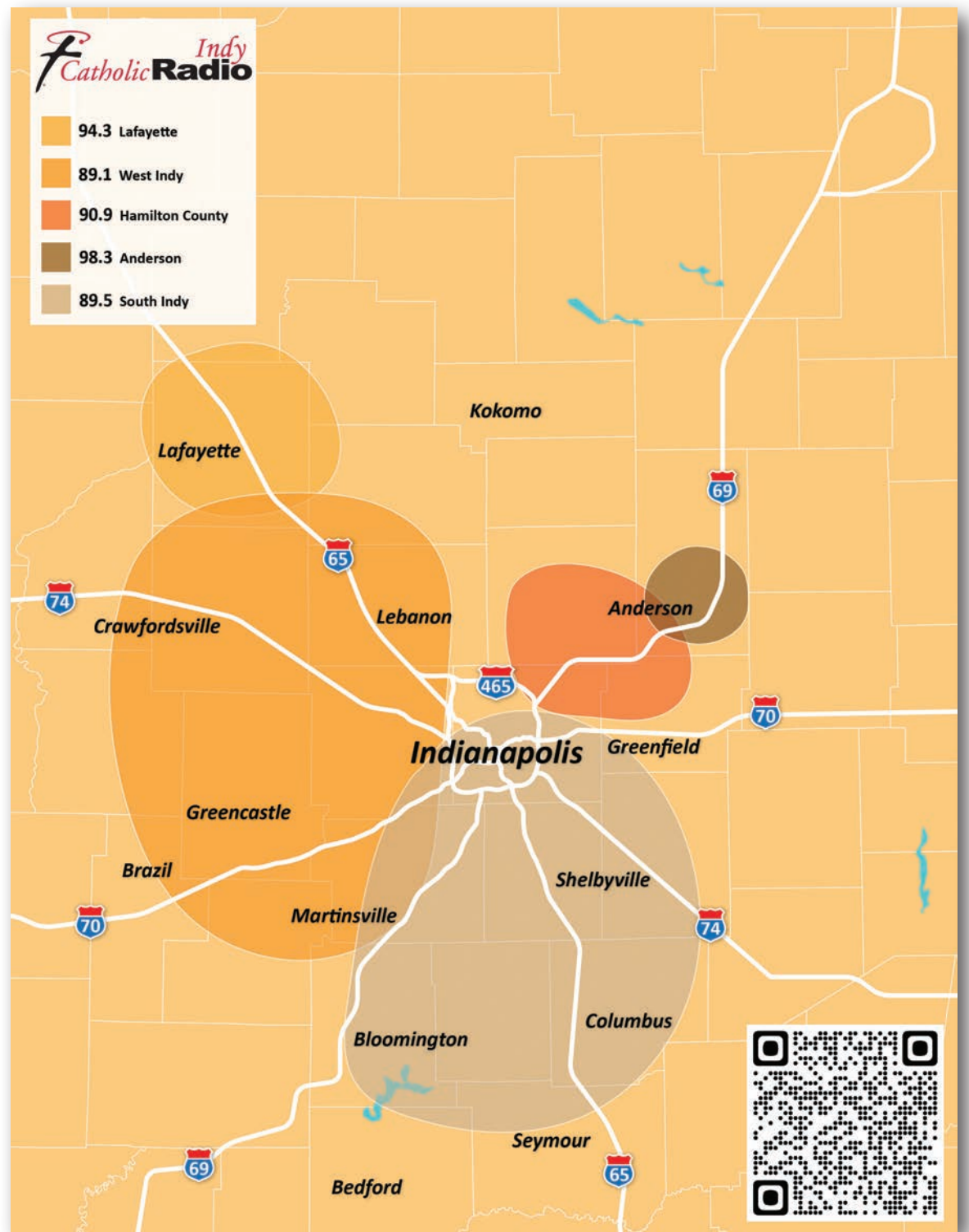
‘Apologetics matter’

Keynote speaker Anders spoke about the importance of Catholic radio as an evangelization tool and the role it played in his own journey as a former Presbyterian to being received into the Catholic faith in 2003.

“Apologetics matter,” he said, noting that Catholic radio may be some people’s only introduction and connection to the faith, “from the fellow in the middle of rural Japan who literally knows no Catholics in the world,” to those in areas of the United States dominated by Protestant faith traditions.



During a banquet on Feb. 25 in Indianapolis celebrating 20 years of Catholic Radio Indy, Deacon Paul Lunsford of the Lafayette, Ind., Diocese, left, and archdiocesan Deacon Ronald Pirau pose with the Archbishop Fulton Sheen Evangelist of the Year Award each received from Catholic Radio Indy general manager Gordon Smith, right.



He recalled one caller from Mississippi who asked question after question on the same call.

“Finally he says, ‘I apologize for hammering you like this, but you guys are literally the only Catholics I know,’ ” Anders shared.

Some callers are intent on challenging the faith, he also noted. One such caller was “Roy the truck driver.”

“I patiently answered his objections and explained how I had fallen my way out of the box [of misperceptions] that he was in,” said Anders.

After calling the show for about six months, Roy shared with Anders that he was coming into the Church that Easter.

“Six months after that, he calls to tell me how he’s evangelizing the Catholic faith for other truckers at truck stops,” said Anders.

While “Called to Communion” is intended for non-Catholics, he said he gets many calls from “cradle Catholics who have grown up in the Church their whole life who say, ‘I never knew the Catholic faith until now.’ ”

‘Catholic radio changed my life’

Anders spoke about his own journey to Catholicism from being Presbyterian and a staunch believer that Catholics were wrong and “fell outside of Christ’s salvation.”

It was through the process of earning a doctorate in Reformation history and historical theology that he came to see the truth of the Catholic faith.

One day in the early 2000s, Anders discovered a Catholic radio station with EWTN programming. Eventually he called Marcus Grodi, host of EWTN’s “The Journey Home” radio show.

He asked Grodi if he knew any former Protestants in the Birmingham, Ala., area who had become Catholic—not knowing that EWTN was located in Birmingham “just five miles” from Anders’ house.

“I could hear him chuckle, and he said, ‘Yeah, I might know a few,’ ” said Anders.

He started visiting the EWTN headquarters, getting to know the faith through staff members, and professed the Catholic faith in 2003.

Meanwhile, Anders said, his marriage had been crumbling for several years. He credits the healing and forgiveness he found through the sacrament of reconciliation with restoring his marriage.

“God got a hold of me in my studies first, but then in my moral life, and then the witness of real Catholics, and then to the mercy of the confessional, and then from Catholic people who loved me, and then backed me into a radio studio, where now I get to talk to people all over the world who’ve had problems just like me,” Anders summarized.

“Catholic radio matters,” he said. “It matters to the deepest places of human personality and relationship. ... Catholic radio changed my marriage. Catholic radio changed my life, and it does that for people all over the world every single day.”

“The gift of Catholic radio is tremendous,” Anders added. “I think it’s the greatest tool we have for evangelism in the Church today, but also in terms of the actual qualitative difference that it makes to people’s lives, to their marriages, to their relationship with God, to their self-respect, to their communities.”

(Listen to Catholic Radio Indy locally by tuning in to 89.1 FM—west Indianapolis; 89.5 FM—south Indianapolis; 90.9 FM—Hamilton County, Ind.; 94.3 FM—Lafayette, Ind.; or 98.3 FM—Anderson, Ind.; or anywhere by downloading the Catholic Radio Indy app from an app store, by dialing 641-793-5507, by asking Alexa to “play Catholic Radio Indy,” or by clicking “Listen Live Now” at catholicradioindy.org. To donate online or for information on becoming an underwriter, go to the same web address. To donate by mail, send a check for “Catholic Radio Indy” to Catholic Radio Indy, 8383 Craig St., Suite 280, Indianapolis, IN 46250.) †

Pope asks children to make the world better, one little step at a time

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Making the world a better place for everyone starts with prayer and little steps like saying hello, sorry or thank you, Pope Francis said in a letter to the world's children.

"Our world will change if we all begin with these little things, without being ashamed to take small steps, one at a time," he wrote in the letter that was released on March 2.

The letter included an invitation for the youngsters to participate in the first World Children's Day meeting in Rome on May 25-26. At a news conference after the letter was published, organizers said 57,000 children from 60 countries already had signed up, and they hoped 100,000 children ages 6-12 would attend the opening event at Rome's Olympic Stadium and Mass with Pope Francis the next day in St. Peter's Square.

In his letter, Pope Francis told children that they are "a source of joy for your parents and your families, but also for our human family and for the Church, in which each of us is like a link in a great chain stretching from the past to the future and covering the whole Earth."

Children also remind everyone of their need and desire "to grow and flourish," and that all people are someone's sons and daughters and are brothers and sisters, he said. "We would not be alive unless others brought us into this world, nor could we grow without having others to love and from whom to receive love.

"The fact that we are small reminds us that we are also frail and need one another as members of one body," the pope wrote.

Pope Francis explained to the children that he chose the Bible passage, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rv 21:5) as the theme for World Children's Day because it is a reminder that to make the world a better place, people need

to be united with Jesus and with others.

"With Jesus, we can dream of the renewal of our human family and work for a more fraternal society that cares for our common home," the pope wrote.

Sharing "a special secret" with the children, Pope Francis told them that if they really want to be happy, they need to pray every day "because prayer connects us directly to God" and "fills our hearts with light and warmth."

And even the youngest people can understand that they cannot be happy all alone "because our joy increases to the extent that we share it," he said. "Joy is born of gratitude for the gifts we have received and which we share in turn, and it grows in our relationships with others.

"When we keep the blessings we have received to ourselves, or throw tantrums to get this or that gift, we forget that the greatest gift that we possess is ourselves, one another: all of us, together, are God's gift," the letter said. "Other gifts are nice, but only if they help us to be together. If we don't use them for that purpose, we will always end up being unhappy; they will never be enough.

"Think of your friends and how great it is to spend time with them: at home, at school, in the parish and the playground, everywhere," Pope Francis wrote. "Playing, singing, discovering new things, having fun, everyone being together and excluding no one. Friendship is wonderful and it grows only in this way: through sharing and forgiving, with patience, courage, creativity and



Pope Francis greets a child during a meeting with youngsters from around the world called "Let Us Learn from Boys and Girls" at the Vatican on Nov. 6, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

imagination, without fear and without prejudice."

In preparation for World Children's Day, the pope asked them to pray the Our Father every morning and every evening with their families and to think about the words.

Jesus, he said, "is calling us and he wants us to join actively with him, on this World Children's Day, to become builders of a new, more humane, just and peaceful world.

"Jesus, who offered himself on the Cross to gather all of us together in love, who conquered death and reconciled us with the Father, wants to continue his work in the Church through us," the pope wrote. "Think about this, especially those of you who are preparing to receive first Communion." †

Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*. An asterisk (*) indicates confession only, not a service.

Batesville Deanery

March 8, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2:30-6:30 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville*
 March 16, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville*
 March 16, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville*
 March 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
 March 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, St. John the Evangelist campus
 March 20, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
 March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville

Bloomington Deanery

March 12, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul
 March 13, 6 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
 March 14, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
 March 27, 6 p.m. at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery

March 10, noon-2 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City*
 March 13, 6:30 p.m. at St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty
 March 17, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at St. Anne, New Castle*

Indianapolis East Deanery

March 12, 6 p.m. at St. Rita
 March 19, 7 p.m. at Holy Spirit
 March 25, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. "Leave the Light On" at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House*

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the East Deanery are as follows:

Second and fourth Sundays after 10 a.m. Mass, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
 Sundays during Lent, 9-9:30 a.m. at Our Lady of Lourdes

Indianapolis North Deanery

March 10, 2 p.m. at St. Simon the Apostle
 March 11, 7 p.m. at Christ the King
 March 12, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X

Indianapolis South Deanery

March 8, 6:30-7:30 p.m. for St. Ann and St. Thomas More (Indianapolis West Deanery), Mooresville, at St. Thomas More

March 16, 8:30 a.m.-10 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood*

Indianapolis West Deanery

March 8, 6:30-7:30 p.m. for St. Ann (Indianapolis South Deanery) and St. Thomas More, Mooresville, at St. Thomas More
 March 13, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Holy Angels
 March 21, 6:30 p.m. for St. Gabriel the Archangel, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Monica at St. Monica

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the West Deanery are as follows:

Tuesdays of Lent, 5-6 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
 Wednesdays of Lent (excluding Holy Week), 6-7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
 Thursdays of Lent (excluding Holy Thursday), 5-6 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
 Fridays of Lent (excluding Good Friday): 4-5 p.m. at St. Christopher; 5-6 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg, and St. Monica; 5:30-6:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
 Saturdays of Lent (excluding Holy Saturday), 9-10 a.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg

New Albany Deanery

March 13, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
 March 20, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
 March 20, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
 March 21, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville
 March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Seymour Deanery

March 10, 9 a.m. at St. Patrick, Salem
 March 13, 6:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour
 March 17, 3 p.m. at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

Tell City Deanery

March 10, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery

March 15, noon-7 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute*

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Terre Haute Deanery are as follows:

Thursdays 6:30-8 p.m. and Saturdays 3:30-5 p.m. (excluding Holy Week) at St. Joseph University, Terre Haute †



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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Stations of the Cross show way to Calvary is ‘the path of true love’

By Michael R. Heinlein

(OSV News)—Christians know the life of a disciple will not be easy. Christ did not mince words about this—telling his disciples they must take on life’s sufferings as in the form of capital punishment that would later be used to take his life:

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23).

How do Christians make sense of the crosses they bear? The question of why suffering exists finds its answer in Christ’s transformation of suffering through love. Christ’s cross helps us begin to make sense of our own, hence the universal appeal of popular devotions like the Stations of the Cross.

The Stations of the Cross finds its roots with the Franciscans who helped rebuild the Christian sites of the Holy Land following the medieval Crusades. Given the prominence of Christ’s passion within Franciscan spirituality, the order encouraged pilgrims in Jerusalem to journey along Christ’s way to Calvary.

While it began as a pious devotion, its enduring relevance in the Christian life, however, caused the devotion to spread. Over time, the pope gave Franciscans the prerogative to erect “stations” of the cross for popular devotion in parishes the world over. Long after Franciscans played a central role in promoting this prayerful meditation on Jesus’ suffering and death, it is hard to find a parish building or complex that does not have the Stations of the Cross.

The universal reality of suffering makes devotions inspiring meditation on the passion and death of Jesus particularly relevant in Christian life. Such prayer forms like the Stations of the Cross are popularized, particularly in the season of Lent.

They should not necessarily be restricted there alone, however, since the Stations of the Cross have become a primary opportunity for the faithful to learn the purpose of their crosses, which come to us at all times of life.

Through fostering communal celebration of the Stations of the Cross, priests have the privilege of accompanying their flocks in this understanding. Assisted by praying with the Stations of the Cross, the faithful enter into the experience of Christ and others—such as Pilate, Mary, Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, the women of Jerusalem or those who crucified the Lord. In this way, devotions like the Stations of the Cross assist the faithful in appropriating the fruits of Christian suffering.

It makes sense, then, that those who have “put on Christ,” becoming members of his body through baptism—a bond renewed and strengthened in each reception of holy Communion—should expect nothing



Actors do a live re-enactment on Good Friday, on March 30, 2018, of the Stations of the Cross during a mile-long procession in Houston. Meditating on the passion and death of Christ in devotions like the Stations of the Cross can help Catholics join their own suffering to Christ’s. (OSV News photo/James Ramos, Texas Catholic Herald)

less than a share in Christ’s own passion and cross.

In light of Christ’s passion, it likewise makes sense to understand suffering’s purpose as rooted in love. “If you really want to love Jesus,” St. Gemma Galgani said, “first learn to suffer, because suffering teaches you to love.”

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). God is love, and love is the source of all that is.

St. John Paul II offered a powerful meditation in his 1984 apostolic letter “*Salvifici Doloris*” on ways to understand the role of suffering in our lives:

“Love is also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ” (#13). Out of love, Christ gave of himself completely, even unto death—handing over his spirit out of obedience to the Father’s will (see Lk 23:46).

Christ’s own suffering and death has untold value and immense purpose—whereby God bought us back from the slavery of sin and death. So, too, does ours, because, as St. John Paul II described it, “each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ” (“*Salvifici Doloris*,” #19).

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen wrote: “The great tragedy of the world is not what people suffer, but how much they miss when they suffer. Nothing is quite as depressing as wasted pain, agony without an ultimate meaning or purpose.” The Stations of the Cross make real every imaginable aspect of human suffering that was on full display at Christ’s passion. And they teach us to see the fruit of suffering.

On his way to Calvary, Christ experienced the sufferings ordinary men and women experience every day throughout the world. He showed not only how to deal with them, but through the power of love, how to transform suffering’s destructive power into something life-giving.

In Christ’s passion and death, St. John Paul II wrote that Jesus “has taken upon himself the physical and moral sufferings of the people of all times, so that in love they may find the salvific meaning of their sorrow and valid answers to all of their questions” (“*Salvifici Doloris*,” #31).

Meditating on the Stations of the Cross exposes Christ’s suffering heart—“sorrowful even to death” (Mk 14:34). In his condemnation to death, Christ teaches that we have the freedom to accept life’s sorrows. He does not let condemnation be levied upon him, but rather he chooses it out of love. Taking up his cross, Christ models how to accept suffering as an act of love in obedience to God’s will.

Christ falls three times on the way to Calvary. The sufferings due to sin in our lives continually cause failure. In falling himself, Christ shows that, despite suffering’s tendency to bring us down, discouragement can be

overcome by dependence on God’s grace. Christ teaches us how to persevere through the failure and exhaustion through which our suffering inevitably leads and be of one heart and mind in pursuit of the Father’s will. Such is redemptive suffering—as the old saying goes, “no pain, no gain.”

Christ’s way to Calvary illustrates, too, how God graces us with models of love in the midst of our suffering. But like Christ, we must be attentive and receptive to them. The compassion, cooperation and generosity of others—such as Christ experienced in the fourth, fifth and sixth stations—are examples of how love is returned to love.

And when unburdened by our own sufferings, through love, each of us can be channels of God’s love through service, like Mary, Simon and Veronica. “In the face of evil, suffering and sin, the only response possible for a disciple of Jesus is the gift of self, even of one’s own life, in imitation of Christ; it is the attitude of service,” Pope Francis said during World Youth Day in Poland in 2016.

Since life’s road must pass by way of Calvary, this journey of love ultimately entails that we strip ourselves of all that keeps us from God and his will. At the end of his road to Calvary, Christ shows that abandoning ourselves to the hands of providence comes with detachment from all earthly power, pleasure, wealth and honor.

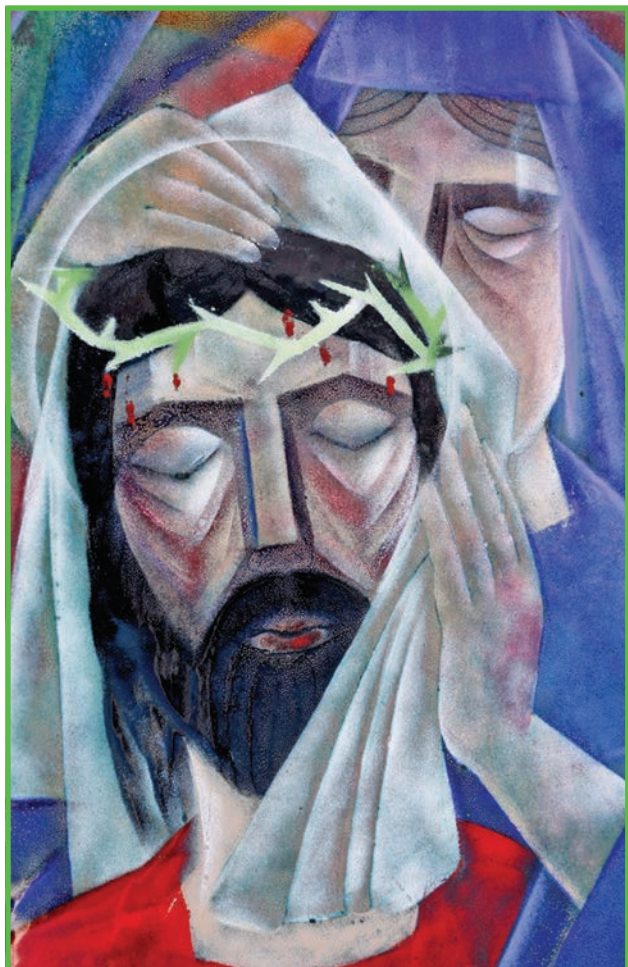
The Christian must be unhesitant to cast aside anything necessary to advance the kingdom of God. In this way, suffering is a gift that enables us to focus on the new life in Christ that awaits believers. Through the pain of suffering, we gain the joy of heaven itself—eternal happiness with God—the gates to which Christ opened for “the many.”

In meditating on Christ’s passion and death, through devotions like the Stations of the Cross, comes the realization that life’s sufferings can be joined to Christ’s—by which one learns that love forms suffering’s foundation. “The road is narrow,” St. John of the Cross said. “He who wishes to travel it more easily must cast off all things and use the cross as his cane. In other words, he must be truly resolved to suffer willingly for the love of God in all things.”

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, weeks before he was elected pope following the death of Pope St. John Paul II, referenced this when he said that Jesus not only taught us how to pray the Stations of the Cross, but also their meaning. “The Way of the Cross is the path of losing ourselves,” he said, “the path of true love.”

Suffering expresses love’s total self-emptying required of the disciple. “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Lk 9:24).

(Michael R. Heinlein is editor of *Simply Catholic*. Follow him on X @HeinleinMichael.) †

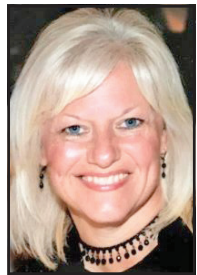


An image of the Stations of the Cross at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington shows the sixth station, “Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.” (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

Joyful Witness/Kimberly Pohovey

Spiritual slump leads to realization of contentment

There have been times in my life when I have felt I am absolutely bursting with faith. I have also clung desperately to my faith in times of hardship. But now isn't either one of those times.



In the past, I would say I have experienced great peaks and valleys—depending on the events that have unfolded in my life.

When life was fantastic, I felt on fire for my faith and wanted to shout my joy to God from a mountain top. When I experienced great difficulty, I agonizingly cried out to God to lift me from the valley. Both situations left me with the overwhelming sense of God's presence in my life.

As I look back, I fear my prayer life might have been based only on significant events in my life—as if I'm some sort of spiritual drama junkie.

Where I am in my life today isn't dramatic. I am neither experiencing a high or low. If anything, I feel like I'm living on a plateau.

My life is calm, fulfilling and enjoyable, but not overly exciting. And I think because there isn't much drama in my life, I find myself not quite knowing what to do in terms of prayer. I feel like I'm in a spiritual slump.

Have you ever had times like this in your life? You're neither running toward God nor turning your back on him. You're just in a stagnant spot. Stagnancy leads me to feel lazy. I repeat the same prayers every day. I attend Mass and pray the rosary without any great enthusiasm, and it's not that I feel very distant from God; it's more that I lack any great emotion in my spiritual life.

In between the Church's liturgical seasons, we celebrate ordinary time. That's how I would describe my faith right now. I feel as if I'm stuck there. I have nothing over-exciting to report to or pray for from God. So, what to do?

As I have talked with God about this slump, the first thought that occurred to me is that it's OK. Even St. Teresa of Calcutta confessed to long periods of spiritual dryness in her life. Perhaps it is these stretches that make us appreciate our more fervent experiences of prayer

and faith.

As I reflect on my situation, I believe God might be trying to convey to me that I should be glad for the ordinary.

Prior peaks and valleys in my life have generally come at a cost. Maybe God just wants me to celebrate the calm. I keep ruminating on the Scripture passage "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:11). Just maybe God has called me to this season of my life not to feel as if I'm in a slump, but to sit in his stillness and simply bask in the knowledge that he is by my side.

In the past, I felt that if I didn't keep moving, I wasn't growing, being productive or accomplishing anything. The more I think about it, maybe God is trying to tell me that sometimes the status quo is what we need.

God knows I've experienced enough drama for one lifetime. Maybe he is calling me to the calm. Maybe what I thought was a slump is actually ... his peace.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.) †

Christina Capecchi/

Twenty Something

The painting beneath the painting: faith that endures

I was a first grader when I made my inaugural trip to Walt Disney World. In February—decades later—I returned with a first grader and a fresh set of eyes.



So much came back to me. My favorite ride then remained my favorite ride now: Pirates of the Caribbean.

I remembered not only the sight of the swashbucklers, but the feel of the bobbing boat winding through water and the smell of the dank walls.

It had been there all along, tucked in an inner recess of my 6-year-old heart. The experience had stuck, like an old photo captured on the sticky page of an album. I just hadn't realized.

I've tended to think of my memory bank as static, always accessible in equal supply. But the older I get, the more dynamic it seems. Parenthood amplifies this, offering another go-round, layers of nostalgia as soft and warm as an old patchwork quilt.

So much that is learned in childhood endures. The songs. The prayers. The prayers turned into songs. The wispy, wistful soundtrack for *Anne of Green Gables* that sounds like growing up. The parts of the Mass, as familiar as your parent's hand. The welcome that invokes our triune God in one breath: "The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The drama of the consecration and Jesus' direct invitation: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it." The marching orders at closing to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Pick up a beloved childhood book and be amazed. The story is still there. The Wild Things still dangling from tree branches with Max, their wild rumpus in full swing. Richard Scarry's mice still zipping along in their pencil-mobile. The old man still resting on *The Giving Tree*, now a stump.

The things we forgot we'd forgotten. Memories that never left us, though decades have passed without a single thought. Invisible but not erased.

I've been searching for the words to describe this happy, haunting sensation. It is at once new and familiar—the warmth of recognition plus the tingle of novelty.

Leave it to the Italians to capture it: *pentimento*. It is an art term used to describe traces of a previous work, an artist's change of mind. Most often, it refers to original marks in a painting that were painted over but reappeared through time. The painting beneath the painting.

Pentimento may show a head or hand that the artist first sketched in a slightly different place. A dramatic example is Picasso's "The Old Guitarist," where the outline of a woman's head appears at a 90-degree angle from the guitarist's neck. Conservators used X-ray images to further decipher what lay beneath, extracting more of the woman's body and another face at her neck.

To me, *pentimento* is hopeful: the original marks of childhood endure, the stories and songs and sanctifying graces.

When we worry about the record number of "nones," those Americans who claim no religious affiliation, I like to preface the stats. We do not see what may be slowly unfolding. We do not know what painting is hidden beneath the painting. It is the very passage of time that allows for *pentimento*—the gradual erosion of oil paint, sometimes through centuries, like a person's tough exterior or recent departure from faith.

Their story is not over. And though it may be buried very deep, long ago, something sacred remains.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.) †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

A call to uphold the value and dignity of life in all its stages

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* underscores the sacredness of human life, affirming its sanctity as it originates from God's creative act and maintains a unique connection with the Creator throughout its existence.



The ultimate authority over life, from its inception to its conclusion, resides with God, and no one possesses the right to directly end the life of a human being (#2258). Each individual, fashioned in the image and likeness of God, inherently holds value, and is cherished by God from the moment of conception. The call for Catholics is to uphold the dignity of every person, acknowledging this intrinsic worth.

While the pro-life movement often focuses on issues like abortion and euthanasia, St. John Paul II, in his encyclical "*Evangelium Vitae*," emphasizes that charity in the service of life should be consistent, devoid of bias and free from discrimination (#87).

Pope Francis characterizes our current culture as a "throwaway culture," where everything, including human life, is considered disposable once deemed no longer useful.

In the Gospel of Mark (Mk 2:15), the narrative of Jesus associating with social outcasts challenges societal norms, prompting the Pharisees' dismay. Today, we also fall prey to similar judgments, measuring a person's value based on job title, physical appearance, age or societal contributions.

We must recognize that we all are created in God's image and are meant to be in union with him. To achieve this union, we must love others as God loves us, acknowledging the inherent dignity of every human being, irrespective of sin, weakness, disability, age or illness.

Lula, facing a challenging upbringing, found herself living on and off the streets at age 17. Despite struggles with

employment and stable housing, a turning point occurred at 27 when she became pregnant.

Turning to Catholic Charities for assistance, she received not only material support but also crucial wrap-around services such as counseling, day care referrals and guidance on obtaining her GED. During 18 months as a Catholic Charities client, Lula transformed her life, gaining confidence, securing a full-time job and achieving her educational goals. This experience made her feel supported and secure in the community, demonstrating the transformative power of love and resources.

Consistency in upholding fundamental values at all life stages is paramount, recognizing the value and dignity of the unborn, the homeless, the mentally ill, prisoners and the terminally ill. As Christians, it is our duty to see Christ in everyone. In today's secular society, separating political bias from genuine love and welcome is challenging, necessitating introspection to identify areas where we fall short in respecting life.

While advocating for legislative measures against abortion or assisted suicide is crucial, true respect for life involves personal encounters with those whom Jesus would embrace but society might reject.

Overcoming fear is essential, as highlighted by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, "What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Mt 25:45).

Pope Francis urges us to counter the "throwaway culture" with a culture of "encounter," steering away from political idolatry and recognizing the dignity of all as made in God's image.

(David Bethuram is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. You can contact him at dbethuram@archindy.org.) †

Guest Column/George Matysek, Jr.

Wife, John Paul II remind expectant father 'love makes room'

My heart started beating faster and my face flushed when I glanced at the messages popping up in text bubbles on my phone one early morning last March.



"Are you at work?" one asked.

"Can you let me know when you are there?" another said.

"Uh-oh," I thought.

"Someone died."

Stepping away from a conversation with a colleague, I closed the door to my office and called Treasa—bracing for bad news.

The voice at the other end of the phone lacked urgency, however, and even had a carefree quality. My wife said she wanted to text me a photo and "get my opinion on something."

In the next instant, I was staring at a pregnancy test that showed two telltale vertical lines.

"You think it's positive?" Treasa asked.

"Yes," I said.

Treasa continued chatting about this life-changing development in a relaxed way that would arouse no suspicion among our five kids. Despite the hushed tone of her voice, however, I could tell she was ecstatic.

My heart was still beating furiously. I, too, was overjoyed. Yet, part of me was thinking back to earlier conversations my wife and I had about growing our family. We have always been unconditionally open to life, but questions lingered in my mind.

Was I too old at 50 to be the father of a sixth child? How would we pay for the countless expenses that would go into raising an even larger family? Would we need a new van to fit two adults and six kids? Having lost our first-born son six weeks before his due date, what would we do if we had that experience again, or if the baby was born with health challenges—and how would that impact

our children, who ranged in age from 4 to 9?

When we started sharing the news with family and friends, most were supportive. But a few weren't exactly encouraging.

"You need to find another hobby," one person told me.

Another's jaw literally dropped, and someone else asked if I thought I was a Hollywood movie star—Al Pacino or George Clooney—still having kids later in life.

"Reeeally?" said one, rolling his eyes.

I knew they were teasing ... mostly. Yet, I could tell in some of the reactions that the path we walked was perceived as weird, naive and maybe even foolish by some.

Treasa had a different outlook.

Welcoming a new baby would teach our children to be more generous, she said. Our little ones would give and receive love in a new way. They would

See GUEST, page 14

Fourth Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 10, 2024

- 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23
- Ephesians 2:4-10
- John 3:14-21



The Second Book of Chronicles provides the Mass for this Lenten weekend with its first reading. Chronicles was written about 1,000 years before Jesus. The identity of its author is unknown. As the title of this book implies, its purpose is to record the history of God's people. But the most important aspect of their history always

was religious.

A constant refrain and source of grief among the prophets and the devout of ancient Israel was the sinfulness of the people, and most particularly that of the kings. God caused or willed no distress or hardship. Rather, by disobeying God the people themselves upset the order of life, bringing trouble upon themselves.

This reading insists that God again and again has sent messengers to call the people to piety. Inevitably, these messengers met rebuke.

As an example of all this, Babylonia overtook the Holy Land because sin had weakened the Hebrew kingdoms. The conquerors took many Hebrews to Babylon where their lives were miserable.

A pagan king, Cyrus of Persia, freed these sad people when in turn he overcame Babylon. The Hebrews saw Cyrus as an instrument of God's mercy.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians furnishes the second reading. It teaches critical facts about God, the source of all goodness. Salvation is God's merciful gift. No one deserves it. God lavishly extends it to us as an expression of eternal, divine love.

St. John's Gospel gives this Mass its final reading. In this reading, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, a prominent and pious Jew from Jerusalem. The Lord refers to an event that occurred during the Exodus when Moses lifted high a bronze serpent. All who looked upon this serpent were rescued from death.

Serpents were important in ancient iconography, although more important

among pagans than among Jews. Serpents symbolized eternal life since they shed their hides and seemingly were re-born to new lives.

Jesus predicts being lifted, as Moses lifted up the serpent. He was referring to the crucifixion. All who look upon Jesus will have everlasting life.

Even so, Jesus is not a conqueror of people, who make their own choices. People must freely choose to follow Jesus by renouncing their own sin.

This is important. God sending his only Son shows how he "so loved the world" (Jn 3:16). He desires life for us and therefore sent Jesus to lead us to life, even if we often prefer darkness and, indeed, doom ourselves.

Reflection

This weekend is traditionally called "Laetare Sunday," taking its name from the Latin word, *laetare*, to rejoice. This is the first word of the Latin original of the entrance antiphon for the Mass.

In the liturgies of this weekend, priests have the option of wearing rose, a blend of red and gold. Rose is not the toning down of a stricter violet of Lent, but a signal that Easter is near.

Thus, the presence of gold is critical to understanding the meaning of this liturgical moment. The gold symbolizes the brilliant light of the Resurrection.

At dawn, daylight does not initially appear in a burst of golden sunlight. It comes gradually. The first sign of dawn is often a rose-colored sky.

In reminding us that the sunburst of Easter is not far away, this weekend the Church calls us to rejoice, even if we are in the fourth week of Lent. The victory of Christ is approaching. Salvation is near!

On Good Friday, we will remember the crucifixion, but Jesus, crucified, was eternally victorious over death. He is the radiant "light of the world" (Jn 8:12).

For humanity, the blessed fact is that anyone who turns to Jesus will have his light to guide them unfailingly through the darkness and fog of earthly existence. †

Daily Readings

Monday, March 11

Isaiah 65:17-21
Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b
John 4:43-54

Tuesday, March 12

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12
Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9
John 5:1-16

Wednesday, March 13

Isaiah 49:8-15
Psalm 145:8-9, 13c-14, 17-18
John 5:17-30

Thursday, March 14

Exodus 32:7-14
Psalm 106:19-23
John 5:31-47

Friday, March 15

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22
Psalm 34:17-21, 23
John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday, March 16

Jeremiah 11:18-20
Psalm 7:2-3, 9b-12
John 7:40-53

Sunday, March 17

Fifth Sunday of Lent
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-15
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Obligation to attend Sunday Mass can be affected by health conditions

Q My older sister told me that after age 80, you are relieved of the duty to attend Sunday Mass. I didn't believe her until a friend who is 86 told me the same thing. I have never heard of this. Is it true? (Delaware)



A I have never heard of this either. The relevant citation in *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1247, indicates: "On Sundays and other

holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass." But canon law never mentions an upper age limit for this obligation.

There are some obligations for Catholics which do have stated age parameters. For example, canon 1252 tells us that the obligation to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday "binds those who have attained their majority, until

the beginning of their sixtieth year," meaning that once Catholics turn 60, they are no longer required to keep the fast. The fact that our law demonstrates its willingness to set upper age limits for some obligations makes the lack of a stated age limit for the Sunday obligation all the more striking.

That being said, nobody is bound to an obligation that is impossible or gravely difficult to fulfill. It can happen that by the time people reach 80, various age-related issues could prevent them from attending Mass in person.

For example, health issues might leave them too ill to go out to church, and transportation might become an issue if an elderly person is no longer able to drive. In colder climates, winter weather conditions might also present more of a concern for a senior citizen than they would

for someone a few decades younger.

But if octogenarians thereby found themselves to be no longer bound by the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays, this lack of an obligation would be directly attributable to one of these kinds of above-mentioned reasons, and not simply due to the year in which they were born. An 80-something Catholic in good health who was capable of physically traveling to Mass would be just as bound to observe the Sunday obligation as their younger counterparts.

By the same token, a 20-something Catholic who was legitimately impeded from attending Mass due to reasons of health or logistics would be likewise excused from the Sunday obligation.

At the end of the day, our discernment of whether or not we are excused from the duty to attend Mass is a matter of conscience. That is, the Church trusts us to make this determination in good faith; we're not asked to provide proof to anyone that attending Mass is prohibitively difficult for us.

But if older adults have a hard time weighing whether their circumstances truly excuse them from the Sunday obligation, it might be helpful for them to ask for advice from their confessor or parish priest.

And although it would not be strictly necessary, if it helps to bring clarity or ease the conscience of a Catholic who is on the fence about whether or not they should stay home from Mass, it is possible to request a formal dispensation from the Sunday obligation. Such a dispensation can be granted by either the local bishop or—as would likely be more convenient for most people—from the pastor of one's territorial parish. (See canons 87 and 1245.)

As per canon 1245, a bishop or pastor can also "commute" the Sunday obligation to "some other pious work." This means that the proper authority can essentially set some other prayerful activity as a substitution for the Sunday obligation for a specific person in a particular case. So, for example, if a senior citizen feels uncomfortable traveling to Mass, their bishop or pastor can change the Sunday obligation to something like prayerfully reflecting on the Mass readings of the day or watching a televised Mass.

(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.) †

My Journey to God

Nail It to the Cross

By Sonny Shanks

I want more money and possessions.
I want more fame and power.
I want more soda pop and gum and popcorn.
I want but I also worry.
I worry about my looks and my weight and my age.
I worry about my relationship status.
I worry about my position in my community.
I worry about my test results from school.
I worry about my test results from the doctor.
There's no room for you in my life.
It's full of I want, I worry, I.
What if I nailed I to the cross?
I'd have room for you then.
I'd have room for Jesus then.
I could do for you then.
I could do for Jesus then.
And y'know, I think all three of us would be happier.

(Sonny Shanks is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon. Photo: A man kneels in prayer before a crucifix at Holy Cross Church in New York City on Good Friday, April 14, 2017.) (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



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.

ATKINS, Alan N., 74, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Feb. 19. Father of Jeffery and Scott Atkins. Brother of Brenda Jones. Grandfather of 12.

BRESE, Betty, 78, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 12. Wife of Gene Brese. Mother of Lisa Harreld, Dawn Holifield and Deb Weidner. Daughter of Ione Lynn. Sister of Brenda Muench and Joe Huyear. Grandmother of 11.

CELESTIN, Israel, 82, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Feb. 11. Husband of Henrietta Celestin. Father of

Rachel, Chetzley, Christopher, Heath, Israel, Jr., and Wendall Celestin. Grandfather of 16.

COLLINS, Daniel G., 72, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Jan. 21. Father of Brian, Christopher and Patrick Collins. Brother of Lori Keen, Glenn, Mark and Randall Collins. Grandfather of four.

ENGEL, Karen, 81, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 23. Mother of Kimberly Miller, John and William Engel. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of 15.

LOVE, John, 89, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Feb. 17. Father of Lisa Belman. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of five.

MADER, Eugene F., 68, St. Michael, Greenfield, Feb. 17. Father of Shelby Mader. Brother of Roseanne Huckleberry, Catherine Odle and Gerald Mader. Uncle and great-uncle of several.

MUCKRIDGE, Don H., 83, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City, Feb. 17. Father of Brent and Patrick Muckridge. Brother of Carol Cotton and Nancy Kirlin. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of four.

NAVILLE, Herman F., 93, St. Mary, Navilleton, Feb. 17. Husband of Marcella Naville. Father of Elaine Edwards, Carol Houglund, Cheryl Tansey, Daryl and Donald Naville. Brother of Elizabeth Blessing, Naomi Brockman

Vatican visit



Pope Francis gathers with a group of religious sisters for a photo at the end of his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican on Feb. 28. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

and Eugene Naville. Grandfather of 13. Great-grandfather of 15.

PEDIGO, Roger D., 67, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Jan. 8. Husband of Angela Pedigo. Father of Trisha Blaylock, Kelly Donahue, Julia and Mike Pedigo. Grandfather of nine.

STROTHER, Ellen J., 81, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Feb. 18. Wife of Robert Strother. Mother of Jessica Griggs, Aaron, Lawrence and Scott Strother. Sister of Libby Brown, Ree Enloe, George, Gus, Jerry, Peter and Richard Kutche. Grandmother of three.

TANASOVICH, Robert T., 90, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Feb. 17. Husband of Elizabeth Tanasovich. Father of Lynn Phelps, Mary Sue Rush, Anita Wiley, Deborah, Robert and Steven Tanasovich. Brother of Dr. Cheryl

Tanasovich. Grandfather of 17. Great-grandfather of 24.

VOLZ, Christine, 78, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Feb. 10. Mother of Andrew, Brent and Daniel Volz. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of nine. †

Texas executes death-row inmate despite allegations of false testimony at trial

(OSV News)—Ivan Cantu was executed on Feb. 28 by the state of Texas despite claims that the Texan's 2001 conviction for killing James Mosqueda and Amy Kitchen, his cousin and his cousin's fiancée, was based on false testimony.

In a statement issued through the progressive group MoveOn, Sister Helen Prejean, a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph and death penalty abolitionist, said her mission was both to serve as Cantu's spiritual adviser during his incarceration and "publicly share the injustice of this execution.

"We took up the cause of this man because mistakes were made at his trial," Sister Helen said. "And we have a deficient and flawed appeal system that refused to review the substantive issues in this case. Ivan is a very brave man. In the final hours of his life, I granted Ivan peace as he readied himself to die. Ivan initiated more avenues in the pursuit of his exoneration than any single person I've counseled on death row."

Collin County Prosecutor Greg Willis said in a statement, "After over two decades of multiple state and federal courts comprehensively reviewing his conviction, Ivan Cantu has finally met with justice tonight.

"My hopeful prayer is for the victims' families, friends and loved ones to find a long-awaited sense of peace," Willis said, arguing that "clear and powerful evidence" backed up the sentence.

But multiple jurors from Cantu's original trial have

said they did not support his execution, *The Texas Tribune* reported.

Cantu's case garnered national attention after allegations that false testimony contributed to his conviction. More than 151,600 people signed an online petition calling for a stay of his execution.

Sister Helen said, "Ivan was grateful for everyone who supported him in his fight for a fair trial. Remember, by speaking up and taking action for Ivan together, we are bending the arc toward justice and are one step closer to ending the death penalty."

The Catholic Church teaches the death penalty is incompatible with the sanctity of human life. In his 2020 encyclical, "*Fratelli Tutti*," Pope Francis cited the writings of St. John Paul II, explaining his predecessor "stated clearly and firmly that the death penalty is inadequate from a moral standpoint and no longer necessary from that of penal justice.

"There can be no stepping back from this position," Pope Francis wrote. "Today we state clearly that 'the death penalty is inadmissible' and the Church is firmly

committed to calling for its abolition worldwide." Pope Francis also revised the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#2267) in 2018 to reflect that position.

In a Feb. 29 statement, Jennifer Allmon, executive director of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, called for people to "pray and petition our representatives for a reform of our death penalty due process.

"It is simply unconscionable that the courts have set an impossibly high threshold to present new evidence when a person's life is at stake," she said.

Catholic Mobilizing Network executive director Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy also released a Feb. 29 statement, saying Cantu's execution, "despite serious doubts about his guilt and newly discovered evidence," demonstrated how "our criminal legal system is more interested in vengeance than fairness."

She noted that since 1976, when capital punishment in the U.S. was restored, "196 people have been exonerated from death row after being sentenced to death for a crime they didn't commit." †

Providence Sister Laurette Bellamy taught music in Indiana schools for 54 years, volunteered throughout the state

Providence Sister Laurette Bellamy, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Feb. 9 at Mother Theodore Hall on the campus of her religious community's motherhouse. She was 96.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Feb. 27 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Laurette was born on June 27, 1927, in Chicago. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Feb. 2, 1948, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1955.

Sister Laurette earned a bachelor's degree in music at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in music at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a

doctorate in music theory at Indiana University in Bloomington.

During her 76 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Laurette ministered as a music educator in Catholic schools for 54 years in Indiana. In 2005, she volunteered in agencies in Bloomington, Greenwood, Indianapolis and Terre Haute. In 2023, Sister Laurette committed herself entirely to prayer.

In the archdiocese, Sister Laurette served at the former Ladywood School in Indianapolis from 1950-52 and 1957-64 and at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1952-53, 1955-57, 1968-71, and 1972-2010.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876. †

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GUEST

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learn to make sacrifices and bond more strongly. Their support system would grow.

We brought the newest Matysek child home from the hospital in December, an early Christmas gift. The reaction of the children squashed any earlier concerns I had. One by one, each held his or her baby brother, beaming proudly. In these first few weeks, they've showered him with love, doting on him and offering to help with everything from getting his binky to reading him stories and voluntarily (!) cleaning up around the house.

During his epic 1979 visit to Washington, D.C., Pope St. John Paul II noted that decisions about the number of children in a family "must not be taken only with a view to adding to comfort and preserving a peaceful existence."

Parents, he said, "will remind themselves that it is certainly less serious to deny their children certain comforts or material advantages than to deprive them of the presence of brothers and sisters, who could help them to grow in humanity and to realize the beauty of life at all its ages and in all its variety."

He and Treasa are right. Love makes room.

(George Matysek, Jr. is managing editor of the *Catholic Review*, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.) †

ICC

continued from page 1

Espada said that the ICC is equally dismayed by the targeting of a particular demographic: low-income women.

“Aside from the Church’s position on this type of contraception, it seemed to me during testimony on this bill that people were placing a value on the types of babies who should be born,” said Espada, who testified against the legislation during a House committee hearing. “It was distressing to me to hear comments like that, and I think it should be for anyone. As the testimony continued, it wasn’t just about unwanted pregnancies. It was about unwanted pregnancies from a particular type of person. When you talk along those lines—that certain types of people are better off not having children—you get dangerously close to eugenics.”

The proponents for House Bill 1426 argued that half of the babies born in Indiana are born to mothers on Medicaid. They also pointed to the challenging circumstances that many low-income women face and the fact that many do not seek pre- or post-natal care.

“That should be concerning also, because why would you want to implant chemical contraception into someone who is not going to see a doctor on a regular basis?” Espada said.

Dr. Michael Padilla, co-founder of the Franciscan FertilityCare Center in Indianapolis, raised similar red flags. He cited numerous health concerns associated with this type of artificial contraception—from cancer risk to known side effects of mood swings, pain, increased weight gain and abnormal bleeding.

“In certain areas of medicine where it’s

permissible for us to use contraceptives for treatment, such as endometriosis, the language used for contraceptives in that scenario in the literature is ‘suppressive therapy,’ and that speaks quite well to the truth,” Padilla said. “So this is suppressing female physiologic function. It is inherently inducing a disease state. A woman is supposed to have a healthy cycle.”

With regard to House Bill 1426, he also expressed dismay about what he characterized as a “coercive and manipulative” approach to pushing this type of birth control on women when they are most vulnerable.

“There is something beautiful about birth, and inherently exhausting too,” said Padilla, whose Franciscan Health network clinic is one of the only hospital-based clinics in the country offering the Creighton method of natural family planning. “So you’re approaching a woman when she’s tired, she is probably in some pain, and now she has a baby she is overwhelmed with but loves completely. And humanistically speaking, you are now taking advantage of someone in impressing an ideology upon them that they are not at a place to consent to.

“Moreover, it’s audacious to tell someone that you’re not smart enough, or stable enough, to have someone else in your life that you can love and who will love you back,” he added. “We don’t need to assume things about people and make judgments about what’s good for them. We can do better than this.”

Padilla, the 2022 recipient of the archdiocese’s Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Respect Life Award, acknowledged that it is unhealthy for a woman to become pregnant again not long after giving birth. But he added that



‘We want to look at ways to wrap mothers in need, and ways that we can be partners with the state in this. Let’s pour as many resources as we can toward creating a culture of life.’

—Alexander Mingus, associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

while “medical risks are hypothetical, moral evils are real and present now.”

The Catholic Church’s long history of social teaching on these issues culminated with St. Pope John Paul II’s groundbreaking encyclical “*Evangelium Vitae*” or “The Gospel of Life.” This document, arguably the best-known and most-quoted affirmation of the Church’s moral teaching on the sanctity of life, includes numerous arguments against artificial contraception.

One especially serious concern involves instances in which hormonal birth control can actually serve as an abortifacient—that is, a drug that could cause an abortion by preventing the implantation of a fertilized egg.

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) were originally included in House Bill 1426, but debate over their potential abortifacient effects led to them being eliminated from the legislation.

As leaders of the ICC await the outcome of House Bill 1426, they are also looking at pro-life legislation through a more wholistic and long-term lens. They say they will continue to push for child tax credits, paid family leave and pregnancy accommodations

in the workplace to support mothers and families, especially those in challenging circumstances.

“We want to look at ways to wrap mothers in need, and ways that we can be partners with the state in this,” said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC. “Let’s pour as many resources as we can toward creating a culture of life.”

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

The ICC website includes a page tracking the progress of key legislation introduced at the General Assembly, where bills stand at this point in the legislative session, and ways to take action. The page may be accessed at www.indianacc.org/bill-tracker.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus [Little Flower] Parish in Indianapolis, is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †

‘Why, Lord?’ is an appropriate prayer for grieving parents, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Crying out to God and demanding answers when one’s child dies is anything but a sign of a lack of faith, Pope Francis told a group of grieving Italian parents.

“There is nothing worse than silencing pain, putting a silencer on suffering, removing traumas without facing them, as our world often encourages in its rush and numbness,” the pope said in a speech written for members of the “*Talità Kum*” Association from Vicenza, Italy.

While the pope had an aide read his speech on March 2 because he was suffering from bronchitis, he personally greeted each member of the group.

In the text, the pope said he wanted to “offer a caress to your heart, broken and pierced like that of Jesus on the cross: a heart that is bleeding, a heart bathed in tears and torn apart by a heavy sense of emptiness.

“The loss of a child is an experience

that defies theoretical descriptions and rejects the triviality of religious or sentimental words” or “sterile encouragements,” the text said.

Recognizing that too often the pious phrases Christians offer to grieving parents do nothing to help and may just add to the pain, the pope said that the best response is “to imitate the emotion and compassion of Jesus in the face of pain,” not trying to minimize it, but to share it.

Pope Francis told the parents, “Grief, especially when it is so excruciating and without explanation, needs only to cling to the thread of a prayer that cries out to God day and night, that sometimes expresses itself in the absence of words, that does not attempt to resolve the drama but, on the contrary, inhabits questions that keep returning: ‘Why, Lord? Why did this happen to me? Why did you not intervene? Where are you while humanity suffers and my heart

mourns an immense loss?’ ”

In the face of suffering, the pope wrote, “the first response of God is not a speech or a theory, but walking with us, being at our side. Jesus lets himself be touched by our pain, he has walked the same path and does not leave us on our own, but frees us from the weight that oppresses us,

carrying it for us and with us.

“The Lord wants to come to our homes, the home of our hearts and the homes of our families shocked by death,” Pope Francis wrote. “He wants to be near us, he wants to touch our affliction, he wants to give us his hand to raise us up again.” †

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Bishops call for fasting, prayer as abortion is enshrined in French constitution

PARIS (OSV News)—French bishops called for fasting and prayer as abortion was enshrined in the constitution by an overwhelming 780-72 vote, accompanied by a standing ovation when the result was announced as the parliament met in Versailles.

After several months of legislative process, the French Congress, a special body composed of both chambers of parliament, revised the country's 1958 constitution to enshrine women's "guaranteed freedom" to abort in Article 34, making France the first country in the world to explicitly include the right to abortion in its constitution.

French bishops called for "fasting and prayer" in a March 4 statement with the Pontifical Academy for Life releasing its own communique on the same day, saying, "There can be no 'right' to end a human life."

Academy members lamented the debate over the bill in France "did not touch on support mechanisms for those who wish to keep their child," and added that the "protection of human life is humanity's primary objective, and can only develop in a world free of conflict, where science, technology and industry are at the service of the human person and of fraternity."

In a statement signed by Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort of Reims, president of the French bishops' conference, and vice presidents Archbishop Vincent Jordy of Tours and Bishop Dominique Blanchet of Créteil, the bishops cried out that "of all European countries, even Western Europe, France is the only one where the number of abortions is not decreasing and has even increased over the last two years," and that France "would have honored itself by instead promoting the rights of women and children."



Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort

In an online post on Oct. 28, 2023, French President Emmanuel Macron said that "in 2024, the right of women to choose abortion will become irreversible." This followed a promise Macron made on March 8, 2023, International Women's Day, which was seen as a response to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022.

In the wake of the action that French media called "historic," French bishops said in a Feb. 29 statement that abortion "remains an attack on life from the very

beginning," and "cannot be seen from the sole angle of women's rights," regretting that "the debate initiated did not mention support measures for those who would like to keep their child"—an argument repeated in the statement issued by the Pontifical Academy for Life on March 4.

Several French bishops additionally stressed their anger and expressed the danger for freedom of expression about abortion in their country.

On Feb. 27, Archbishop Olivier de Germainy of Lyon pointed out that constructive debate is no longer possible in France on the issue of abortion. "It is becoming difficult to express oneself on this subject without running the risk of becoming a media target," he said.

With the bill, Archbishop Germainy said, France put "the equal dignity of all human life—a principle with constitutional value—and freedom of access to abortion on the same level. How to explain such a contradiction?" he asked.

Abortion is free of charge, allowed up to 14 weeks of pregnancy and is far from being called into question in France.

In 2022, there were more than 234,000 abortions for 723,000 births in France, the highest number of abortions since 1990 and the highest number among European Union countries. It's a "sad record," wrote the bishops in November. "This dramatic reality goes beyond the mere question of a right for women" and "is not progress."

Lucie Pacherie, a lawyer for the Jérôme Lejeune Foundation, which continues the research of geneticist Jérôme Lejeune on Down syndrome, told OSV News, "The freedom to have an abortion was in fact already constitutionally recognized."

The threat, she said, is that the Congress has now "placed it at the rank of a supreme constitutional value."

"This elevated it to a higher level than other freedoms—such as freedom of conscience or freedom of expression—which are only recognized by [statements issued by] the Constitutional Council or in other texts with constitutional value," she said. Pacherie warned "this will put a greater pressure on those who seek to understand and remedy the often dramatic causes which can lead women to have an abortion."

In 1958—the same year when the now-updated constitution was passed—Lejeune and two other scientists, Marthe Gautier and Raymond Turpin,

discovered the chromosomal anomaly responsible for trisomy 21, known as Down syndrome.

Dismayed to see his discovery used in prenatal diagnosis, and leading to abortions, he campaigned throughout his life for the defense of human life from conception until natural death. St. John Paul II asked Lejeune to become the founding president of the Pontifical Academy for Life. He died in 1994, and in 2021 Pope Francis approved the promulgation of a decree on his heroic virtues, declaring Lejeune venerable.

"I am concerned about the taboo that now exists on this issue," Pacherie added. "The deputies were unable to raise the ethical questions that the medical act of abortion poses, to propose amendments or evoke the conscience clauses for doctors, without being booed. The number of abortions is increasing in France, and it is impossible to debate on this subject," she said, echoing the concerns of the bishops.

Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris, speaking on Catholic-run Radio Notre Dame on March 2, expressed his "sadness" at seeing "the fact of not transmitting life" promoted as a positive value.

"We guarantee the freedom not to carry a pregnancy to term. But what guarantees do we have that women will have the freedom to make another choice? What support will they have?" he asked.

Since 1975, women have had a legal right to terminate their pregnancy in France. The late Simone Veil, who served as France's health minister in several governments and is considered a godmother of French "abortion rights" called the Veil Act, always claimed that "no woman resorts to an abortion with a light heart," and that it is "always a tragedy." Since 2012, abortion procedures have been fully reimbursed by social security.

Macron described the March 4 move as "French pride" that had sent a "universal message."

"This constitutionalization of abortion is the constitutionalization of a lie," Pacherie told OSV News. "This lie hides the objective reality of abortion, which regards an unborn child and a woman in a situation of distress."

The Pontifical Academy for Life appealed to "all governments and all religious traditions to do their best so that, in this phase of history, the protection of life becomes an absolute priority." †



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