



The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Evangelization Outreach

The veneration of the cross teaches us important life lessons, page 12.

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Emma Schuler, left, the Catholic campus minister for Indiana University in Bloomington, chats with Maria Thomas, a first-year student at IU from St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Life-changing advice leads young woman to share her faith and joy with IU students

One in an occasional series

(Editor's note: In this series, The Criterion is featuring young adults who have found a home in the Church and strive to live their faith in their everyday life.)

By John Shaughnessy

BLOOMINGTON—The first of Emma Schuler's two favorite moments at Indiana University in Bloomington began with a challenge and a cup of hot chocolate.

As the Catholic campus minister for IU, the 24-year-old Schuler always looks for opportunities when the college

students who come to nearby St. Paul Catholic Center for retreats, Mass and Bible study want to share their faith openly, hoping to bring others into a relationship with Christ.

So the 2021 graduate of IU was thrilled when a current student—Jillian Gzresiak—approached her with a challenge to reach out to the entire campus.

"She said to me, 'We have something so great here at St. Paul's, but if we never share it with others, it's wasted. People out there need us! People in my classes and in the dorms need to know who Jesus is,'" Schuler recalls.

"When she said that, I knew that our students were really understanding our mission. To be fully captivated by Christ

See **CAMPUS MINISTER**, page 8

Senate resolution condemns physician-assisted suicide

By Victoria Arthur

After the latest effort to push for physician-assisted suicide in Indiana failed at the Statehouse, some lawmakers took the extra step of issuing a resolution



condemning the practice to help ensure it never takes hold here.

The Indiana Senate approved the resolution on March 4, just days before the early conclusion of the 2024 General Assembly and at a time when more than a dozen states were considering joining the ranks of those already allowing physician-assisted suicide.

In light of the Catholic Church's longstanding commitment to upholding the dignity of human life, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) hailed the statement as an important stand.

"Physician-assisted suicide neither allows for a natural death nor respects the dignity of the person, both of which are fundamental teachings of the Church," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the official public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

"Additionally, these types of laws are not in the best interest of patients, particularly patients who are vulnerable due to a devastating illness or debilitating circumstance in life. These are the people who should be cared for and most protected, not given tools to harm themselves."

In physician-assisted suicide, which is currently legal in 10 states and the District of Columbia, adults deemed terminally ill can obtain and then self-administer life-ending medication. Proponents often use terms such as "end-of-life options" or "death with dignity" in presenting their case for what they contend is a means of avoiding a painful, prolonged death when a person faces a terminal, debilitating illness.

See **ICC**, page 16



Angela Espada

Sidewalk advocates 'still essential' despite state ban on most abortions

By Natalie Hoefler

It's been eight months since Indiana enacted a life-saving law restricting most abortions in the state.

But drive by a Planned Parenthood facility in Indiana that no longer offers abortions and you're still likely to see Sidewalk Advocates for Life volunteers armed with brochures, informational and treat-filled blessing bags—and love.

"They can't perform abortions [here] now," says Margie Schmitz, a sidewalk advocate who serves outside

See **ADVOCATES**, page 10

Larry Kunkel, left, and Margie Schmitz serve as Sidewalk Advocates for Life volunteers at the Planned Parenthood facility in Indianapolis, where women go for abortion referrals, birth control, "morning after" emergency contraception and other services in opposition to the sanctity of life. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Pre-National Eucharistic Congress service event allows Hoosiers to help those in need encounter Christ

Criterion staff report

The archdiocesan Catholic Charities-Social Concerns ministry and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis Archdiocesan Council are teaming up to launch a pre-National Eucharistic Congress (NEC) service project that will allow Hoosiers to help those in need throughout the country to receive both a package of hygiene items and an encounter with Christ.

“Buying hygiene items is a luxury for so many individuals within our communities,” says Theresa Chamblee, archdiocesan director of Catholic Charities-Social Concerns. “Offering a simple gift of a hygiene care package helps provide dignity and hope to those who may feel forgotten. And giving them in person allows both the giver and the recipient to encounter Christ in each other.”

All are invited to participate, whether or not attending all or part of the NEC in Indianapolis on July 17-21.

The community-led project involves groups gathering specific, essential items for those in need, coordinating a date for community members to fill gallon-size Ziploc bags with the items, and dropping them off at the St. Vincent de Paul distribution center in Indianapolis through June 1.

Some bags will be distributed during the NEC through opportunities to meet Christ in and be Christ to those living on the streets in Indianapolis.

Other bags will be distributed to those attending the congress, to create such encounters in their own communities throughout the country.

All groups in the archdiocese are invited to coordinate a local project—parishes, parish ministries, schools, youth groups, lay apostolates, councils and auxiliaries such as the Knights of Columbus, Knights of Peter Claver and St. Vincent de Paul, and more.

The first step of the project is to advertise and coordinate a local donation drive for these specific items (note—name brand doesn’t matter but are simply listed as examples):

- gallon-size Ziploc bags in which to pack the items
- large socks
- individually wrapped soft food items, such as NutriGrain bars or small, single-serve trail mix packs
- individual packs of body wipes
- individual packs of handwipes
- trial- or travel-size toothbrushes
- trial- or travel-size toothpaste
- trial- or travel-size lotions (less than 3 ounces)
- compact-size Mylar blankets
- rosaries with instruction cards
- small, handmade index card with Scripture quote or message affirming the person’s value.

Trial and error have shown that one of each of the above items will fit into a one-gallon bag. For example, one pair of large socks, one NutriGrain bar, one lotion, one Mylar blanket, etc.

Next, project coordinators can set a date for the community to create the hygiene care packages.

The complete bags must be delivered by June 1 to the loading docks on the south side of the St. Vincent de Paul Distribution Center, 1201 E. Maryland St., in Indianapolis, between 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

“Pope Benedict [XVI] said, ‘Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities—I can give them the look of love which they crave,’” said Chamblee, quoting the late pope’s words from his 2005 encyclical, “*Deus Caritas Est*” (“God is Love”).

“Those who participate in this project will make both the ‘outward necessities’ and ‘the look of love’ possible in Indianapolis during the National Eucharistic Congress, and all over the country afterward,” Chamblee added.

(For more information on this project, go to cutt.ly/nec-carepackages or contact Theresa Chamblee, archdiocesan director of Catholic Charities-Social Concerns, at tchamblee@archindy.org or 317-236-1404.) †



NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS WEEKLY UPDATE



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

March 15–24, 2024

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

March 23 – 9:30 a.m.
Synod Listening Session at St. John Paul II Parish, Sellersburg

March 24 – 10 a.m.
Palm Sunday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

Marian University launches new Franciscan Leadership Institute

Special to *The Criterion*

With the goal of creating more missionary disciples to serve the Church, Marian University in Indianapolis recently announced its plan to start



Adam Setmeyer

its Franciscan Leadership Institute.

A press release from the university noted, “Communities, schools and parishes in today’s world require missionary disciples who can use research and the wisdom of Christ to tackle the complex

issues they face with innovative, faith-filled responses.

“The Franciscan Leadership Institute will fulfill this need through cutting-edge research, comprehensive formation programs, new academic pathways and partnerships with organizations across the nation.”

The institute will endow scholarships and support programs that advance four key areas, according to the press release.

Discipleship: Launch the San Damiano Scholars Program for students in the College of Osteopathic Medicine seeking to carry on the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

Scholarship: Create degrees and certificates, both in-person and online, to empower leaders in Catholic schools, parishes, health care and other ministries.

Leadership: Expand the *Renovación*: The Initiative for Parish Renewal to

cultivate leadership teams in Latino-serving parishes.

Partnership: Develop a network of communities of practice among 5,000 Catholic leaders throughout the country.

The institute will be led by its director, Adam Setmeyer, who is also Marian’s chief mission officer. JT Noble—chair of the department of theology and an associate professor—will serve as the assistant director. Franciscan Father Rick Martignetti

will serve as vice president of mission and ministry and Franciscan scholar in residence.

“This marks a pivotal moment in our commitment to excellence and service in our Catholic, Franciscan tradition,” said Kenith Britt, Marian’s chancellor and chief operating officer. “We anticipate the Franciscan Leadership Institute will have a profound impact on Marian University, our Church and our country through creating transformational leaders in service to the world.”

Setmeyer noted, “The new Franciscan Leadership Institute is a bold choice by Marian University to propel the formation of Catholic leaders, and, like St. Francis, Marian will be uncompromising in its commitment to the Gospel and quality programs that make a real difference in the life of the Church.” †



Kenith Britt



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NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in *The Criterion*?

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Pilgrims eager to lead 'biggest eucharistic procession in world history'

(OSV News)—A profound experience with the Eucharist during Mass in his freshman year at Texas A&M University compelled Charlie McCullough to make



NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

Jesus the center of his life. "Every decision that I've made after that has been a small step in that relationship and a small response to that invitation," said McCullough, a 22-year-old north Texas native. "And now the invitation is him saying, 'Come and follow me,' as we go on pilgrimage across the United States."

McCullough is one of 24 young adults who will be journeying with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament along four National Eucharistic Pilgrimage routes leading to the National Eucharistic Congress. The "perpetual pilgrims" will begin their

treks on May 17-19—the weekend of Pentecost—from San Francisco; New Haven, Conn.; Brownsville, Texas; and the headwaters of the Mississippi River at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota.

Their routes—a combined 6,500 miles—will converge eight weeks later in Indianapolis for the July 17 opening of the five-day congress in Lucas Oil Stadium. Along the way, the pilgrims will go through small towns, large cities and rural countryside, mostly on foot, with the Eucharist carried in a monstrance designed particularly for this unprecedented event.

"This will be the biggest eucharistic procession in world history," said Kai Weiss, a perpetual pilgrim studying theology at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington. "I think Jesus will sanctify this land in an unimaginable way, even invisibly and in an unseen way. But obviously, we will be visible and we will be easily noticed, and

I just look forward to what Christ in the Eucharist can bring to other people."

Weiss, 27, grew up in Regensburg, Germany, where elaborate Corpus Christi processions are commonplace and people are familiar with Europe's long history of walking pilgrimages, he said. Last year, he participated in a two-day walking pilgrimage to the Marian shrine of Our Lady of Altötting with about 4,000 people, where pilgrims sang hymns and prayed the rosary along the way.

"That really communal aspect is so beautiful about processions and pilgrimages—that they bring us together as a Church, and that since they're also public, they can also bring in other people," Weiss said. "It's a wonderful way of expressing our faith and our joy."

In October, the National Eucharistic Congress issued a call for perpetual pilgrims and received more than 100 applications. Criteria included being a baptized and practicing Catholic between the ages of 19-29, being in good physical condition and capable of walking long distances, and being committed to upholding Church teachings. Backgrounds in ministry, service, leadership and pilgrimage experience were of special interest, according to organizers.

The perpetual pilgrims were chosen after multiple rounds of interviews and follow-up screenings, organizers said.

In February, the pilgrims met for a retreat in St. Paul, Minn., where they received spiritual formation from Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., who serves as chairman of the National Eucharistic Revival, as well as National Eucharistic Congress staff and priests with pilgrimage and media experience.

Most of the pilgrims are graduate or undergraduate students, and some work for mission-oriented apostolates and nonprofits. "A common thread for all was

a profound encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist that they were inspired to share with others," said a press release.

Organized by Modern Catholic Pilgrim, a Minnesota-based nonprofit that promotes U.S. walking pilgrimages and biblical hospitality, the pilgrimage routes include stops at sacred landmarks including saints' shrines and diocesan cathedrals.

Each day will include Mass, a small eucharistic procession and 10-15 miles of travel. Along the way, parishes are planning to host eucharistic devotions such as adoration, praise and worship, and lectures. Parishes, religious orders, schools, shrines and retreat centers will offer the pilgrims hospitality and offer fellowship and meals.

A support vehicle will accompany the pilgrims and transport them through legs of the journey where "safety, terrain, and/or climate may present obstacles," according to the media statement.

The pilgrimage routes are named for key saints for North America: the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route from the east, the St. Juan Diego Route from the south, the St. Junipero Serra Route from the west, and the Marian Route from the north, which includes a stop in Wisconsin at the Shrine of Our Lady of Champion, the only approved Marian apparition site in the United States.

Weiss is traveling the Marian Route with fellow perpetual pilgrims Sarah Cahill of Virginia; Matthew Heidenreich of Ohio; Danielle Schmitz of California; Jennifer Torres of Colorado; and Megan Zaleski of Illinois.

With McCullough on the Juan Diego route will be Camille Anigbogu of Texas; Shayla Elm of North Dakota; Issy Martin-Dye of Ohio; Joshua Velasquez of Texas; and MacKenzie Warrens of Missouri.

See **PILGRIMAGE**, page 9

Would you like to nominate someone for the 2025 Legacy Award? Do so by March 31

The archdiocese is currently accepting nominations for a faith-filled individual or couple to receive the Legacy Award at the 2025 Legacy Gala.

There are three ways to nominate someone for the honor in 2025: share your nomination on the website, www.archindy.org/LegacyGalaNomination; send your nomination by e-mail to LegacyGala@archindy.org, or send it in the mail to Legacy Gala, c/o Office of Stewardship and Development, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202.

The following information is needed for your nomination to be considered: 1) name of nominee and their parish; 2) address, e-mail address and phone number of nominee; 3) your name, parish name, address, e-mail address and phone number; 4) a narrative of 250-500 words explaining why you are nominating this individual(s).

The deadline for nominations is March 31. †

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Saturday, April 27, 2024

White River State Park

- 1 Mile Family Fun Run/Walk
- Beer (21+)/Root Beer Garden
- Nitro from the Indy Fuel, 8-9 a.m.

To learn more and register, please visit svdpindy.org/neighbor

We are... *United* in the Eucharist

As a Church, we are stronger together. The impact of your gift is essential to the people of our archdiocese and the mission given to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Meet Mason Harvey, a senior this year at Seton Catholic High School in Richmond.

"As seniors, they are getting ready to go out into the world. Their faith is going to be challenged at every turn of the way that they go. Mason is ready for that."

Jane Brack
Principal - Seton Catholic High School

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A very sincere *THANK YOU* to those who have already given your support. God bless you.

www.unitedcatholicappeal.org

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Editorial

Do you have time to pray, to stand up for children, for life?

If you're looking for an opportunity to add more prayer to your Lenten practices, it's not too late to participate in a 40 Days for Life campaign.

40 Days for Life is an international, multi-faith effort that seeks to end abortion through peaceful prayer vigils outside abortion centers, and to raise community awareness of the consequences of abortion.

During the campaign, individuals silently pray during one-hour time slots in front of abortion centers around the world, including the Planned Parenthood facilities in Indianapolis and Bloomington. While state law now prohibits abortions to be performed in these two facilities, they still offer abortion referrals and other services opposed to the sanctity of life (see article about sidewalk advocates on page 1), and they represent the evil of the abortion industry promoted by Planned Parenthood throughout the nation.

The six-week period provides people of faith a grace-filled opportunity to offer special petitions to end abortion around the globe. Besides Indianapolis and Bloomington, there are 40 Days for Life sites located throughout Indiana and the surrounding region for anyone interested in prayerfully standing up for life.

Prayer warriors from area Knights of Columbus councils did just that by taking part in an overnight prayer vigil from 7 p.m. on March 8 to 7 a.m. on March 9 in front of the Planned Parenthood facility at W. 86th Street and Georgetown Road in Indianapolis. We thank the Knights, priests and others for their commitment during those 12 hours to standing in solidarity for the unborn and for their witness of faith.

As a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision overturning the court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision—which had legalized abortion on demand in the U.S.—abortion regulation was returned to each state. But we are witnessing many in society who still strongly support abortion rights. While the court in *Dobbs* emphasized that there is no federal constitutional right to abortion in the U.S., some are pushing hard to again make access to abortion the law of the land.

In his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on March 7, President Joe Biden reiterated his position that access to abortion should be expanded by federal legislation.

Although he did not use the word "abortion" in his address, Biden, a Catholic, noted, "If Americans send me a Congress that supports the right to choose, I promise you: I will restore *Roe v. Wade* as the law of the land again," the president said.

Chelsey Youman, national legislative adviser for Human Coalition Action,

a pro-life advocacy organization, said in a statement after the address, "It is unconscionable that the White House and members of Congress are hijacking what should be a moment of national unity to promote the mass death of children in the womb.

"The plight of vulnerable women seeking abortion should be off-limits for politicization, yet President Biden wants to use the killing of an innocent child with disabilities to boost his chances of re-election."

Jeanne Mancini, president of the National March for Life and a Catholic, offered a similar sentiment, saying, "President Biden's remarks were meant to convince listeners that his administration cares for pregnant women facing difficult circumstances, but his policies communicate a very

different picture.

"His Department of Health and Human Services has proposed a rule seeking to prohibit temporary assistance to needy families

[TANF] funding from going to pregnancy resource centers which serve pregnant women and families, who need such help," she said.

Mancini added, "The fact is that most women want to keep their children but some need support to do so. Pregnancy resource centers exist to provide life-affirming support and resources and yet are under attack from powerful politicians like President Biden who want us to believe they care about choice. In reality, those currently in power push only one choice for women: abortion, anytime and for any reason."

The president's message and the support many still have for abortion confirm our prayers are still very much needed. While Indiana state law now requires abortions to be performed only in hospitals or hospital-run clinics, women still visit the Planned Parenthood facilities in Indianapolis and Bloomington for out-of-state abortion referrals, birth control, morning-after (Plan B) abortion pills, transgender hormone therapy and other services that contradict a culture of life.

Now is an opportune time to take part in your nearest 40 Days for Life effort before the spring campaign ends on March 24. The Bloomington campaign is taking place along the public right-of-way outside of the Planned Parenthood facility at 421 S. College Ave. To sign up, go to 40daysforlife.com/en/Bloomington. To take part in the Indianapolis campaign, sign up at 40daysforlife.com/en/Indianapolis. To find other campaigns outside of the archdiocese, go to 40daysforlife.com and select "Locations."

As the battle to fully protect the unborn continues, may our prayers and actions this Lenten season and beyond bear fruit.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Patti Lamb

Workout, love between husband and wife offer a reminder God looks into our hearts

Recently, my snug work clothes reminded me that it's time to get to the gym. I'm tethered to my desk with my new role, and I haven't been getting my steps in.



As soon as I reached the second floor, I quickly remembered why I had been avoiding the gym. I saw physically-fit people sprinting on

treadmills and lots of chiseled bodies at the weight machines. Some folks really dress the part in fancy sports gear and gym shoes. I will not comment on the intensity of the spin class I witnessed down on the first floor.

I felt defeated before I even stepped on the treadmill. To make matters worse, I couldn't get the machine to work. I kept pressing the button prompts and nothing would happen.

"That one is out of order," the man on the nearby treadmill said.

"It's been broken for weeks," he added.

I thanked him and, embarrassed, stepped off the treadmill. I finally found a functioning machine, hopped on and starting walking. I cranked the volume on my headphones with fast tunes for cardio and tried to increase my pace. Still, I couldn't help but look around at all the gym regulars and feel inferior.

That's when I glanced over to the track and saw a T-shirt I didn't expect. A physically-fit man, whom I would guess was in his 60's, was wearing a shirt that said, "I LOVE MY WIFE." I thought that was a lovely message to share in today's society.

I imagined his wife was as fit as a fiddle.

"She's probably in that spin class downstairs right now," I thought to myself.

He disappeared out of sight until a few minutes later when I saw him walking with a woman on the indoor

track. She was beautiful and fit, but she was slumped over and shuffling her feet, leaning on a rolling walker. It appeared that she had suffered a stroke or some health setback.

Although he looked like a routine marathoner, her husband took tiny steps alongside her. Runners sprinted by, so he made sure his wife was in the far-right lane, and he kept his hand on the small of her back.

My eyes got misty watching the couple walk together.

I realize it's critically important to take care of our bodies—something I have not been doing recently. But it's also important to remember that our bodies are shells. And what's most important are the souls dwelling inside.

That day at the gym, I was most impressed not with herculean muscles or seemingly ageless women. Instead, I found myself marveling at the love between a man and his wife.

The next morning at Mass, which was the Fourth Sunday of Lent, the first reading was about when the Lord sent Samuel to choose from among Jesse's sons to be king. Samuel took a look at Eliab and thought there was no contest among Jesse's sons.

"Surely the Lord's anointed is here before him," Samuel uttered, upon seeing Eliab (1 Sm 16:6).

"But the Lord said to Samuel: 'Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart' (1 Sm 16:7).

Isn't that refreshing? Our Creator looks to *our hearts*—not to our waistlines, our net worth, or our degrees.

We are called to do the same—to look beyond earthly measures and to connect with God from our hearts.

(Patti Lamb is a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †

Letter to the Editor

Writer's stories, team's effort 'touch my heart each and every week,' reader says

Hello from St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington!

I've been applauding John Shaughnessy and his stories in *The Criterion* for years, but it took his story about Roncalli High School visual arts teacher Mark Stratton in Indianapolis in the March 1 issue to "push me over the edge" and make me sit down and write to him.

Congratulations and thanks to John and your team for producing an outstanding publication!

You touch my heart each and every week!

God bless you all for what you do!

Jim Bright
Bloomington

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in *The Criterion* as part of the newspaper's commitment to "the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God" (*Communio et Progressio*, 116).

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

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

edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

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

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Draw closer to Christ, who offers life forever with him

The publication date for this column is Friday, March 15. We are just two weeks away from Good Friday, and as we celebrate the Fifth Sunday of Lent this weekend, we are reminded that God alone is the Lord of life and death.

The first reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent in the Scrutiny Year A readings from the Book of Ezekiel proclaims:

O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the Lord. I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord. (Ez 37:12-14)

The Lord has the power to open the graves of the dead and bring us back to life. He who has given us life promises to restore us to life after death by giving us God's own Spirit at the time of our resurrection on the last day.

This is a fundamental truth of our Catholic faith—the resurrection of the body. It's a great mystery which we cannot understand or explain in any detail. How or when it will happen is not at all clear. What we will look like, or be like, after we rise again is hinted at in the accounts of the risen Lord's appearances to his disciples, but no one knows for sure.

God's power over death was proven definitively in the resurrection of Jesus after his cruel passion and death on the cross. The risen Lord has assured us that we, too, will rise again. We believe this, but we are filled with doubts and uncertainty. Life after death seems hard to imagine, and we have many unresolved questions.

The Gospel reading (Jn 11:1-45) addresses our doubts about death. Jesus travels to Bethany because his friend Lazarus has died. Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, are both convinced that if Jesus had come sooner their brother, who was gravely ill, would have been healed. Now, they assume, it is too late. By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been buried in the tomb for four days.

As St. John tells us:

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." (Jn 11:20-27)

Two things of great significance are happening here. First, Martha affirms the truth of the resurrection of the dead, and she acknowledges that she will see her brother again on the last day. But secondly, and far more importantly, she comes to believe that Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life. Everyone who lives and believes in him "will never die" (Jn 11:26).

This is a mystery far greater than the fact of the resurrection of the dead. It speaks to the heart of what life and death are all about. In Jesus, we find the source, ground and goal of all life. He is the Christ—the beginning, the "now" and the end point of all life. In him, we live and move and have our being. By affirming this truth, Martha shows that she accepts the deepest meaning of the Gospel's teachings about Jesus.

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. He demonstrates that God alone has power over life and death. Coming just two weeks before our observance of his own passion and death, this Gospel reading is a powerful reminder that we are called to believe in much more than an abstract teaching about life beyond the grave. We are invited, and challenged, to encounter the person of Jesus Christ and to see in him "the resurrection and the life."

May these weeks leading up to the Pascal Triduum draw us closer to Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life. May we recognize in him the truth about the meaning of life and death. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Acerquémonos a Cristo que nos ofrece la vida eterna con él

La fecha de publicación de esta columna es el viernes 15 de marzo, a tan solo dos semanas del Viernes Santo. En el preludio del fin de semana del quinto domingo de Cuaresma, se nos recuerda que solamente Dios es el Señor de la vida y de la muerte.

Según el Leccionario, la primera lectura para la celebración de los escrutinios de este domingo procede del Libro de Ezequiel y proclama:

Pueblo mío, voy a abrir los sepulcros de ustedes; voy a levantarlos de sus sepulturas para traerlos de nuevo a la tierra de Israel. Y cuando yo abra sus sepulcros y los saque de sus sepulturas, ustedes, pueblo mío, sabrán que yo soy el Señor. Entonces pondré mi espíritu en ustedes, y volverán a vivir. Sí, yo los haré reposar en su tierra, y así sabrán que yo, el Señor, lo dije y lo cumplí. (Ez 37:12-14)

El Señor tiene el poder de abrir las tumbas de los muertos y devolvernos la vida. El que nos ha dado la vida promete devolvernosla después de la muerte dándonos el propio Espíritu de Dios en el momento de nuestra resurrección en el Día Final.

Esta es una verdad fundamental de nuestra fe católica: la resurrección del cuerpo. Es un gran misterio que no podemos comprender ni explicar con detalle; no está claro cómo o cuándo ocurrirá. Cómo luciremos o cómo seremos después de resucitar es algo que se asoma en los relatos de las apariciones del Señor resucitado a sus discípulos, pero nadie lo sabe con certeza.

El poder de Dios sobre la muerte se demostró definitivamente en la resurrección de Jesús tras su cruel pasión y muerte en la cruz. El Señor resucitado nos ha asegurado que nosotros también resucitaremos y aunque lo creemos, estamos llenos de dudas e incertidumbre. La vida después de la muerte parece difícil de imaginar y tenemos muchas preguntas sin responder.

La lectura del Evangelio (Jn 11:1-45) aborda nuestras dudas sobre la muerte. Jesús viaja a Betania porque su amigo Lázaro ha muerto; sus hermanas, Marta y María, están convencidas de que si Jesús hubiera venido antes, su hermano, gravemente enfermo, se habría curado. Ahora, suponen que es demasiado tarde. Cuando Jesús llega, Lázaro lleva cuatro días

enterrado en la tumba.

Como nos dice san Juan:

Cuando Marta oyó que Jesús venía, salió a su encuentro; pero María se quedó en casa. Y Marta le dijo a Jesús: "Señor, si hubieras estado aquí, mi hermano no habría muerto. Pero también sé ahora que todo lo que le pidas a Dios, Dios te lo concederá." Jesús le dijo: "Tu hermano resucitará." Marta le dijo: "Yo sé que resucitará en la resurrección, en el día final." Jesús le dijo: "Yo soy la resurrección y la vida; el que cree en mí, aunque esté muerto, vivirá. Y todo aquel que vive y cree en mí, no morirá eternamente. ¿Crees esto?" Le dijo: «Sí, Señor; yo he creído que tú eres el Cristo, el Hijo de Dios, que has venido al mundo.» (Jn 11:20-27)

Aquí están ocurriendo dos cosas de gran importancia. En primer lugar, Marta afirma la verdad de la resurrección de los muertos y reconoce que volverá a ver a su hermano en el último día. Pero en segundo lugar, y mucho más importante, llega a creer que Jesús mismo es la resurrección y la vida. Todo el que vive y cree en él "no morirá eternamente" (Jn 11:26).

Se trata de un misterio

mucho mayor que el hecho de la resurrección de los muertos ya que llega a la esencia de lo que son la vida y la muerte. En Jesús encontramos la fuente, el fundamento y la meta de toda vida. Él es el Cristo: el principio, el "ahora" y el punto final de toda la vida. En él, vivimos, nos movemos y somos. Al afirmar esta verdad, Marta demuestra que acepta el significado más profundo de las enseñanzas del Evangelio sobre Jesús.

Jesús resucita a Lázaro y demuestra que solamente Dios tiene poder sobre la vida y la muerte. A tan solo dos semanas de nuestra observancia de su propia pasión y muerte, esta lectura del Evangelio es un poderoso recordatorio de que estamos llamados a creer en mucho más que una enseñanza abstracta sobre la vida más allá de la tumba. Se nos invita y se nos desafía a encontrarnos con la persona de Jesucristo y a ver en él "la resurrección y la vida."

Que estas semanas previas al Triduum Pascual nos acerquen más a Jesucristo, el Señor de la Vida. Que reconozcamos en él la verdad sobre el sentido de la vida y de la muerte. †

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 20, April 17

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

March 20

St. Michael Parish, 145 E. St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **The Mystic Next Door: An Ordinary Man's Extraordinary Encounter with the Holy Spirit**, 6 p.m., author Edward Jozsa presenting, free. Information: 765-647-5462, brookvilleparishes@gmail.com.

March 21, April 18

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: holyrosary.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.

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

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.

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 2-18

St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities Virtual Auction, items include bourbon basket, kids' electronics basket, wine classes, tickets to experiences in Indiana and Kentucky and more, silent auction items available for general bidding from April 2-18, premium items from April 11-18. Auction site: bidpal.net/stegala2024.

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.

April 6

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Devotion**, 8 a.m., rosary, litany, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, confession 8-8:30 a.m. followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

April 7

Monthly Prayer with Sisters of Providence: "Prayer on Spring," for single Catholic

women ages 18-42, via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., seventh day of each month. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505, jlna@spsmw.org.

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Free Solar Eclipse Event**, 2-4 p.m., \$5 donation for solar glasses, snacks and drinks provided. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

April 9

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.

April 18

The Galt House, 140 N. Fourth St., Louisville. **St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities Giving Hope—Changing Lives Annual Gala**, 5:30-9 p.m., doors open 5:30, dinner served 7 p.m., client testimonials, videos, live auction, free, register by April 3. Information, registration: 812-949-7305, CReid@steCharities.org.

April 19-21

Theater at the Fort, 8920 Otis Ave., Indianapolis. **Alice in Wonderland**, Fri. 7:30 p.m., Sat. 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m., performed by Agape Theater Company youth actors, tickets \$5-\$15. Information, tickets: 317-450-5171, info@agapetheatercompany.com, tinyurl.com/agape-alice24.

April 20

Sidewalk Advocates for Life training, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., location and other details given by phone, \$10 for materials, trainees must be available to volunteer as sidewalk advocate or prayer partner at Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road in Indianapolis during normal business hours Mon.-Fri., register by April 11. Information, registration: Sheryl Dye, smdye1@gmail.com, 317-407-6881.

Sisters of Providence White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Earth Day Festival**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., nature shows, kids' activities, craft demonstrations, exhibits, tours of the organic gardens and horse barns, bake sale, free admission, donations accepted. Information: 812-535-2932, wvc@spsmw.org, WhiteViolet.org. †

Retreats and Programs

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

March 29

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grov. **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, May 1

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, May 3

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, May 14

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, May 21

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.

April 26-28

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Tobit Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$298 per couple, includes separate rooms, meals and materials. Information, registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Women's Weekend of Peace**, Fri. 7 p.m.-Sun. noon, \$250, includes accommodations, meals and materials, limited to six participants. Information, registration: offmgr@mountsaintfrancis.org, 812-923-8817, tinyurl.com/msfwomenwknd24. †

Simple Soup and Bread fundraiser benefitting Crisis Office set for Holy Thursday, March 28

The annual Simple Soup and Bread Luncheon to support the archdiocesan Crisis Office will take place in Assembly Hall at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center at 1400 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, from 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. on Holy Thursday, March 28. Doors open at 11:30 a.m., a short prayer service will take place at 11:45 a.m., and lunch will be served at 11:55 a.m.

This year's program is in remembrance of the late Stephanie Davis, who served as the program director for Catholic Charities Indianapolis Crisis Office and its Christmas Store for many years.

The Crisis Office offers assistance to low-income persons residing in Marion County unable to provide for basic necessities such as shelter, food and clothing. Services include linking clients with existing community

resources, access to a food pantry and clothing room, bus tickets for job transportation, medication prescription assistance and limited rental assistance.

With the number of people seeking assistance from the Crisis Office increasing in the past year, the goal for the luncheon is to raise \$10,000 to support those in need.

For donations of \$50-\$99 made prior to or at the event, donors will receive a handmade ceramic cross made by students at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. Those donating \$100 or more will receive an angel.

The cost for the luncheon is \$10. Registration is preferred by March 22; however, walk-ups will be accepted. Registration is available online at tinyurl.com/soupbread24.

For more information, contact Cheri Bush at 317-236-1411 or cbush@archindy.org. †

Archbishop Thompson to lead Way of the Cross with Knights of Columbus on March 29

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will join the Indiana Knights of Columbus in leading the 86th Annual Way of the Cross at the American Legion Mall, 500-600 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, at noon on Good Friday, March 29.

Attendees are asked to assemble on the mall on North Street between Meridian and Pennsylvania streets for the start of event.

For more information, contact Patrick Olmstead, Sr., at 317-258-7740 or cic@indianakofcc.org. †



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



Let's be seekers and risk-takers on our pilgrimage of faith

Pope Francis has consistently challenged baptized Christians to abandon the comforts of home and to set out on a missionary journey to seek and find true happiness and peace. "To seek and to risk," the Holy Father says, "these are two words that describe the journey of pilgrims. To seek and to risk."

Not surprisingly, then, in his address to students at the Catholic University of Portugal last August, Pope Francis encouraged his young audience to see themselves as pilgrims on a journey through life that makes them both seekers and risk-takers. As the Holy Father said:

We are always journeying "toward." We are called to something higher, and we will never be able to soar unless we first take flight. We should not be alarmed, then, if we sense an inner thirst, a restless, unfulfilled longing for meaning and a future, "com saudades do futuro" (looking to the future)!

Paraphrasing St. Augustine's famous prayer, "Our heart is restless until it rests in you, O Lord," the pope encouraged his young audience

to recognize the true cause of their spiritual seeking and to resist the temptation to find comfort in the empty promises of the evil one.

Indeed, the Holy Father says, "We should only be worried when we are tempted to abandon the road ahead for a resting place that gives the illusion of comfort, or when we find ourselves replacing faces with screens, the real with the virtual, or resting content with easy answers that anesthetize us to painful and disturbing questions." Replacing faces with screens is a uniquely modern problem. It isolates us from reality and tempts us to think that we are not affected by the serious problems that surround us every day.

"To go on pilgrimage is to head toward a destination or seek out a goal," the pope says. "Yet, there is always the risk of heading off into a maze, with no goal in sight, and no way out! We are rightly wary of quick and easy answers, which can lead us into a maze; let us be wary of facile solutions that neatly resolve every issue without leaving room for deeper questions. Let us be wary! Indeed, our vigilance is a tool for

helping us to move forward instead of going round in circles."

Easy answers anesthetize us, the pope says. They fill our minds with facile solutions to complex problems, and they give us false hope. "Our condition as seekers and pilgrims means that we will always be somewhat restless," Pope Francis says, "for, as Jesus tells us, we are in the world, but not of the world" (Jn 17:15-16).

To be "in the world, but not of the world" requires us to keep our eyes and ears open and to look to the future with both realism and hope. Mature Christians should not be naïve. Sin and evil are all around us (and inside us). If we lose sight of the power of evil or become indifferent to the plight of those who suffer from the devil's influence, we will lose our way and wander aimlessly in the desert.

Pope Francis counseled the university students, and all of us:

I would encourage you, then, to keep seeking and to be ready to take risks. At this moment in time, we are facing enormous challenges; we hear the painful plea of so many people.

Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet, let us find the courage to see our world not as in its death throes, but in a process of giving birth, not at the end, but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history.

"A third world war fought piecemeal" in every corner of the globe and among people of every language, culture and socio-economic circumstance is a frightening image. Yet, to deny this reality is to fool ourselves into thinking that all is well when the opposite is clearly true.

And yet, we dare not lose hope. From the vantage point of Christian hope, the pope says, the world is not "in its death throes." It is simply beginning again, experiencing the pains of new birth.

Let us all be born again in Christ. And may our personal spiritual rebirths help us to guide our weary, war-torn world to the peace of Christ who gives meaning and hope to all.

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion's editorial committee.) †

"Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God."

—Pope Francis, "*Misericordiae Vultus*" ("The Face of Mercy")

"Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios."

—Papa Francisco, "*Misericordiae Vultus*" ("El rostro de la misericordia")

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Seamos buscadores y arriesgados en nuestra peregrinación de fe

El papa Francisco ha desafiado constantemente a los cristianos bautizados a abandonar las comodidades del hogar y a emprender un viaje misionero para buscar y encontrar la verdadera felicidad y la paz. "La búsqueda y el riesgo—dice el Santo Padre—son dos palabras que describen el camino de los peregrinos. La búsqueda y el riesgo."

No es de sorprender, entonces, que en su discurso a los estudiantes de la Universidad Católica de Portugal el pasado agosto, el Papa Francisco animara a su joven audiencia a verse a sí mismos como peregrinos en un viaje por la vida que les convierte tanto en buscadores como en arriesgados. En palabras del Santo Padre:

Estamos caminando "hacia." Estamos llamados a algo más, a un despegue sin el cual no hay vuelo. No nos alarmemos, entonces, si nos encontramos interiormente sedientos, inquietos, incompletos, deseosos de sentido y de futuro, "com saudades do futuro" [anhelando el futuro]!

Parafraseando la famosa oración de san Agustín: "Nuestro corazón está inquieto hasta que descansa en ti, Señor," el papa animó a su joven audiencia a reconocer la verdadera

causa de su búsqueda espiritual y a resistir la tentación de encontrar consuelo en las promesas vacías del maligno.

De hecho, dice el Santo Padre, "Preocupémonos más bien cuando estamos dispuestos a sustituir el camino a recorrer por el detenernos en cualquier oasis—aunque esa comodidad sea un espejismo—; cuando sustituimos los rostros por las pantallas, lo real por lo virtual; cuando, en lugar de las preguntas que desgarran, preferimos las respuestas fáciles que anestesian." Sustituir rostros por pantallas es un problema exclusivamente moderno que nos aísla de la realidad y nos tienta a pensar que no nos afectan los graves problemas que nos rodean cada día.

"Peregrino es caminar hacia una meta o buscando una meta. Siempre está el peligro de caminar en un laberinto, donde no hay meta. Tampoco hay salida. Desconfiemos de las fórmulas prefabricadas—son laberínticas—, desconfiemos de las respuestas que parecen estar al alcance de la mano, de esas respuestas sacadas de la manga como cartas de juego trucadas; desconfiemos de esas propuestas

que parece que lo dan todo sin pedir nada. Desconfiemos. La desconfianza es un arma para poder caminar adelante y no seguir dando vueltas."

Las respuestas fáciles nos anestesian, dice el Papa; nos llenan la mente de soluciones fáciles a problemas complejos y nos dan falsas esperanzas. El Papa Francisco nos dice que dada "nuestra condición de buscadores y peregrinos, como dice Jesús, "estamos en el mundo, pero no somos del mundo" (Jn 17:15-16).

Estar en el mundo, pero no ser del mundo requiere que mantengamos los ojos y los oídos abiertos y miremos al futuro con realismo y esperanza. Los cristianos maduros no deben ser ingenuos; el pecado y el mal nos rodean (y están dentro de nosotros). Si perdemos de vista el poder del mal o nos volvemos indiferentes ante la difícil situación de los que sufren la influencia del demonio, perderemos nuestro camino y vagaremos sin rumbo por el desierto.

El Papa Francisco aconsejó a los universitarios, y a todos nosotros:

Amigos, permítanme decirles: busquen y arriesguen. En este momento histórico los desafíos son enormes, los quejidos dolorosos—

estamos viviendo una tercera guerra mundial a pedacitos—, pero abrazamos el riesgo de pensar que no estamos en una agonía, sino en un parto; no en el final, sino al comienzo de un gran espectáculo.

La imagen de "una tercera guerra mundial a pedacitos" librada en todos los rincones del planeta y entre personas de todas las lenguas, culturas y circunstancias socioeconómicas, resulta aterradora. Sin embargo, negar esta realidad es engañarnos pensando que todo va bien cuando lo cierto es claramente lo contrario.

Y, sin embargo, no nos atrevemos a perder la esperanza. Desde el punto de vista de la esperanza cristiana, dice el Papa, el mundo no está "agonizando"; se trata sencillamente de volver a empezar, de experimentar los dolores de un nuevo nacimiento.

Renazcamos todos en Cristo y que nuestros renacimientos espirituales personales nos ayuden a guiar a nuestro mundo cansado y desgarrado por la guerra hacia la paz de Cristo, que da sentido y esperanza a todos.

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

CAMPUS MINISTER

continued from page 1

and growing in his holiness is not to be content holding the name of Jesus as a secret in your heart. To love Jesus is to share about his saving grace.”

And so, on All Saints’ Day in the fall semester of 2023, Schuler, Gzresiak and other students headed to campus with a boatload of hot chocolate and a table that they filled with information about different saints and the offerings at St. Paul Catholic Center.

“It was incredible. We had so many interactions and touchpoints,” Schuler recalls. “The coolest part about it was how many of our Catholic Center students made a point to stop by the table during the day. They jumped right in to invite other students and have conversations with people passing by. It was beautiful to see them talk about their faith with their peers on campus.”

On that cool November day, the group gave away more than 200 cups of hot chocolate during the 2 1/2 hours they were there.

“From that, we had a few students express interest in RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults],” Schuler says. “One followed through on that and has started coming to classes. A few other Bible study connections were made. It was a really fruitful time.”

Schuler thought the approach was so inspired that she and several Catholic students set up camp again on campus on Fat Tuesday, sharing coffee and doughnuts with passing students on the day before Lent began.

“We handed out Ash Wednesday Mass times for people and invited them to join us for Ash Wednesday services,” she says. “Our students who were around for it in the fall were so pumped about coming again that they brought people with them to do it. It’s turned into a thing for us, which is really cool. The best part for me is that it’s on the students’ initiative.”

That experience—Schuler’s second favorite moment on campus—came with an unusual Lenten touch.

‘He gave me advice that I have carried with me ever since’

On the table that day with the coffee and the doughnuts was a small spinning wheel, reminiscent of the one on the television game show, “Wheel of Fortune.” On the wheel were different options of what college students could consider giving up for Lent.

“No social media, no snooze button, no sweets, no coffee or caffeine, no skipping class, fasting,” Schuler says, listing some of the choices.

“Some people asked, ‘What is a fast, why do you fast?’ It was a really cool opportunity for us to share a little bit of the Gospel with them, that Jesus went into the desert and fasted. We kind of focused on making room for God. Our lives are so busy, so what can you cut out to make space for a little more silence—to give God a chance to work?”

Schuler asked that same question of herself near the end of her junior year at IU.

“I was really stressed out about just where the Lord was calling me in my life,” she says. “I was worried about career and vocation and all these really big items that come up at that point in your life. And, of course, I was scared about what the Lord might ask me to do.”

In the midst of that fear and uncertainty, she met with Dominican Father Patrick Hyde, the pastor of St. Paul Catholic Center.

“He gave me advice that I have carried with me

ever since,” she says.

“Father Patrick said, ‘You don’t need to figure out what you’re doing five years from now. You just need to figure out what your next best step is and where can you take a confident step knowing that you’re following Jesus right now.’ He took a big scary thing and broke it down to what’s best for tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.”

Believing that Christ was calling her “to know him better and follow him more closely,” Schuler focused her steps on that direction. A year later, she also made one specific prayer to God during her graduation weekend at IU.

“I had just received Communion at the Baccalaureate Mass,” she recalls. “In the most sincere prayer I could utter, I asked Jesus to bring me back to Bloomington as quickly as possible.”

That’s just what happened after she earned a master’s degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame in 2023.

“I never imagined that God would answer that prayer and bring me back to not only my favorite city, but my favorite place in that city—St. Paul’s,” she says. “After my work in theology, I was more convicted than ever of my desire to serve the Church. It was truly Providence that I am able to serve in a place where I also received so much.”

Receiving each person with love

Her first eight months as the Catholic campus minister at IU have been everything she hoped they would be.

“It has been a true joy,” she says. “It has opened doors to building relationships because I can understand exactly what they are experiencing on campus. I also get to work with student leaders who are experiencing stresses and navigating obstacles that I experienced. It is beautiful to get to walk alongside them in a place so familiar to me.”

IU junior Eric Hull knows the impact that Schuler has on students’ lives and their faith journeys, including his.

“In being friends with Emma, one can come to know the tenderness of Christ and his Blessed Mother,” Hull says. “Emma always leaves her door open while she works, so students can come and talk with her. When she talks to people, even if she has many duties to attend to, she is always willing to give her full attention and receive each person she meets with love, seeing Christ in each person. She only desires that the community comes to know Jesus.”

Freshman Maria Thomas beams when she talks about Schuler and the atmosphere she has helped to create among IU’s Catholic students. She cites the karaoke nights that Schuler has planned after weekday evening



On Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, members of St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington came to the Indiana University campus, joyfully offering coffee, doughnuts and information about Lenten opportunities at St. Paul. Elise Fogle, left, Sophie Zell, Lizz Sahyouni, Lauren Meade, Connor Gorton and Brendan Carey were part of the IU-connected group that strived to share their Catholic faith with other IU students that day. (Submitted photo)

Masses and the Sunday suppers that Schuler coordinates for about 200 students after Sunday evening Mass.

“Emma is great. She does a really good job with events that strengthen our faith and build up community,” Thomas says. “Being at IU has exceeded my expectations in having a strong Catholic community and virtuous friendships. It’s a really welcoming community.”

Father Patrick describes Schuler as “a woman of deep faith, abiding prayer and confidence in the Holy Spirit.”

“One of the aspects of Emma’s work that stands out is her commitment to building Christ-centered relationships with our students, residents, staff and volunteers,” he says. “She personifies our pastoral priority of building relationships first—of listening to and honoring the story of each person, so that we can lead them to a deeper relationship with Jesus.”

Another reason to smile

Her efforts to help IU students draw closer to Christ have also helped her draw closer to him.

“Every day at St. Paul starts with a holy hour for the staff and missionaries,” Schuler says. “We come together in prayer to lift up our ministry and our hearts to Jesus. This time has been so graced for me as it gives me the space to stay connected with my Creator.”

She thinks back to that conversation she had with Father Patrick, when he encouraged her to not stress about the future, to keep her life’s direction focused on following Jesus. It’s led her to exactly where she wants to be, including another moment that delights her.

“Flash forward to this year,” she says. “I found myself talking to a current student who came to me and shared the same feelings and worries that I had shared with Father Patrick. I got to sit with her and repeat the words that Father had told me.

“I had this immense gratitude for God to let me be the person who needed that conversation then and who could offer advice in the same conversation today. I couldn’t help but smile as we were talking.” †

Eucharistic Revival initiative helps parishes reach lapsed Catholics

(OSV News)—What would happen if clergy and parish leaders personally reached out to Catholics who have stopped attending Mass to invite them

to come back, telling them they are missed and wanted in the parish community? This is the question and challenge the U.S. bishops are posing as their National Eucharistic Revival initiative focuses on parish efforts this year.

The bishops launched resources in early March as part of the “Invite One Back” initiative, equipping clergy and parish leaders to invite those who have stopped attending Sunday Mass to fill the pews once again.

Many people simply didn’t return to the pews after the COVID-19 pandemic restricted in-person Mass attendance in 2020. One 2022 study from Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate showed a 7% decline in adult Catholics attending Sunday Mass compared with pre-COVID data.

The revival website notes that in 2020 a “significant portion of Catholics lost connection with their local parish during the shutdowns, and just never came back. It’s time to bring them home.” The website also points to Pew data from 2014, which found that 13% of all U.S. adults are former Catholics.

“The goal of this initiative is to fill the pews again,” the website says. “To do that, we all need to invite back everyone who has left in a way that makes sure they feel seen and desired as an individual member of your parish family. Whom are you called to invite home?”

In his introductory letter to parish leaders, Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., wrote, “Our efforts in evangelization and inviting Catholics back to Mass are not just about increasing numbers or filling pews. Rather, our efforts are about guiding people to intimate encounters with Jesus Christ and leading souls to salvation, allowing them to experience God’s love, mercy, and goodness.

“It is important to invite these people back because it is a great act

of love! It is also one of the simplest and most effective ways to evangelize,” he emphasized. “Love desires to be shared once it is received. The source and summit of the Christian life is participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice, where we encounter the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament.”



Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens

within our community and that their presence is missing.”

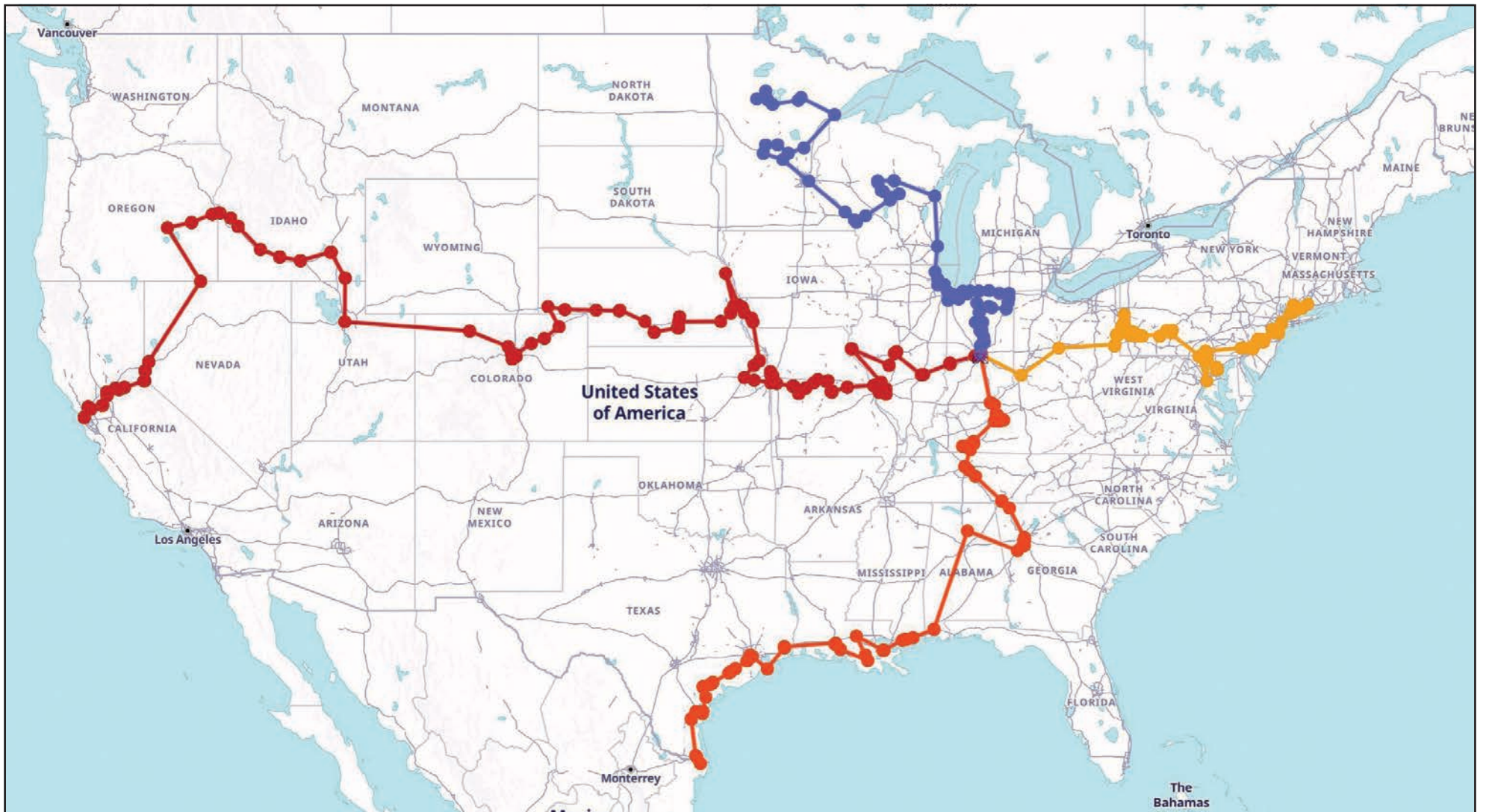
The website encourages clergy and parish leadership to “make a list of parishioners you haven’t seen in a while or people who used to be members of your parish” to immediately begin praying for them, and start discerning “how you can best reach each member of that group,

and make a plan to contact each one of them in whatever way would be most meaningful.”

When it comes to tools for reaching those who’ve stopped attending Mass, resources include letter and postcard templates as well as scripts for starting phone calls with former parishioners. Creativity and personalization are encouraged in these conversations with the goal of listening to the individual and meeting them where they are.

Prayer also is a central part of the campaign, as the initiative calls for parishes to put a prayer for the campaign in the bulletin as well as for parish groups to dedicate rosaries and holy hours for the effort.

“Let us pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and fortitude to carry out this sacred mission,” urged Bishop Cozzens, chairman of the board of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc. “Let us embrace each soul with open arms, rejoicing as they return to the embrace of the Church and our parish communities through the gift of the Eucharist.” †



PILGRIMAGE

continued from page 3

On the Serra route will be Chima Adiole of Texas; Chas Firestone East of Virginia; Patrick Fayad of Nebraska; Jack Krebs of Wisconsin; Madison Michel of Minnesota; and Jaella Mac Au of Georgia.

On the Seton route will be Dominic Carstens of Wyoming; Zoe Dongas of New York; Marina Frattaroli of Texas; Natalie Garza of Texas; Amayrani Higueldo of Pennsylvania; and Christopher Onyike of Florida.

Along the way, 30 Franciscan Friars of the Renewal will rotate time on the routes as chaplains. In addition, Father Roger Landry, a chaplain at Columbia University

in New York, plans to accompany pilgrims the entire length of the Seton route.

Higueldo, a recent nursing school graduate, told OSV News she is thrilled to be among the perpetual pilgrims.

“Through nursing school, I had no time whatsoever,” she said. “My prayer to the Lord was like, ‘Lord, I just want to spend more time with you’ ... and lo and behold, here we are a couple months later, and I get to spend two whole months with our eucharistic Lord, and to go on this crazy adventure, beautiful adventure.”

While she is grateful for what the opportunity will mean for her own life and relationship with Jesus, she is also excited for what it will bring to people they encounter along the way, including those who have questions

about the Eucharist or react negatively to the pilgrimage. She is getting ready by reading Scripture, prayer and daily Mass, to “let him [Jesus] work in me and prepare me,” she said. “Because really I don’t know what it’s going to be like until we get there.”

Like her fellow perpetual pilgrims, Higueldo, 26, is also investing in good footwear and increasing the length of her daily walks. She’s noticing the difference it makes in her body.

“My calves are definitely hurting,” she said.

While she expects to carry a light load, she won’t leave behind her journal, she said, “just being able to be a witness to all the graces that the Lord wants to pour out during this pilgrimage and be able

to document those and just fall back on those.”

As McCullough thinks about the people the pilgrims will meet along the way, he reflects on the way Jesus encountered people in the Gospels.

“It was always unique and different because he met them where they were at,” said McCullough, a college senior studying mechanical engineering. “I’m just so excited for the look of love from the Eucharist to be extended time and time again to whoever we encounter.”

Weiss said he thinks the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage could be a unifying balm in a polarized country.

“It’s him [Jesus] who brings us all together; he desires and yearns for all of us,” he said. †

Church leaders decry biggest kidnapping in Nigeria since Chibok girls’ abduction

(OSV News)—Recent kidnappings of hundreds of people in Nigeria, including almost 300 schoolchildren on March 7 in Kuriga in the central part of the country, have left Church leaders and parents, including Catholics, speechless in the face of another wave of senseless violence.

As kidnappings become a horrific new normal in Nigeria, Church leaders have strongly urged the government to act.

In broad daylight, gunmen raided a government primary school and kidnapped at least 287 pupils in the biggest mass abduction from a school in a decade. The incident is the second mass kidnapping in the West African nation of more than 200 million in less than a week.

“This is heartbreaking to all of us, and it’s now time for the authorities to act fast to stop the killings and abductions,” lamented Emmanuel Ayeni Nwogu, catechist from the Archdiocese of Kaduna, where the March 7 abduction happened. “We continue to pray for the children who have been kidnapped, and we hope they are still alive and under the mighty hand of God.”

Malala Yousafzai, 2014 Nobel Peace prize winner shot in 2012 for fighting for the rights of girls in Afghanistan to be educated, condemned the kidnapping of more than 200 students in Nigeria.

“No child should endure the horror and trauma of being forcibly abducted from their schools,” she wrote

on X, formerly Twitter, on March 10. “Children around the world—from Nigeria to Gaza to Afghanistan—must be able to access school safely and freely. I urgently call on all relevant authorities to facilitate a safe return for all those abducted in Kaduna State, and I stand with their grieving families in these trying times.”

The abduction of the children, led to a nearby forest at gunpoint, happened 10 years after the Boko Haram terrorist group abduction of 276 schoolgirls from their dormitory in the town of Chibok caused international outrage. In grim statistics of that tragic incident, 98 of the victims are still missing, according to Amnesty International. †

New maternity home called Missy’s Hope opens in Jennings County

Walking with Moms is a monthly feature highlighting organizations that help—and need support in helping—expecting and parenting mothers in need in central and southern Indiana. For a list of organizations highlighted in the past, go to www.archindy.org/walkingwithmoms.

Missy’s Hope Maternity Home
P.O. Box 611
North Vernon, IN 47265
Phone: 812-767-2897
E-mail: peggydyerbland@yahoo.com
Website: www.supportmissyshope.org
Contact: Peggy Dyer-Bland, CEO and founder

Services: Maternity home for pregnant mothers or mothers who have recently delivered a baby and find themselves without support; offering shelter, food, life skills and employment assistance to help women live independently; help with options and resources if mother chooses adoption; mother and child typically stay until baby is 6-12 months, depending on mother’s readiness to support herself and her child.

Items currently most needed: Diapers, highchairs, strollers, cribs, crib sheets, baby

bathbubs, baby bottles, baby and mother hygiene items, baby blankets, plastic toys for ages 1 and younger; new only—baby beds, baby clothes, breast pumps, stuffed animals, bags for storing and freezing breast milk. To drop off items, call Peggy at 812-767-2897. Items and gift cards can also be purchased and delivered through an Amazon wish list at tinyurl.com/MissyHopeWishList (case sensitive).

Volunteer and paid position opportunities: Volunteers needed for half-day, whole day and multiple-day opportunities for weekdays or weekends.

Hiring week and weekend house mothers. Those interested in volunteering or applying for house mother should e-mail peggydyerbland@yahoo.com with subject “Volunteer” or “House Mother.”

Financial donations: Online at supportmissyshope.org/donate or send checks made out to “Missy’s Hope Maternity Home” to address listed above. †



Walking with
Moms in Need



ADVOCATES

continued from page 1

a Planned Parenthood center in Indianapolis where abortions used to be performed. “But they refer women to locations outside of the state where they can have an abortion.”

And the facility still provides services like birth control, “morning after” emergency contraception and gender-affirming care—all which violate the sanctity of life. The same is true for the Planned Parenthood facility in Bloomington.

“We know that the abortion bans work,” says Milessa Yeomans, Midwest and Northwest regional programs manager for Sidewalk Advocates for Life. “They help protect women from harm and save lives.

“But we still have women experiencing unexpected pregnancies. The role of sidewalk advocates is the same as it has always been. They’re there at the abortion referral facilities offering hope and help to clients—especially with Planned Parenthood—steering women away to life-supporting help.”

‘We can steer them to better options’

Indiana’s new law protecting most unborn children went into effect on Aug. 1, 2023. It limits abortion up to 10 weeks gestation in instances of rape or incest, up to 20 weeks gestation in cases of lethal fetal anomalies, or when the mother’s life is in danger from specific medical issues. The law also requires that abortions take place at a hospital or a hospital-owned surgery center.

Schmitz, a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, admits there are fewer cars pulling into the Indianapolis Planned Parenthood facility since the law went into effect.

“We used to see about 25 cars or so” pull into the facility’s parking lot during a typical shift, says the 16-year sidewalk counseling veteran. “Now we see probably 12.”

As a car enters or exits the driveway, a sidewalk advocate approaches it with a smile and friendly wave.

“We try to find out why they’re there so we can steer them to better options and give them better information,” says Schmitz.

“If we find out that they’re there for an ultrasound or pregnancy test, we try to get them to go to the Women’s Care Center,” a pro-life pregnancy care center adjacent to the Planned Parenthood facility.

Getting an ultrasound or pregnancy test is no violation of the sanctity of life. So why intervene?

“Planned Parenthood is going to try to pressure them to have an abortion,” says Schmitz. “There’s no pressure at Women’s Care Center, no judgment.

“And we know at Women’s Care Center they point out [on the ultrasound] the different features of the unborn child. We don’t know if they do that at Planned Parenthood. A high percentage of those who see the ultrasound choose life.”

And all of the services at Women’s Care Center are free. At the Indianapolis and Bloomington Planned Parenthood centers, a pregnancy-related ultrasound is \$221 and a pregnancy test is \$17.

For those who agree to go to Women’s Care Center rather than Planned Parenthood, “We run over and meet them there at the Women’s Care Center and introduce them to the staff,” says Schmitz.

If a woman declines the option of Women’s Care Center, sidewalk advocates have brochures listing other close but cheaper alternatives for ultrasounds and pregnancy tests.

“From a national standpoint, Planned Parenthood’s main source of funding is from abortions,” says Larry Kunkel, one of Schmitz’s fellow sidewalk advocates. “So, we want to steer women away from them and the evil they represent.

“And if a woman says she’s there for birth control, we give her literature to understand how birth control can affect them physically and emotionally.”

Less pressure, but ‘just as important’

Kunkel is now in his eighth year of volunteering as a sidewalk advocate. As a member of the Knights of Columbus—he is currently Life Director at the state level, and Vocations and Life Director for his local council—Kunkel is passionate about helping women and saving babies.

But he admits he was “surprised” that those pulling into the Planned Parenthood drive were willing to speak with him.

“Originally, I thought I wouldn’t be a good fit [as a sidewalk advocate] because I’m a man,” says Kunkel, a member of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. “Actually, they’re pretty open to me. And often there are men bringing the women, so they relate to other men. It’s just really not been an obstacle.”

And without abortions being performed at facilities like Planned Parenthood in Indiana, there is a decrease in stress when trying to share information with those who pull into the drive.

“It’s less of a pressured situation when that client arrives,” says Yeomans. “There’s a difference in the feeling at that sidewalk when it’s an abortion day versus when they’re just seeking information. People are generally more open to our information because they’re not feeling that pressure as they go in.

“Yet that role [of sidewalk advocate] is still essential and just as important. Connecting them with help before they go out of state [for an abortion] is so important. So is letting the community know where their pregnancy care center is and what it offers.”

Information about post-abortion healing is among the literature sidewalk advocates offer, Yeomans adds.

“That piece is so significant and so important, too,” she notes. “They have no idea there is help to walk them through the grieving process after losing a child. That’s another important part of our role.”

Outside the Planned Parenthood facility in Indianapolis, sidewalk advocates also offer blessing bags with a Pro-Life Action Ministries brochure, small treats, a personal item like lotion or lip balm, and the name and number of Gabriel Project president and director Linda Kile.

“We’ve had women who have taken the bag but refused to speak with us, who later called seeking help,” says Sheryl Dye, Sidewalk Advocates for Life program leader in Indianapolis. “Those little bags are so valuable.”

No break ‘in doing God’s work’

Yeomans says there is still a great need for both men and women to maintain a presence at centers that offer abortion referrals.

“There’s just a need for advocates to stay motivated, to be present even though numbers have gone down,” she says. “Because there are still those abortion-vulnerable women seeking abortion across state lines.”

In fact, there’s a need for more sidewalk advocates. Kunkel notes that currently there are not enough volunteers to cover the Indianapolis Planned Parenthood facility’s Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. hours.

There is only one requirement to be a sidewalk



Sidewalk Advocates for Life volunteers offer life-affirming information to those entering or exiting the driveway of a Planned Parenthood abortion referral center such as the ones in Indianapolis and Bloomington, where women go for abortion referrals, birth control, “morning after” emergency contraception and other services in opposition to the sanctity of life. “Blessing bags” handed out include small treats and a personal number to call for help from Gabriel Project. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

advocate, says Yeomans: “You have to have a heart to reach women with lifegiving and lifesaving resources.”

Age is not a factor, she adds, saying she knows advocates in their 80s (Schmitz is 81), “and the youngest I met is 14.”

Some advocates, like Schmitz and Kunkel, interact with those seeking services from a non-life-affirming center. Others serve with them silently as prayer partners, standing if they can, or sitting in a chair if they have physical limitations.

“We have one volunteer who couldn’t go to the sidewalk but serves behind the scenes,” says Yeomans. “God will take your unique gift and use it to save lives.”

Volunteers attend a one-day training and take a pledge “to be peaceful and law-abiding” when serving, she explains, noting, “We want everyone to do everything above reproach and pleasing to Christ.”

For those unconvinced of the continued need for sidewalk advocates in Indiana, Yeomans suggests driving to an active abortion center across the state line—like one in Illinois deceptively named The Hope Center.

“It’s impactful to see who we’re up against and who we’re for and why it matters to stay on the ground and visible,” she says.

Abortion bans can lead to “a false sense of ‘we can take a break,’” Yeomans adds. “We don’t take a break in doing God’s work.

“When we look at the precious moms and babies we show up for, yeah, there’s no big abortion clinic in Indiana now. But abortion is an option being given to someone who is vulnerable. It’s just as important to care for that mom and her baby now.”

(A Sidewalk Advocates for Life training for volunteers to serve at the Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road in Indianapolis will take place from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on April 20. The location will be disclosed upon registering. The \$10 cost includes materials. Trainees must be available to volunteer for time slots as a sidewalk advocate or prayer partner during normal business hours Mon.-Fri. Register by April 11. For more information or to register, contact Sheryl Dye at smdye1@gmail.com or 317-407-6881. For more information about serving as a Sidewalk Advocate for Life at the Planned Parenthood center at 421 S. College Ave. in Bloomington, send an e-mail to programs@sidewalkadvocates.org.) †

St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany annual gala set for April 18, online auction bidding begins on April 2

Criterion staff report

St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities (SECC) in New Albany will host its annual Giving Hope ~ Changing Lives gala at The Galt House, 140 N. Fourth St., in Louisville, from 5:30-9 p.m. on April 18.

All are invited to this free event, which will include a cash bar. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m., with client testimonials, videos and a live auction included in the event.

Live auction items range in value from \$2,000-\$6,500, including a one-week stay at a cottage in Florida, an autographed “Colts Legends” helmet, an autographed Beatles album, an autographed Masters flag, one-day PGA championship tickets, a weekend trip to New York for a Broadway play, and a house concert with Grammy-winning songwriter Frank Myers.

Registration to attend the gala is

required by April 3. To register, contact Cathy Reid at creid@stecharities.org or 812-949-7305.

An online, pre-gala auction will open for bidding on April 2 at bidpal.net/stegala2024, with a focus on premium items from April 11-18. Auction items include a premium bourbon basket, rounds of golf at several local courses, a Kentucky Derby Through the Years basket, a \$450 kids’ electronics basket, a Total Wine and More wine class valued at more than \$600, and more. Other auction items include tickets to experiences in Indiana and Kentucky such as Abbey Road on the River, Kentucky Science Center, Frazier History Museum, Kentucky Kingdom,

Belle of Louisville, Derby Dinner Play House, Holiday World, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Indiana Beach, Indianapolis Zoo and more.

The event helps support St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities’ five umbrellas of programs:

- Housing, including a maternity home, domestic violence transitional housing and rapid rehousing, a women and

children’s emergency shelter and Affordable Supportive Housing (ASH) units. Last year, these programs assisted 346 women faced with homelessness and 189 women and children needing shelter and support.

- Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana, serving pregnant women considering

adoption for their baby and parents seeking to adopt. Last year, this program assisted with 33 birth parent inquiries.

- Marie’s Blessings Community Distribution Program, offering free, gently used mother/baby and household items for families in need, serving 1,045 families last year.

- Supported Living Program, providing help to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Floyd and Clark counties, empowering them to lead more independent lives. Last year, volunteers contributed 7,130 hours of support to these individuals.

- School Counseling, with four counselors currently serving five Catholic schools in Clark, Floyd and Harrison counties.

For more information on these services, go to stecharities.org or call 812-949-7305. †



SIMPLY CATHOLIC

In vitro fertilization, freezing embryos pose ethical and moral problems

By Fr. Francis J. Hoffman

(OSV News)—When the Alabama Supreme Court recently recognized the personhood of embryos, it gave legal standing to something the Church has clearly



Fr. Francis J. Hoffman

established: An embryo is a human being and should be treated with the dignity and rights due to all people, especially the most vulnerable who cannot speak for themselves.

This is part of the reason the Church opposes *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), in which embryos created in a laboratory are transferred to a woman for gestation. OSV News asked Father Francis J. Hoffman, a priest of Opus Dei well known as “Father Rocky” in his role as executive director and CEO of Relevant Radio, to dive deeper into the Church’s teaching on IVF and the related issue of frozen embryos in this interview.

Q. I know there are very good reasons for the Church to teach against IVF, but what are they? Also, what forms are allowed, and what is the difference?

A. “The Church hopes and prays that God will bless married couples with children, but knows very well from experience and stories in the Bible that not every married couple receives the gift of children.

“So, to begin to answer your question, it needs to be stated that children are a gift from God—they are not a right. While every married couple has a right to try to have children, it is important to respect God’s law and the law of nature for procreation.

“In this regard, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, quoting ‘*Donum Vitae*,’ a 1987 instruction by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, states: “A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The ‘supreme gift of marriage’ is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged ‘right to a child’ would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right ‘to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents,’ and ‘the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception.’

“The Gospel shows that physical sterility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord’s cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others’ (#2378-2379).

“There are several reasons why IVF is unethical. The first reason is that in the attempt to create new human life, IVF results in the disproportionate risk of loss of innocent human life. Innocent human lives are lost through IVF because ‘excess’ human embryos created in the process are either discarded or placed in cryopreservation [deep freeze].

“Since human embryos are human lives, and human beings have an inherent right to life which is denied by cryopreservation or by being discarded, IVF is unethical. Pope Francis has been remarkably strong in his condemnation of our modern ‘throwaway’ culture. Up to 90% of the human embryos that are created never make it. They never had a chance.

“The catechism, again quoting ‘*Donum Vitae*’ states: ‘It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material. Certain attempts to influence chromosomal or genetic inheritance are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. Such manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity’ which are unique and unrepeatable” (#2275).

“The second reason IVF is unethical may be difficult for people to understand if they do not have an appreciation for natural law, but here it is anyway. Because IVF invades the sacred space of interpersonal human sexual relations and relies too much on technology, it winds up separating the spouses from each other and often separating the real parents from their offspring.

“Here it will be helpful to reprint what the catechism, quoting ‘*Donum Vitae*’ teaches us in this regard:

“Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple [donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus], are gravely immoral. These techniques [heterologous artificial insemination and fertilization] infringe the

child’s right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses’ ‘right to become a father and a mother only through each other.’

“Techniques involving only the married couple [homologous artificial insemination and fertilization] are perhaps less reprehensible, yet remain morally unacceptable. They dissociate the sexual act from the procreative act. The act which brings the child into existence is no longer an act by which two persons give themselves to one another, but one that ‘entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person.’

“Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children. Under the moral aspect, procreation is deprived of its proper perfection when it is not willed as the fruit of the conjugal act, that is to say, of the specific act of the spouse’ union. ... Only respect for the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and respect for the unity of the human being make possible procreation in conformity with the dignity of the person’ ” (#2376-77).

“Finally, reproductive medical assistance or techniques allowed include any which respect the life of the embryo and the exclusive sexual union of the married mother and father. LTOF (lower tubal ovum transfer) and GIFT (gamete intra-fallopian transfer) are methods that the Church does not condemn.

Q. I understand that as a result of various scientific and technological processes there are many—millions?—of frozen embryos that have been preserved for different reasons, including IVF. How are they understood by the Church? What is permitted regarding them by the Church? What are the accepted forms of use for them? If they are being destroyed for medical purposes, isn’t this another slaughter of the innocents?

A. “There is no good solution to the situation of frozen embryos. Biological science and the Church are in agreement about their status: From the moment of conception, they are human beings. The Church does not permit them to be destroyed. It would be best if their natural parents brought them to term.

“Whenever we discuss the ethics of human reproduction, the necessary starting point—as mentioned above—is the recognition that children are a gift from God and not a human right. That premise may be difficult for some to accept, but it is based on the unique sacred dignity of each human person endowed with a unique spiritual and immortal soul.

“With respect to IVF, the catechism is quite clear in #2377, a teaching which repeats verbatim ‘*Donum Vitae*’ in 1987. This same teaching is expressed in St. John Paul II’s encyclicals ‘*Veritatis Splendor*’ [1994]) and ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’ [1995]. The Holy See has repeated this teaching with the instruction ‘*Dignitatis Personae*’ (2008). All of those documents declare IVF to be immoral, and do so for a variety of reasons.

“There are several moral problems with IVF. A serious problem is the disposition of ‘excess’ embryos. Often, they are left in a state of suspended animation, or even destroyed. We cannot treat human beings so callously.

“Here, it will be helpful to revisit what St. John Paul



A medical lab technician operates an embryo vitrification during an intra cytoplasmic sperm injection process (ICSI) on Sept. 13, 2019, at a laboratory in Paris. The Church objects to this and other similar techniques, including *in vitro* fertilization, on various moral and ethical grounds. (OSV News photo/Christian Hartmann, Reuters)

taught on this subject in ‘*Evangelium Vitae*’ in 1995:

“The various techniques of artificial reproduction, which would seem to be at the service of life and which are frequently used with this intention, actually open the door to new threats against life. Apart from the fact that they are morally unacceptable, since they separate procreation from the fully human context of the conjugal act, these techniques have a high rate of failure: not just failure in relation to fertilization but with regard to the subsequent development of the embryo, which is exposed to the risk of death, generally within a very short space of time.

“Furthermore, the number of embryos produced is often greater than that needed for implantation in the woman’s womb, and these so-called spare embryos are then destroyed or used for research which, under the pretext of scientific or medical progress, in fact reduces human life to the level of simple ‘biological material’ to be freely disposed of” (#14).

“There seem to be four ways to treat the embryos, but not all of them are ethical:

“1) Use them for research. This is clearly wrong because it constitutes the direct killing of human life. No matter how good the intention of the research, this would always be wrong.

“2) Do nothing and eventually they will die. (They deteriorate even while frozen.) This seems unsatisfactory.

“3) Thaw them, let them die and bury them. This also seems unsatisfactory, for all human life deserves to be cared for. How could it be moral or ethical to bury alive a living human being?

“4) Implant them in the mother or in another woman willing to adopt the child and bring him or her to term. Implanting the embryo in the mother is the best course of action at this point, but unlikely in many cases. As for adoption and implantation, reputable, trustworthy and orthodox moral theologians have different opinions about adoption of the embryos. But there seems to be a growing consensus that it could be ethical and even heroic to adopt a frozen embryo, although that action would not be morally obligatory for anyone.

“However, implantation [adopted or not] is not free of ethical concerns: It constitutes a material cooperation in the business of IVF, which is intrinsically evil in the first place, although the implantation could be allowed under the principle of double effect.

“The only answer to this dilemma is to prohibit IVF. In the words of Bishop Elio Sgreccia, a former president of the Pontifical Academy of Life who died in 2019: “The practice of *in vitro* fertilization must be stopped. It only encourages the production of frozen embryos, and freezing embryos is utilitarianism without mercy. When you start a wrong procedure like this, any solution is wrong and sad.’ ”

(Father Francis J. Hoffman, aka “Father Rocky,” is the executive director and CEO of Relevant Radio and a priest of Opus Dei.) †

Journey of the Heart/Jennifer Burger

Is your heart ready for the joy that God and life offer?

The month of March has loomed large on my calendar for months. I knew there would be a lot going on with a full schedule of Lenten programs here at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis through Holy Thursday—and my daughter's wedding right before Holy Week on March 23!



What was really looming over me, however, was all that I had to do rather than the season of Lent that I love so much and, of course, the blessing and joy of celebrating a wedding. My goal was to be super organized and laser-focused with all the details mapped

out accordingly. I wasn't quite sure how it would all unfold, but I had a plan!

Naturally, God had a plan for me too, and it was revealed in a providential encounter just before Lent began.

I ran into a friend who was going to be leaving for a monthlong trip out of the country. I eagerly asked him, "Are you getting excited for your trip?" He gave me a somewhat puzzled look and kindly explained that "excited" was not a word in his vocabulary, but rather he was "ready."

That response resonated with me and has stayed with

me since—and now I am being asked the same question about the wedding: "Are you getting excited?"

I find myself pausing before answering that question. I don't intend to remove the word "excited" from my vocabulary, but I've given more thought to what that really means and how "being ready" relates to it.

When I say I am excited, it implies that I'm looking forward to something that I hope to enjoy and celebrate. But "excited" can also refer to a heightened energy that causes anxiety and agitation.

When this happens, our excitement has been displaced. It is not a feeling that brings joy but rather becomes a distraction.

The story of Mary and Martha comes to mind (Luke 10:38-42). Martha seems to be putting all her energy into getting ready. I imagine her having her own list of things to do to make everything perfect for their guest Jesus, but in doing so she ends up missing the opportunity to savor and enjoy his arrival, the "better part" that Mary chose.

I've been operating from to-do lists and spreadsheets to keep everything in my head organized on paper so I can stay on task and everything can go according to plan. But I keep returning to that notion of being ready. ... Is my heart ready?

There is a readiness or preparedness that makes

the occasion of excitement all the more enjoyable and meaningful when we finally reach it. I desire this kind of readiness for my daughter's wedding, for Holy Week and for Easter. I still have my lists, but I've been surrendering their importance for the sake of the "better part," and what I'm finding is the gift of journeying with others through this Lenten season.

Each act of prayer, sacrifice and giving to and for others has been a moment of grace that has filled my heart with the same kind of readiness as the five wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 who had enough oil in their lamps, which allowed them to attend the wedding feast when the bridegroom arrived.

It is a readiness of being fully present—a posture of the heart that is not only able to receive but to give. It is a readiness that surpasses anything looming in our lives and that brings us in full communion with the divine.

Now that is something about which we can truly be excited! It is what we will celebrate with great joy this Easter! Are you ready? †

(Jennifer Burger is program manager at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis and a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis. She is also a spiritual director.) †

Evangelization Outreach/Fr. James Brockmeier

The veneration of the cross teaches us important lessons in life

In a few weeks, the Church will enter Holy Week and celebrate the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Friday of the Passion of the Lord and the Easter Vigil. While the catechetical work of the Church so often happens in parish religious education and classrooms in our Catholic schools, the liturgies of Holy Week are tremendous teachers.



This Lent, I have been reflecting on the many Good Friday liturgies in my life, particularly the veneration of the cross during those celebrations.

As a young elementary school student, I remember seeing a big wooden cross processed to the front of the Church and hearing the deacon sing "Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world." I was convinced that somehow the true cross, the one that Jesus carried and died on, was being carried into my Church. I could barely bring myself to touch it when it was time.

Years later, I remember being an altar server, a little bit disappointed that our cross was just one of many crosses, just a reminder and not the real thing. I had the duty of wiping the places where the cross had been kissed with a purificator. Why were people touching and kissing this cross with sadness and love in their eyes?

As I got older and had my own experiences with the cross in my life, I began to understand the beauty of coming forward each year to venerate. It might not be made of wood from the

The Lord allows us each a share in his cross; he invites us to carry it and not to lay it down. It is easy to run from the suffering that the Lord allows us to experience in our lives.

real cross of Jesus, but I learned from witnessing the faith of those around me that I could truly encounter the cross of Jesus in that moment.

The cross we venerate is a sacramental, an object that calls our minds to the passion and death of Jesus.

The liturgy of the Church helps us to express in sign and symbol the deepest truths of our faith. By his death and resurrection, Jesus has freed us from our sin and transformed our own suffering. The veneration of the cross of Good Friday teaches us to show our gratitude for his cross.

In his general audience during Holy Week last year, Pope Francis invited us: "Let us think precisely about the cross: out of the most terrible instrument of torture, God wrought the greatest sign of his love. Having become the tree of life, that wood of death reminds us that God's beginnings often begin with our endings."

The Lord allows us each a share in his cross; he invites us to carry it and not to lay it down. It is easy to run from the suffering that the Lord allows us to experience in our lives.

Venerating the cross teaches us not to run, but to approach the cross with devotion. When we touch or kiss the cross, we learn that it is the source of our salvation.

I encourage you to participate in your parish's celebration of Holy Week this year. Venerate the cross, and let it teach you to love and embrace our Lord's saving cross.

(Father James Brockmeier is the director of the Office of Worship within the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. He can be reached at jbrockmeier@archindy.org.) †

Feeling IV/Effie Caldarola

Like Jonah, we are all called to be signs of God's limitless mercy

As a small child, I was a bit of a religious nerd.

I'm not sure why. I was the oldest child, the only daughter, and our little Catholic mission parish in farm country was central to our lives. From a young age, faith intrigued me.



Case in point: I remember taking a toy—probably not a treasured stuffed animal, more likely something of my brother's—and placing it behind a chair. Then I would talk to God. If you make this item disappear, I would tell the Almighty, then I will definitely believe in you.

Needless to say, the toy was always safely sitting behind the chair when I looked. I remained a tiny believer, albeit a disappointed one.

I chuckle when I recall this memory, and if this mystery we call God has a sense of humor, then the angels were chuckling too.

I was asking for a sign. And recently, we read about Jesus' warnings about asking for signs. In the Gospel of Luke, he is quite adamant: "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (Lk 11:29).

Jonah became a sign to the city of Nineveh; Jesus

is telling the crowds that he, Jesus, is the sign, the only sign we need. And he, Jesus, is greater than Jonah, whose fabulous tale involves being swallowed by a large fish, and greater than Solomon.

Although probably not an historical character, Jonah's story carries lessons. God asked Jonah to perform a mission—go to the pagans in the vast city of Nineveh and proclaim the true God.

Understandably, Jonah is terrified. Instead of heading for Nineveh, he boards a ship going the other direction.

When the sailors on board decide that Jonah's rebellion against God is the cause of a devastating storm, they pitch him overboard. Hence, the fish, who eventually decides he doesn't want Jonah either and coughs him up on shore.

Jonah gets the point. He heads to Nineveh and proclaims the Lord. He becomes a sign of God.

A good deacon friend said this years ago: "You may be the only Gospel someone reads today."

We're called to be signs, too.

But this sign business still challenges me. The Gospels are full of the marvelous deeds of Jesus. The blind see, evil spirits are expelled, the multitudes are fed, the lepers cured. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead after days in the tomb.

Hopefully Jesus' message of love, mercy and inclusion was attracting crowds to him. But let's be honest—many of those crowds were attracted by the amazing stories they had heard of healing. They saw and hoped for signs and wonders.

Jesus' incredible love and mercy propelled him toward helping those in need. Often, he would instruct the healed to tell no one. But people inevitably blabbed.

But these works also drew the crowds to hear his message. How many who listened to the Sermon on the Mount had come for miracles, but stayed to hear the real message of how we are called to be the miracle, to be the sign.

It takes spiritual maturity to become the sign rather than, like a hopeful child, demanding one. We're in the midst of 40 days to ponder that. Forty—a sacred number. The rain fell for 40 days on Noah, the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness. Jesus was credited with 40 days in the desert.

During our 40 days, may we seek to see how God sends us out, like Jonah, to be a sign of Christ's limitless mercy.

(Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral studies from Seattle University.) †

Fifth Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 17, 2024

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Hebrews 5:7-9
- John 12:20-33

The Book of Jeremiah provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. A common theme runs through all the prophets of ancient Israel, namely that despite human sinfulness and treachery, God always is merciful. He always forgives. He never forsakes the people.



Jeremiah constantly wrote with this theme in his mind. He had no doubt. The people had gravely sinned and had consequently brought chaos and misery upon themselves. Thus it is with humans. God, however, saves sinners from their plight.

This weekend's reading speaks of a new covenant. The people's sins had severely betrayed the old covenant, given to the people through Moses, and then to David and his dynasty. But God would offer a new way to life, peace and joy.

The Epistle to the Hebrews supplies the second reading. This epistle is rich in Jewish symbolism. It abundantly proclaims the most profound of Jewish beliefs, that God will never fail in mercy and forgiveness if the people reform.

This reading underscores the role of Jesus, the Son of God, in the divine plan to redeem the lost. His suffering on the cross affirmed and verified his perfect obedience to the Father. The Lord made possible eternal salvation for all who, with the help of God's grace, obey.

St. John's Gospel supplies the last reading. Greeks who were visiting Jerusalem sought Jesus. They approached Philip, an Apostle. Philip went to Andrew, another of the Twelve.

An interesting incidental was that contact with Jesus is initiated through the Apostles. It shows that in the early Church, when this Gospel was written, the Apostles were crucially important because they literally had known the Lord. They were the Lord's special students, chosen to represent him. Since they personally had been chosen, they acted and spoke with the authority of Jesus.

Jesus placed a dark cloud over this reading. He predicted the crucifixion, but also implied that Calvary would result in life for all. To illustrate, Jesus spoke of a grain of wheat, lifeless and tiny. But the Lord notes from this small seed, perhaps like the mustard seed of one of his parables, new life springs. Finally, Jesus says that no gift is as total as the giving of a person's life.

The Gospel reveals the intimacy between Jesus and God the Father, and between the Lord and his disciples. This intimacy with the disciples necessarily requires their absolute will to follow him regardless of the costs. The costs may be very high. Discipleship may not be easy.

Reflection

Next weekend, the Church will celebrate Palm Sunday, also known as Passion Sunday. In two weeks, the Church will call us to mark this year's Holy Week with its magnificent, expressive liturgy of the Triduum.

Two consoling lessons emerge from this weekend's Gospel reading. The Lord Jesus and God the Father are perfectly and inseparably one. So, Jesus prays to the Father and is answered. Jesus is the supreme channel for the outpouring of divine everlasting love. The self-sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary is the sublime act of God's love.

God's love is never restricted or limited. In the first verse of this Gospel reading, Greeks wished to see Jesus. Many wish to see Jesus. He is visible to those who turn to him.

The Lord declares that the Father will bless true disciples, all who acknowledge that he is the perfect teacher.

The key to bonding with God is wholeheartedly turning to him. Obedience is a vitally important part of each of the lessons this weekend. Jeremiah called the people to obey God. Hebrews and John extoll the obedience of Christ.

Such unqualified obedience is demanding, to say the least, but nothing else will suffice. And, in the end, God helps us be obedient with his grace.

In obedience is genuine acknowledgement of God, a statement of reality, of who we are, and of who God is. †

Daily Readings

Monday, March 18

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and doctor of the Church
Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or Daniel 13:41c-62
Psalm 23:1-6
John 8:1-11

Tuesday, March 19

St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22
Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2:41-51a

Wednesday, March 20

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95
(Response) Daniel 3:52-56
John 8:31-42

Thursday, March 21

Genesis 17:3-9
Psalm 105:4-9
John 8:51-59

Friday, March 22

Jeremiah 20:10-13
Psalm 18:2-7
John 10:31-42

Saturday, March 23

St. Turibius of Mogrovejo, bishop
Ezekiel 37:21-28
(Response) Jeremiah 31:10-13
John 11:45-56

Sunday, March 24

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
Mark 11:1-10
or John 12:12-16 (procession)
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18a, 19-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:6-11
Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Bishops' conferences determine rules related to abstinence on Fridays

Now that we are in Lent, most Catholics I know are eating fish on Fridays to conform to the abstinence requirement.



But if I typically avoid meat or eat fish most days anyway, should I do something different for Lent, or just stay the same? I've heard some Catholics give up chocolate or sodas for Lent, and

a priest recently told me I could even set aside a little extra time each Friday for private prayer and meditation. Could you comment? (Indiana)

The short answer is no. During Lent, a Catholic cannot substitute another form of penance for Friday abstinence from meat.

Canon 1251 of the *Code of Canon Law* states: "Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the episcopal conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday."

In some countries, such as England and Wales in the United Kingdom, Catholics are required to refrain from consuming meat every Friday year-round. In the United States specifically, our local episcopal conference (the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) issued its "Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence" in 1966.

This document gives Catholics in the U.S. the option to substitute some other form of penance—such as giving up some other food or taking on additional prayer time—for the canonically required abstinence from meat on Fridays outside of Lent, in accord with their own personal discernment.

The 1966 "Pastoral Statement" shares some of your reasoning when it notes that "changing circumstances, including economic, dietary and social elements, have made some of our people feel

that the renunciation of the eating of meat is not always and for everyone the most effective means of practicing penance. Meat was once an exceptional form of food; now it is commonplace.

"Accordingly, since the spirit of penance primarily suggests that we discipline ourselves in that which we enjoy most, to many in our day abstinence from meat no longer implies penance, while renunciation of other things would be more penitential."

However, the "Pastoral Statement" still requires American Catholics to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays. The document states that "in keeping with the letter and spirit" of "*Paenitemini*," the 1966 apostolic constitution by St. Paul VI, "we preserved for our dioceses the tradition of abstinence from meat on each of the Fridays of Lent, confident that no Catholic Christian will lightly hold himself excused from this penitential practice."

Part of the value of this mandatory Lenten Friday abstinence for all Catholics, even those Catholics who wouldn't normally be craving a meat-based meal, is not only the subjective sense of doing penance, but also the solidarity and witness-value of a communal penitential practice.

When we abstain from meat on Fridays in Lent, we are practicing a penance alongside our brothers and sisters in the Church around the world. On those occasions when we may need to visibly refuse meat or otherwise choose a fish or vegetarian option on a Friday, we are also demonstrating the importance of our faith to each other and to non-Catholics.

This all being said, if you personally feel that Friday abstinence during Lent is not enough of a sacrifice to be spiritually beneficial for you, you are certainly free to incorporate another penitential practice in addition to abstinence on Fridays.

And while the only strictly binding Lenten obligations for Catholics are abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Fridays, and to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, it is customary, albeit not required, for Catholics to choose some additional spiritual practice for Lent at their own discretion.

Traditionally, we speak of Lent as a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, so any penance falling generally into one of these categories would be appropriate.

(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.) †

Rube awakening



Grant Wanstrath, left, Calvin Padgett, Myra Meer, Elsa Schneider, Laney Wuestefeld, Damien Brelage and Hunter Young, part of the Rube Goldberg team of seventh- and eighth-grade students at St. Louis School in Batesville, celebrate after the team finished second in a regional competition on Feb. 24. They will move on to the national competition at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., in April. The team built a machine that included more than 40 steps to put toothpaste on a toothbrush. Not included in the photo are students Jeffrey Gerstbauer, Kathryn Mack and Sophia Leising, and coach Michael Brelege. (Submitted photo)

Rest in peace

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

BOWLING, Dr. Richard P., 86, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Feb. 27. Father of Theresa Rodriguez, Frederick, Paul, Philip and Thomas Bowling. Grandfather of 13. Great-grandfather of five.

BULLEIT, Barbara Ann, 92, St. Mary, Navilleton, March 2. Mother of Angie, Debbie, Jackie, Jeannie, M. Angie, Terri, Charlie, Doug, James, Joseph, Mark, Matthew and Randy. Grandmother of 23. Great-grandmother of 20.

BURFORD, Gerard H., 92, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 15. Father of Karen Carter, Patricia Terry, Janet Vardaman, David and Steven Burford. Grandfather of 13. Great-grandfather of several.

CONN, George A., 91, All Saints, Dearborn County, Feb. 25. Father of Kelly Baker, Anne Saxton and Kevin Conn. Brother of Gary Conn. Grandfather of two.

EDGELL, Robert E., 89, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 21. Husband of Judy Edgell. Father of Margaret Core, Ginger Lirette, Heather Whaley and John Edgell. Grandfather of seven.

GAROFOLA, Jr., Joseph, 91, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Feb. 27. Father of Timothy and Tracy Joe Garofola. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of six.

GOBLE, Nathaniel, 36, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 22. Son of Daniel and Joan Goble. Brother of Julie Losurdo. Grandson of Dorothy Goble. Uncle of one.

GOUGH, Marilyn K., 88, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Feb. 27. Mother of Kathleen Cox, Corlene Ray, Rhonda Teague, Albert, Jr., David, Larry and Tim Gough. Grandmother of 14. Great-grandmother of nine.

GROVES, Darla D., 89, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 29. Mother of Julie Dantic, Dean and Scott Groves. Sister of Barbara Ross and Dennis Mullis. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of four.

HARPENAU, Merle, 98, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 29. Husband of Madeline Harpenau. Father of Sharon Schneider. Brother of Mary Meunier and Leonard Harpenau. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of nine.

HECK, Peggy J., 89, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 22. Wife of Chris Heck. Mother of Cindy Cain, Mike and Todd Heck. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of six.

HENDRIX, Rylee M., infant, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Feb. 25. Daughter of Brock Hendrix and Carli Fields. Granddaughter of Raymond and Tracy Fields, Aaron Hendrix and Amanda Hoffman. Great-granddaughter of Rhonda and Dwight Hendrix, John Clark and Jon Hoffman. Great-great-granddaughter of Judy Walters. Niece of several.

KAISER, Jessica L., 38, St. Michael, Brookville, Feb. 27. Mother of Jaden Kaiser. Daughter of Bruce and Cheryl Kaiser. Sister of Mary Jo Clark.

LANGDON, Donna, 88, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Feb. 27. Sister of Theresia Cunningham, Mary Shoultz, Bernadette Wheatley, Edward, Michael and Ronald Korte. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of eight.

LOYD, Keith, 67, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, March 1. Husband of Starling Loyd. Father of Krista Johnson, Starla Mathis and Keith Loyd, Jr. Brother of Deborah Graham and Denise Mills. Grandfather of six.

MERRILL, Maria, 62, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 19. Wife of Gordon Merrill. Mother of Sarah and Matthew Kreitzer, and Bethany, Gregory and Jeremy Merrill. Sister

Papal pal



Pope Francis shares a moment with a child after his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 6. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

of Mark and Mike Lane. Grandmother of one.

PIOTRZKOWSKI, Goldie, 91, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 17. Mother of Theresa Bailey, Bobbie Sigmund, Brian, Leonard, Jr., Richard and Timothy Piotrkowski. Grandmother of 18. Great-grandmother of 11.

PREWITT, Matthew S., 51, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Feb. 21. Son of Charlie and Sue Prewitt. Brother of Haley Prewitt. Uncle of several.

RENN, Arlene E., 92, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Feb. 24. Mother of Rhonda Miracle, Barbara Spaulding, Charles and Eric Renn. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother nine.

ROBERGE, Lois A., 96, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Feb. 28. Mother of Susan McClain, Barbara Yeary, Elizabeth, Christopher and Paul Roberge. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of eight.

SCHRECK, Joyce M., 72, St. Joseph, Corydon, Feb. 28. Wife of Richard Schreck.

Mother of Anita Levin, Brian, James and Jeffrey Schreck. Sister of Barbara Bullington, Karen Smith, Gary, Gerald, Mickey and Randy Lowe.

Grandmother of 12.

WALKER, Mary Lynn, 80, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 22. Mother of Dianna

Higgenbotham, Monte, Jr., and Nicholas Walker. Sister of nine. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 18. †

Providence Sister Grace Marie Meehan served in education and health care

Providence Sister Grace Marie Meehan, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on March 2 at Mother Theodore Hall on the campus of her religious community's motherhouse. She was 93.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on March 12 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Grace Marie was born on Nov. 7, 1930, in Chicago. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Jan. 7, 1948, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1955.

Sister Grace Marie earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in education at Indiana State University in Terre Haute and an associate degree in nursing at Lincoln Trails Community College in Robinson, Ill.

During her 76 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Grace Marie ministered as an educator in Catholic schools

for 22 years in California, Illinois, Indiana and Oklahoma. She also served in leadership and in health care in her community, and health care in Illinois and Maryland. After retiring from ministry in 2016, Sister Grace Marie volunteered in Chicago and Albuquerque, N.M. In 2023, she dedicated herself entirely to prayer.

In the archdiocese, Sister Grace Marie ministered at the former St. Agnes Academy in Indianapolis from 1950-51, at Our Lady of the Greenwood School in Greenwood from 1959-68, at St. Mary School in Richmond (now St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School) from 1968-69 and St. Michael School in Greenfield from 1969-72.

She served at the motherhouse on her community's Corporate Renewal Team from 1972-76, as administrator of the infirmary from 1976-81 and as a nurse from 1983-84.

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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victimassistance@archindy.org

Jesus wants all people to be saved, pope says at Angelus

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Christians should pray for the grace to look at others with the same mercy and care with which Jesus looks at them, Pope Francis said.

"No one is perfect. We are all sinners, we all make mistakes, and if the Lord were to use his knowledge of our weaknesses to condemn us, no one could be saved," the pope said on March 10 before reciting the *Angelus* prayer with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Commenting on the day's Gospel reading, Jn 3:14-21, Pope Francis focused on the line: "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).

When Jesus encounters people in the Gospel, the pope said, he

sees all that they are. "There are no secrets before him. He reads their hearts."

Then and now, Jesus sees the whole person, not "to point the finger at us, but to embrace our life, to free us from sins and to save us," he said. "Jesus is not interested in putting us on trial or subjecting us to judgment. He wants none of us to be lost."

"The Lord's gaze upon every one of us is not a blinding beacon that dazzles us and puts us in difficulty," he said, "but rather the gentle glimmer of a friendly lamp that helps us to see the good in ourselves and to be aware of the evil so that we may be converted and healed with the support of his grace."

However, Pope Francis said, people often do not treat others with the same kind of care.

Think about how "very often we condemn others," he said. "Many times, we like to speak badly, to go in search of gossip against others. Let us ask the Lord to give us, all of us, this merciful gaze, to look at others as he looks at us."

Pope Francis also called attention to "the grave crisis afflicting Haiti," with kidnappings, looting and violence.

"I am close to the Church and to the dear Haitian population, which has been plagued by many sufferings for years," he said, asking people to pray that through the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Help "every sort of violence may cease and that everyone may offer their contribution to the growth of peace and reconciliation in the country with the renewed support of the international community." †

Roncalli sophomore lives his dream of becoming a state champion

By John Shaughnessy

Walking between two flaming towers of fire and smoke, 16-year-old Peyton Schoettl strode toward the center of the arena, literally feeling the heat as he headed toward the wrestling mat for the opportunity he had



Peyton Schoettl

worked, sweated and dreamed of for years—winning a state championship.

At the same time, the sophomore from Roncalli High School in Indianapolis felt no pressure or any intimidation about wrestling a senior from Lake Central High School who was undefeated and favored to win the championship in the 106-pound weight class.

After all, Peyton's approach to every match has always flowed from a rare perspective toward competition.

"I try not to worry about winning and losing too much. I feel that's kind of a negative thing to focus on. I just focus on putting my best wrestling out there," he says. "Whatever the outcome, I was OK with it. If I lose, so be it. I'll keep working to get better. But, of course, I wanted to win. I felt I had put the work in during the season, and I was ready to perform."

Wrestling under the lights of the Ford Center in Evansville on Feb. 17, Peyton delivered a performance that ended in the spotlight focused on him. In a tight, intense match of moves, wits and skills that came down to the final second, Peyton won the state championship 3-2.

"I was speechless," Peyton recalls. "This is something

I've been wanting to do for so long—to be an Indiana high school state champ. All the work has paid off. All the extra practices. All the people I've worked with over the years. To do it is so amazing!"

A short time after his win, Peyton rushed into the stands where about 30 of his extended family members greeted him with huge smiles, hugs and tears, including from his parents, Jason and Amy Schoettl.

"It was an emotional thing for my family," says Peyton, a member of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis who attended grade school at Our Lady of the Greenwood School in Greenwood. "My dad was crying. My uncles were crying. Tears of joy."

Wrestling is in Peyton's blood—a grandfather, his father and his uncles all wrestled, a sport that Peyton started in kindergarten.

"I love everything about wrestling," says Peyton, whose parents named him after former Indianapolis Colts' quarterback Peyton Manning. "It's all up to you in wrestling, and I like that part a lot. If you lose, it's on you. The work you put in in the off-season, that's on you. The work you do during the season, that's on you, too."

"I also like the relationships you grow with your teammates along the way. Because you're all working for the same thing. You're all trying to get better together. If I didn't wrestle, it would be a missing part of me."

Peyton's commitment to wrestling reflects his approach to other parts of his life, says Roncalli's wrestling coach Shaun Richardson.

"No one is more deserving of being crowned a state champ," his coach says. "Peyton is an extremely hard worker. I can always count on him to push himself and

others. He is a great person in the classroom, in the wrestling room and outside of school. I can't wait to see what he can do in the next two years at Roncalli."

Even as he savors reaching his dream, Peyton is focused on the future, too.

"I've gotten so many congratulations, and my teammates were super pumped for me," says Peyton, who finished the year with a record of 43 wins and one loss. "It means a lot knowing I have a great support system, and everyone believed in me. "With each day, I get more of a realization of what I've done. It makes me feel happy, but it also makes me feel motivated to get back to work. Anytime I have success, I know I have to keep working or that success won't keep happening." †



A referee raises the arm of Peyton Schoettl, signifying that the sophomore from Roncalli High School in Indianapolis has won the 106-pound match in Indiana's state wrestling championship meet on Feb. 17. (Photo courtesy of Pure Impact Studios, LLC)

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 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 27, 6 p.m. at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery

- March 17, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at St. Anne, New Castle*

Indianapolis East Deanery

- 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:

- March 24 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 South Deanery

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

Indianapolis West Deanery

- 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 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 17, 3 p.m. at American Martyrs, Scottsburg

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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If you are interested in this position, please send your resume to: dherbertz@archindy.org.

Employment

Director of Faith Formation

St. Monica Catholic Church is seeking the person God is calling to serve as our Director of Faith Formation. This position is responsible for directing our programs for catechesis, sacramental preparation and formation of our children in Pre-k through Eighth grade.

Responsibilities include choosing curriculum, training and supervising volunteer parishioner catechists who work with children or with parental adults. Saint Monica, www.stmonicaindy.org, is a dynamic intercultural and multilingual parish of approximately 1700 households.

This position begins in July of 2024. A Bachelor Degree in Theology, Pastoral Ministry, Education or equivalent work experience required.

Letters of interest with resumes may be sent by March 29th via email to parishoffice@stmonicaindy.org. Please include in the subject line: Director of Faith Formation Search. You may also mail them to our parish at 6131 Michigan Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46228.

ICC

continued from page 1

But opponents of physician-assisted suicide—including the American Medical Association—maintain that palliative care and hospice care offer patients true dignity in such situations, providing comfort measures and compassion in the most difficult circumstances.

Dr. Tyler Johnson, an emergency room physician in northeast Indiana who is the lawmaker behind the Senate resolution, points to numerous ethical issues inherent in the practice of assisted suicide.

“Physicians are typically with their patient during the patient’s most vulnerable moments, and that alone carries a responsibility that most professions do not,” said Johnson (R-Leo), who has been a member of the Indiana Senate since 2022. “It is a far stretch to get from palliative care and allowing natural death to physician-assisted suicide. Unfortunately, there are people in the world who have embraced this evil to promote suicide among the most vulnerable individuals.

“You cannot compassionately kill a patient and you cannot care for the patient you are comfortable killing,” he continued. “As a physician in my 15th year of medicine, I cannot fathom what it feels like to give up and stop trying. Physician-assisted suicide is contrary to a physician’s duty as a healer and undermines the physician-patient relationship, and we must condemn this unethical medical practice.”

In a statement he issued following the Senate’s passage of his resolution, Johnson also called attention to the

euphemisms surrounding physician-assisted suicide.

“Those in support will often use softened terms like ‘medical assistance in dying’ to try to make suicide sound satisfactory,” said Johnson, a graduate of the University of St. Francis in Fort Wayne. “But let us not be confused: We are discussing a physician taking steps to end a patient’s life.”

A major driver behind the physician-assisted suicide movement is the Colorado-based organization Compassion & Choices. The group backs “End-of-Life Options” legislation such as House Bill 1011, the physician-assisted suicide measure introduced this year in the Indiana General Assembly. Virtually identical in content to legislation proposed in prior years, the bill failed to receive a hearing.

Still, the ICC and other opponents of physician-assisted suicide say they must remain vigilant as the movement continues to gain momentum.

Twenty years ago, Oregon was the first state to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The practice is now allowed in nine others—California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Vermont and Washington—in addition to the District of Columbia.

This year, physician-assisted suicide legislation has been introduced in more than a dozen other states, including Illinois, Utah, Virginia and West Virginia. In the Virginia General Assembly, a bill made its way through the Senate before stalling in the House the first week of March.

Two Catholic bishops in Virginia had issued a statement condemning the legislation, in keeping with the Church’s long history of social teaching on the sanctity of life.

‘It’s important to remain vigilant and understand what’s happening around the country with regard to these critical issues. It is also important to understand what the Church’s teaching is and to articulate that clearly as we bring the voice of the Church to the public forum.’

—Alexander Mingus, associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference



“Human life is sacred and must never be abandoned or discarded,” wrote Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Va., and Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond, Va. “Legalizing [assisted suicide] would place the lives of people with disabilities, people with mental illnesses, the elderly, and those unable to afford health care—among others—at heightened risk of deadly harm.”

The bishops added that “people facing the end of life are in great need, and must be accompanied with great care and attentiveness.

“To address each of their needs and alleviate their suffering, patients deserve high-quality medical, palliative and hospice care—not suicide drugs.”

Leaders of the ICC have been closely monitoring developments around the United States involving this issue, keeping in touch with their counterparts at other Catholic conferences nationwide. They say they want to ensure that physician-assisted suicide never becomes a reality in Indiana, while also speaking out against the death penalty and other matters in

opposition to the sanctity of life.

“It’s important to remain vigilant and understand what’s happening around the country with regard to these critical issues,” said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC. “It is also important to understand what the Church’s teaching is and to articulate that clearly as we bring the voice of the Church to the public forum.”

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.

A page tracking the status of key legislation introduced at the General Assembly 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.) †

Ukrainian Catholic bishops, ambassador say Ukraine has ‘no choice but to defend’ itself

NEW YORK (OSV News)—Ukraine’s Greek Catholic bishops, led by Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, have said their nation will continue to fight Russian aggression, “notwithstanding the suggestions for need for negotiations coming from representatives of different countries, including the Holy Father himself.

“Ukrainians will continue to defend freedom and dignity to achieve a peace that is just,” said the permanent synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in a March 10 statement, issued hours after the synod had concluded a weeklong series of meetings in the U.S. with clergy, faithful and U.S. government officials.

Signing the statement were the permanent synod’s members: Major Archbishop Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the worldwide Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia, head of Ukrainian Catholics in the U.S.; Bishop Włodzimierz Juszczak of the Eparchy of Wrocław-Koszalin in Poland; Bishop Bohdan Dzyurakh, apostolic exarch in Germany and Scandinavia; and Bishop Josaphat Moshchych of Chernivtsi.

The permanent synod’s visit, which included stops in Washington, Philadelphia, northern New Jersey and New York, marked the first official travel by a Ukrainian Catholic delegation to the U.S. since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, continuing attacks begun in 2014.

The synod’s statement followed a recent interview Pope Francis gave to Lorenzo Buccella of Radio Télévision Suisse, in which he urged parties to the war in Ukraine to “not be ashamed to negotiate before things get worse.”

In the interview, a portion of which was released on March 9 ahead of the full March 20 airing, the pope, who discussed both Russia’s war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war, told Buccella that “the word ‘negotiate’ is a courageous word.”

“When you see that you are defeated, that things are not going well, it is necessary to have the courage to negotiate,” he said. “You may feel ashamed, but with how many deaths will it end? Negotiate in time; look for some country that can mediate. Today, for example in the war in Ukraine, there are many who want to mediate. Turkey has offered itself for this. And others.”

The pope’s comments quickly sparked international backlash, prompting Holy See Press Office director Matteo Bruni to issue a March 9 clarification of the remarks.

Bruni said that “the pope picked up the image of the white flag, proposed by the interviewer, to indicate a cessation of hostilities, a truce reached with the courage of negotiation. His hope is for a diplomatic solution for a just and lasting peace.”

The Ukrainian Catholic bishops prefaced their

statement by clarifying that they “do not yet have a full version of the interview” given by the pope, while noting that “as he has done repeatedly, Pope Francis calls for negotiated settlements of armed conflicts.”

The bishops said they wished “to reflect not upon the pope’s statement but upon the point of view of the victims of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,” since “it is important to understand the position of most Ukrainians.

“Ukrainians cannot surrender because surrender means death,” said the bishops. “The intentions of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and Russia are clear and explicit.”

Ukraine’s ambassador to the Holy See, Andrii Yurash, echoed that sentiment.

“For us, it’s not a matter of a victory—it’s just a matter of the survival of our existence as a nation, as a country,” he told OSV News.

Russia’s war on Ukraine, now entering its 11th year, is “an example of ... contemporary genocide” realized against a “concrete territory, concrete country ... concrete nation,” Yurash said.

He said that he has not yet spoken directly and officially with anyone at the Vatican regarding Pope Francis’

interview comments, but added he “[hopes] we’ll have in the near future, very shortly, some communications.”

Yurash, like the synod bishops, said it is “important to wait for the official contacts and the official explanations ... on the highest level.”

The bishops stressed that along with Putin, “70% of the Russian population support the genocidal war against Ukraine, as does Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Orthodox Church.”

As of November 2023, “the level of support for the actions of the Russian armed forces” in Ukraine “remains high,” with 74% of the populace declaring approval, according to the Levada Center, an independent sociological research firm based in Moscow.

Russian Orthodox leader Patriarch Kirill has moved to absolve Russian troops of crimes, preaching in a September 2022 sermon that any Russian soldier who dies in Ukraine offers a sacrifice that “washes away all the sins that a person has committed.”

“The expressed objectives [of Russia] are articulated in concrete actions,” said the bishops.

Two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights have determined Russia’s invasion constitutes genocide, with Ukraine reporting more than 127,060 war crimes committed by Russia to date in Ukraine since February 2022.

In March 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Putin and his commissioner for

children’s rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for the unlawful deportation and transfer of at least 19,546 children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation. On March 5, the ICC issued additional warrants for two Russian military officials accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

More than 500 children have died in Russian attacks on Ukraine, including five ranging in age from 4 months to 9 years, who were killed along with seven adults in a March 2 Russian drone strike on an Odesa residential building.

“In Putin’s mind, there is no such thing as Ukraine, Ukrainian history, language, and independent Ukrainian Church life,” said the Ukrainian Catholic bishops. “All matters Ukrainian are ideological constructs, fit to be eradicated. Ukraine [for Putin and Russia] is not a reality but a mere ‘ideology.’

“The ideology of Ukrainian identity, according to Putin, is ‘Nazi,’” said the bishops. “By calling all Ukrainians [who refuse to be Russians and accept Russian rule] ‘Nazis,’ Putin dehumanizes them ... [as having] no right to exist. They need to be annihilated, killed.”

The bishops pointed to sites of mass atrocities by Russian forces in Ukraine, such as “Bucha, Irpin, Borodianka, Izium, and ... other places occupied by Russian forces,” as evidence of “the clear purpose of this war: to eliminate Ukraine and Ukrainians.”

Religious persecution has accompanied Russian brutality in Ukraine, the bishops stressed.

“Every Russian occupation of Ukrainian territory leads to the eradication of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, any independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and to the suppression of other religions and all institutions and cultural expressions that do not support Russian hegemony,” they said.

In December 2023, Yevgeny Balitsky, the Kremlin-installed head of the occupied Zaporizhzhia’s military-civil administration, issued an order banning the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus and Caritas, the official humanitarian arm of the worldwide Catholic Church. Balitsky accused all three entities of working on behalf of Western nations against Russia. Reports indicate priests are being kidnapped and held by Russian forces in undisclosed locations.

The permanent synod statement asserted that “recent history has demonstrated that with Putin there will be no true negotiations.”

As an example, they pointed to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, under which Ukraine unilaterally surrendered its nuclear arsenal, the third largest in the world at the time, for security pledges from Russia, the U.S. and the U.K.

The memorandum “is not worth the paper on which it is written,” said the bishops. “So it will be with any agreement ‘negotiated’ with Putin’s Russia.” †



Andrii Yurash