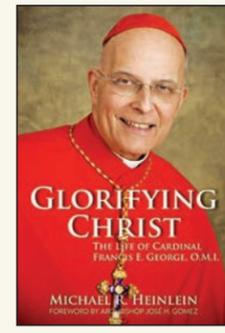




The

Criterion

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A voice of hope, unity

Biography shows how providence guided Cardinal Francis E. George to Church leadership, page 9.

CriterionOnline.com

April 21, 2023

Vol. LXIII, No. 27 75¢

Young woman finds strength and a taste of heaven on World Youth Day scouting trip to Portugal

By John Shaughnessy

As she prayed at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, Emily Mastronicola noticed the dramatic changes in herself.

At 28, she had come to Portugal to do advanced scouting for the nearly 200 youths, young adults and chaperones from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who have already signed up to travel to World Youth Day this summer, joining thousands upon thousands of young Catholics from around the globe who will celebrate their faith with Pope Francis.

But her planning trip in late March to Fatima and Lisbon also became a remarkable time of faith for Mastronicola, the coordinator of events and volunteers for the archdiocese's young adult and college campus ministry.

"Before the trip, I had a lot of anxiety, just getting ready," she says about her first international trip. "Some trips before, I've gotten sick or had some anxiety. But the whole time I was there I was completely at peace. Just being there to witness and see people pray, I just felt so much strength—strength I haven't felt in a while.

"I wasn't afraid about the million things that are going on in our world or thinking about my ministry. I was just

See **YOUNG WOMAN**, page 8

At right, Emily Mastronicola poses in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal where she visited on March 29 as part of her advance scouting trip for the nearly 200 young people from the archdiocese who will be attending World Youth Day with Pope Francis in that European country on Aug. 1-6. (Submitted photo)



A PRAYER TO OUR LADY

Synod's 'messy,' 'joyful' North American phase concludes with call to mission, moves to Rome

(OSV News)—The final document for the North American phase of the 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality was released on April 12, capturing a process of dialogue and discernment that two participants described as "messy," "joyful" and unifying—like the synod itself.

"It's amazing what comes about when ... you invoke the Holy Spirit in the conversation,"



Julia McStravog

Julia McStravog, a theologian and co-coordinator of the North American team for the synod's continental phase, told OSV News.

"The synodal approach provoked a genuine appreciation and joyfulness on the part of the people of God to be able to engage in conversation, even if they were talking about difficult issues," team co-coordinator Richard Coll told OSV News. Coll also serves as executive



Richard Coll

director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development.

Led by Catholic bishops from Canada and the United States, McStravog, Coll and their fellow team members have now synthesized the results of synod listening sessions throughout the two countries, producing a 36-page final document available for download at usccb.org/synod. (According to the USCCB, the Catholic Church in Mexico is participating in the global synod with the Latin American Episcopal Council, or CELAM, given its long partnership with that conference.)

The North American synod team—

See **SYNOD**, page 16

Steady decline of U.S. Latinos identifying as Catholic sounds alarm to 'shift gears'

(OSV News)—The number of U.S. Latinos who identify as Catholic continues to decline steadily, with only about 43% now self-identifying as Catholic, according to a new analysis from the Pew Research Center. The percentage of Latinos who are religiously unaffiliated also has grown.

Pew's study, released on April 13, said the percentage of Hispanic adults identifying as Catholic declined from 67% in 2010 to 43% in 2022. At the same time, U.S. Latinos who identify as religiously unaffiliated (describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular") increased from 10% in 2010 to 30% in 2022.

Hosffman Ospino, a Boston College professor with years of experience examining the role of Hispanic Catholics in the future of the Catholic Church in the U.S., said this decline has been "in the works" for decades and that younger generations of Latinos are less likely to identify as Catholic.

"Something to keep in mind is that the Hispanic population is

growing in the United States of America. And the largest source of growth for the Hispanic community is not the immigrant community as it used to be in the '80s and '90s," Ospino said.

"Now the largest source of growth of the Latino community is the U.S.-born generation, which is being raised largely by both immigrants and the U.S.-born Latinos [and] Latinas. ... It's a very young population, so the trends that Pew is noticing reflect the larger trends among all young people throughout the United States across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups."

U.S. Census Bureau data show the U.S. Hispanic population reached 62.6 million in mid-2021, representing 18.9% of the total population. Since the 2000s, the Pew study said, U.S. births have driven U.S. Hispanic population growth, with four in five (79%) of U.S. Latinos ages 18 to 29 being born in the U.S.

The Pew study also indicated that about half (49%) of U.S. Latinos ages 18 to 29 identified as religiously unaffiliated,

See **LATINO**, page 8



Hosffman Ospino



Archdiocesan seminarians ordained transitional deacons

Criterion staff report

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson ordained three archdiocesan seminarians as transitional deacons during an April 15 Mass at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad.

Those ordained are Deacon Anthony Armbruster, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, left; Deacon Samuel Rosko, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis; and Deacon Bobby

Vogel, a member of St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County.

All three are in formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and are expected to be ordained priests for the Church in central and southern Indiana in June 2024.

(For more information about archdiocesan seminarians and a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.) †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

April 21–27, 2023

April 21 – 2 p.m.
Virtual National Eucharistic Revival Congress Board meeting

April 22 – Noon
Indiana State Circle of the Daughters of Isabella lunch at The Seasons Lodge, Nashville

April 23 – 12:30 p.m.
Confirmation for youths of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Bedford; Our Lady of the Springs Parish, French Lick; and Our Lord Jesus Christ the King Parish, Paoli, at St. Vincent de Paul Church

April 23 – 5 p.m.
Confirmation for youths of St. John the Apostle, St. Paul Catholic Center and St. Charles Borromeo parishes, Bloomington, at St. Charles Borromeo Church

April 24 – 5 p.m. CST
Missionaries of Mercy Prayer and Dinner at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad

April 25 – 10 a.m.
Spring Business Meeting for Priests and Parish Life Coordinators at St. John the Apostle Parish, Bloomington

April 25 – 2 p.m.
Council of Priests meeting at St. John the Apostle Parish, Bloomington

April 25 – 6 p.m.
National Eucharistic Congress dinner, Indianapolis

April 26 – 11 a.m.
Catholic Center department gathering at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

April 26 – 2 p.m.
Virtual National Eucharistic Revival Congress Board meeting

April 26 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation for youths of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Christ the King and Sacred Heart of Jesus parishes, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

April 27 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

April 27 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation for youths of Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Mark the Evangelist parishes, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Major Catholic organizations partner with 2024 National Eucharistic Congress

DENVER (OSV News)—The executive team of National Eucharistic Congress Inc. announced on April 17 that several leading Catholic organizations are investing in the July 17-21, 2024, congress in Indianapolis as “mission partners.”

Relevant Radio, Augustine Institute, Franciscan University of Steubenville, EWTN, OSV (the parent company of the OSV News wire service and the weekly *Our Sunday Visitor* newspaper) and the Knights of Columbus have each made “a substantial financial commitment” and “pledged significant in-house resources toward the planning and promotion of the event itself,” according to a press release.

“One thing has been consistent with every partnership that has developed from these organizations—they all have rolled up their sleeves and asked, ‘How else can we help?’” Cande de Leon, chief advancement officer for National Eucharistic Congress Inc., said in a statement. “It gives me great joy to see the commitment of these organizations with regard to helping the Church and truly wanting to bring people to Jesus in the Eucharist.”

The Year of the National Eucharistic Congress and Missionary Sending 2024-25 is the third and final year of the U.S. bishops’ National Eucharistic Revival. Launched last year, the National

Eucharistic Revival is a three-year campaign by the U.S. bishops to increase the Catholic understanding of and devotion to Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist.

The congress is expected to draw more than 80,000 people, and organizers have compared the event to World Youth Day, with prayer and liturgies, catechesis for individuals and families, and a festival-like atmosphere.

OSV, the Huntington, Ind.-based Catholic publishing company, has been a supporter of the National Eucharistic Revival and Congress from the beginning because “we saw this movement as not just a vehicle for reviving Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ, but for fulfilling the great commission,” said OSV Publisher Scott Richert.

“The Church in the United States is facing unprecedented challenges that can only be solved by a return to the heart of Christianity, our encounter with Christ,” he said, adding that the hope of the congress is Catholics will encounter Christ in Indianapolis, discover Christ in everyone they meet, and invite others to encounter Christ in the Church.

“When we learned about the Congress, we immediately knew this would be a great benefit to the Church and to souls, since the holy Eucharist is Jesus Christ himself,” said

Father Francis “Rocky” Hoffman, executive director and CEO of Relevant Radio.

“We encourage our listeners to attend and partner in prayer for a successful Congress,” he said. “All positive, sustainable, and transformative change in the Church is rooted in our love for and encounter with the holy Eucharist.”

The mission of the Augustine Institute, based in the Denver suburb of Greenwood Village, “is to help Catholics understand, live and share their faith” through its Graduate School of Theology, academic and parish programs and multimedia resources, said Tim Gray, the institute’s president.

“Our hope is that the National Eucharistic Revival leads thousands upon thousands of Catholics to rediscover the love of God who draws close to us and gives himself up for us in the most holy Eucharist,” he said.

“The Eucharist has always been the wellspring of Franciscan University of Steubenville’s spiritual life and at the heart of the school’s Steubenville conferences,” according to Franciscan Father Dave Pivonka, the university’s president.

“Year after year, we have seen the power of Jesus in the Eucharist heal, renew and unify our students, faculty, staff and conference guests, so we’re excited to help stir up a greater love for

the holy Eucharist,” he said.

EWTN’s founder, Mother Angelica, a Poor Clare of Perpetual Adoration, “built the network around her community’s chapel where the Eucharist was adored 24 hours each day” at Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in rural Alabama, said Michael Warsaw, CEO of the EWTN Global Catholic Network.

“Devotion to our Lord in the Eucharist still remains physically and spiritually at the heart of the EWTN apostolate. There is no undertaking in the Church today more important than the program of eucharistic revival, and EWTN is happy to fully support this effort,” he said.

In August 2021, Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly, the CEO of the Knights of Columbus, announced the Catholic international fraternal order would be a major sponsor of the National Eucharistic Revival.

“The more we devote ourselves to the Eucharist, the more we will understand what it means to live a life of service and sacrifice for others—and to live a life of true unity, centered on the ‘source and summit of the Christian life,’” he said in a statement about the organization’s decision to be a mission partner for the 2024 congress.

(To register for the congress go to: www.eucharisticcongress.org/register.) †



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Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
Circulation / Subscriptions: .. 317-236-1425
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570

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

Postmaster:

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

Web site: www.CriterionOnline.com

E-mail: criterion@archindy.org

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

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

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

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

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



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Advocates fear ‘further erosion’ of Indiana wetlands protection

By Victoria Arthur

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and numerous advocates for the environment have serious concerns about a surprise maneuver late in the legislative session that could further strip the already sparse protections for the state’s wetlands.

Last-minute language weakening the definition of wetlands in state law was recently added to an unrelated bill, blindsiding lawmakers and advocates alike and offering no opportunity for public testimony.

The move came just months after the Indiana Wetlands Task Force issued a report emphasizing that Indiana could not afford to lose any more of this critical natural resource.

Rep. Doug Miller (R-Elkhart), a legislator with strong ties to the building industry, introduced the wetlands-related amendment to Senate Bill 414, a measure dealing with sewage disposal systems. That bill had passed the Senate almost unanimously and was scheduled for a vote in the House Environmental Affairs committee when Miller presented the unrelated amendment, which, despite strong opposition from several committee members, narrowly passed 6-4.

“I was very disappointed,” said Indra Frank, a member of the Hoosier Environmental Council, in reaction to the unexpected move. “The bottom line is that Indiana needs its wetlands more than ever for maintaining healthy waterways, providing habitat for many species and reducing flooding. But this bill, as it stands now, would further reduce the protection of wetlands and we’d see more of them disappear.”

A motion to dissent was filed in the Senate on April 13 after the bill returned to that chamber carrying this and other amendments. At press time, the legislation was awaiting a conference committee hearing to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the bill.

During a March 22 House committee hearing, Miller argued that his amendment was necessary to bring the state back in line with the original intent of environmental legislation that passed the General Assembly in 2021, but that has not been completely put into practice. That year, Senate Enrolled Act 389, which was opposed by the ICC and more than 50 environmental and conservation groups, eliminated safeguards for wetlands across the

state by changing their definition and classification.

Senate Enrolled Act 389 had defined three categories of wetlands, with Class III considered the most ecologically important and therefore deserving of the greatest protection from development. The amendment recently introduced to Senate Bill 414 makes it much more difficult for a wetland to be classified as class III.

Developers have been lobbying for additional reductions to the protection of wetlands, saying that the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) has been upgrading Class I wetlands to Class II and III.

“Testimony on Senate Bill 389 in 2021 revealed stories of farmers who were unable to address flooding issues on their properties and conflicts with IDEM agents,” said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Church in Indiana. “The ICC isn’t questioning whether any of these underlying disputes between IDEM, farmers and developers are significant. Rather, we want to ensure that the legislature doesn’t pursue a solution to these issues that removes necessary protection for wetlands.”

Frank, a physician with expertise in environmental health, pointed to the numerous benefits of wetlands and the dangers posed by their eradication, including increased flooding.

“Wetlands are an essential part of a healthy ecosystem,” Frank said. “Here in Indiana, wetlands provide habitat for 50% of the state’s species of small or declining populations, so ecologically they’re very important. They also act like a sponge on the landscape. An acre of wetland can store a million gallons of water or more. When we have big storms, they can help soak up that extra stormwater, which is critically important because it reduces flooding.

“Since [the House committee vote], we’ve been talking one-on-one with as many legislators as we can about the importance of preserving wetlands and how this further reduction in their protection is not advisable,” she added. “It’s ironic that we’re seeing this threat of further erosion of wetland protection immediately following the work of the Indiana Wetlands Task Force.”

That task force, an outgrowth of Senate Enrolled Act 389 two years ago, brought together a range of experts to produce a report on the status of Indiana’s wetlands and recommendations for protecting them. The following excerpt from the executive summary of the report, which

Just like the yearly procession through the city streets, Pope Francis said, their lives are outward signs that transmit God’s love to others through their actions, songs and prayers, even if they aren’t always aware of it.

Pope Francis praised the artwork created by some members of the foundation in their workshops.

While selling their art is important for supporting the foundation financially, the pope said that “the benefit of the labor is greater for those who receive these small objects” and “see all the love you were able to put into its production.”

“How important it is to see in the labor of each person the wonder of learning, the patience of their teachers to show them, the teamwork that is capable of converging each person’s different abilities into a final result that belongs to everyone,” he said.

The pope said that when they work as a team, the artists are the hands of Jesus; they are also his feet, voice and heart when they share the joy of Christ.

“How?” he asked. “By giving thanks to God for your parents, for your siblings, for your teachers, for your priests, for all the people that love you.” †



‘When we ask ourselves why we should care about ecological issues, or how wetlands affect us as humans, it’s good to reinvestigate some of the Church’s teaching. Everything in our environment has an impact on human flourishing and the flourishing of all creation.’

—Alexander Mingus, associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

was issued in October 2022, conveys the overarching message for lawmakers and other audiences:

“Despite the diversity of views and perspectives on the task force, there is a consensus that isolated wetlands do need prioritization at the state level. The functions and values that wetlands provide are clear and significant, and Indiana is at a point where the cumulative loss of wetlands is having a measurable negative impact on residents, particularly from a water quality and flooding standpoint.”

For the ICC, the long history of Catholic social teaching on proper stewardship of the environment forms the basis for engagement on these issues. In line with its opposition to Senate Enrolled Act 389, the ICC has voiced serious concerns with the amendment to Senate Bill 414.

“The Indiana Wetlands Task Force offered great suggestions, and the legislature hasn’t taken up trying to explore any of them,” Mingus said. “Instead, now we have this amendment. Everyone who watches this issue and was involved back in 2021 was very surprised to see it.

“Ultimately, we don’t want the protection of our state’s few remaining

wetlands to be the casualty of arguments over whether IDEM is using its authority properly.”

Instead, Mingus encourages the examination of higher principles, such as those outlined by Pope Francis in his groundbreaking 2015 encyclical on the environment, “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home,” which was directed toward all people of good will.

“When we ask ourselves why we should care about ecological issues, or how wetlands affect us as humans, it’s good to reinvestigate some of the Church’s teaching,” Mingus said. “Everything in our environment has an impact on human flourishing and the flourishing of all creation.”

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.

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

Pope asks mentally disabled, caretakers to be missionaries of God’s love

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Everyone has gifts and talents that can be a public witness to God’s love and mercy, Pope Francis told a group of people with intellectual disabilities and their teachers.

“It is beautiful that in our smallness we can be witnesses of Jesus, missionaries of mercy, missionaries of his love,” the pope said on April 15. “Jesus looks at us and is happy at our effort and the love we are able to transmit.”

Pope Francis made his comments in a meeting with members of the Mother of Hope of Talavera de la Reina Foundation, a project of the Archdiocese of Toledo, Spain, that provides education and vocational training to children and adults with intellectual disabilities and promotes their inclusion in society.

One of the group’s largest projects each year is an annual Way of the Cross ceremony, which, the pope said, teaches those involved “the humility to recognize that we can’t go it alone.”

“There are many things to prepare; you must listen, learn, experiment” to prepare for the ceremony, before later “asking the Lord for the courage to go out in the street, carrying his image for all to contemplate.”



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The Criterion

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Editorial



Pope Francis greets a girl dressed in a traditional costume as he welcomes her and three other youngsters to take a ride with him in the popemobile before his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 12. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Are you open to surprises—and to allowing Jesus to change your heart?

We are more than a week into Easter, the second-longest liturgical season in the Church, which we will celebrate for 50 days until we mark Pentecost the last weekend in May.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes, “The resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross” (#638).

The catechism goes on to say: “Therefore, Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the ‘feast of feasts,’ the ‘solemnity of solemnities,’ just as the Eucharist is the ‘sacrament of sacraments’ [the Great Sacrament]” (#1169).

The Gospels in the first days after Easter Sunday recounted how the resurrected Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, two disciples walking to Emmaus and initially to the Apostles—minus Thomas—who were locked in their room for fear of the Jewish authorities.

Although Thomas initially refused to believe the risen Lord had appeared to his fellow Apostles, a week later Jesus appeared to them again with Thomas present. The transformation of Thomas’ unbelief to his belief—“My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28)—offers us a witness of discipleship in action. As the Gospel continues, Christ tells Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (Jn 20:29).

We are not like that first generation of believers who saw the risen Christ. But by the grace of God, we believe in him, nonetheless. We walk by faith and not by sight. And like the earliest members of the Church, we are each called to go out and share the Gospel with others and be witnesses of this truth.

During the Easter season, our mantra is to proclaim Jesus is risen, that he is alive and that he loves and heals sinners. As missionary disciples, we should not be afraid to go far and wide—including to the peripheries—and share that good news.

Pope Francis said as much during his weekly audience on April 12 in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. He implored people of faith to not be “keyboard warriors” who sit at home and argue with others online.

“One does not proclaim the Gospel standing still, locked in an office, at one’s desk or at one’s computer, arguing like ‘keyboard warriors’ and replacing the creativity of proclamation with copy-and-paste ideas taken from here and there,” the pope said.

We must have an “evangelical zeal,” the pope noted, and be ready to set out and to be open to exploring new paths as we seek to share the Gospel through word and deed.

“I exhort you to be evangelizers who move, without fear, who go forward to share the beauty of Jesus, the newness of Jesus, who changes everything,” Pope Francis said.

The Easter season is an opportune time to allow Jesus to change our hearts, but we must be willing to allow him to do that.

“... Are you a lukewarm Christian, who doesn’t move? Think about it a bit,” the Holy Father said during his audience. “Are you enthusiastic about Jesus and go forward? Think about it.

“A herald is ready to go and knows that the Lord passes by in a surprising way,” the pope continued. “He or she must therefore be free from schemes and prepared for an unexpected and new action: prepared for surprises. One who proclaims the Gospel cannot be fossilized in cages of plausibility or the idea that ‘it has always been done this way,’ but is ready to follow a wisdom that is not of this world.”

Because of the chaos so prevalent in society, we would do well to explore new paths and not to follow the status quo in so many areas of life.

As missionary disciples, we are called to be different. During this Easter season, may we have the courage to proclaim our unwavering belief that Jesus is alive and that the Risen Christ lives forever. Amen!

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

Welcoming new Catholics with several pieces of advice

Becoming a Roman Catholic was one of the best decisions I ever made, and certainly the most life-changing. But in



truth, I had only a vague notion of the deep waters I was wading into. What would have been helpful during the past 40 years? Here are a dozen things I wish I had heard and internalized sooner, and some concrete

items that established Catholics ought to consider.

- Formation never ends, but you’ll be (mostly) doing it yourself from here on out. As St. John Paul II said, “All formation ... is ultimately a self-formation. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons” (“*Pastores dabo vobis*,” #69). The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) is a guided process of intense catechesis and prayer aimed toward baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. After that, the training wheels come off and you are ready to ride. But remember: the best way to keep your own faith growing is to contribute to the formation of others.

- There are some people who seem ready to canonize new Catholics while the chrism is still wet on their foreheads, and others who are equally ready to view them with doubt. Worse than either, though, are those who will push new Catholics into leadership roles too quickly. Don’t ask. And don’t say yes. New Catholics need to allow themselves some time and space to acclimate.

- Those who enter the Church through OCIA probably know more about the Catholic faith than many of their co-religionists. If you’re a cradle Catholic, don’t let that discourage you. If you’re a convert, don’t let it make you feel proud—or frustrated. It’s a sad reality that the formation catechumens and candidates receive is almost always superior to what is provided to everyone else.

- The Church is even bigger than you thought, and it’s easy to get lost. Newbies would do well to find a few tour guides who can show them around what they know and love, but without pushing it as the best-or-only path for everyone. Each of us should discover our leading grace. That means trying on different types of

Catholic spiritualities—and there are dozens—until we find one that fits. All of us should be careful not to impose a veneer of monastic spirituality over our secular lives. Our task, as St. Francis de Sales puts it in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, is to “be who you are and be that well.”

- When the Church hurts and/or disappoints you, love her anyway. Popes, bishops, priests, deacons, religious and fellow parishioners sometimes fall short. Some will admit their errors and do what they can to correct them. Others will ignore bad behavior and continue to justify it. Loving the Church doesn’t mean excusing anything that is contrary to the Gospel. It does mean avoiding anger and the desire for revenge. Speaking or acting prophetically can be costly. Integrity, however, is always worth the price.

- There are all kinds of self-described Catholics. Resist the temptation to hyphenate yourself and go narrow. Instead, enjoy the fact that there’s room for all valid forms of authentic Christian discipleship in the Church. That’s what makes us catholic!

- Find a spiritual director and a posse of go-to saints. Make holiness your goal. Be patient with yourself but persevere. Recognize that the things most likely to keep you from becoming a saint are deficits in human formation, and we all have them.

- Root yourself in a parish.
- Keep praying. When it seems like no one is listening, pray more.
- Don’t expect Catholic life to be easy. Remember: we are following someone who was persecuted and put to death when he didn’t deserve it.

- Don’t become a sacristy rat. Participate in the mission of the Church to be Christ in the world. Those who never leave the loft will always be preaching to the choir.

- The Eucharist draws people to the Church and the Eucharist is what keeps us here. Nothing else comes close.

Sometimes we forget that while the Church is a treasury of God’s grace, it was meant to be lived in. Welcome home, new Catholics (and sorry about the mess).

(Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, wife and mom of eight grown children, who lives in New Orleans.) †

Letter to the Editor

Reader: Believe in the Resurrection and its message of everlasting life

Yippee! Wow! Amazing news! Jesus died and came back to life with a better body that is pain free and will last forever.

Even more amazing, so will we when we transition from this life to the

next, thanks to Jesus, if we believe and love!

Pass it on!

Mike Walro
Hanover

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

Our encounter with Jesus starts in the breaking of the bread

“Stay with us, Lord, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over” (Lk 24:29).

The Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Easter tells the wonderful story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).

Two rather obscure disciples of Jesus (only one, Cleopas, is named) leave Jerusalem three days after Jesus’ crucifixion. In spite of the fact that they have been told about the empty tomb, they are filled with sadness. All their hopes seem to be unfulfilled, and as they walk toward Emmaus, a village seven miles from Jerusalem, they share their disappointment with each other.

A stranger accompanies them and asks what they are discussing. The disciples are amazed at the stranger’s unfamiliarity with the recent events in Jerusalem. “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” they ask him. “What sort of things?” the stranger replies. They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed

him over to a sentence of death and crucified him” (Lk 24:18-20).

The disciples explain that they had hoped Jesus “would be the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21) but now that hope appears to have been crushed. The stranger whom they do not recognize, but who we know is the risen Jesus, says, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:25-26) Then, St. Luke tells us, “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures” (Lk 24:27).

In spite of Jesus’ efforts to open their minds and hearts by teaching them what the Scriptures foretold, the disciples don’t get it. They still do not know who the stranger is. As a result, they can’t possibly understand the truth about the Messiah, “the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21).

The truth is that Christian faith is not an ideology or even merely a collection of religious and moral teachings. It’s an encounter with a person. As Pope Francis pointed out recently in one of his weekly audiences:

Evangelization is more than just

simple doctrinal and moral transmission.

It is, first and foremost, witness—one cannot evangelize without witness—witness of the personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word in which salvation is fulfilled.

In the story of the disciples’ experience on the road to Emmaus, the personal encounter with Jesus that is essential to their understanding of what took place in Jerusalem happens “in the breaking of the bread” (Lk 24:35). Only when they have invited the stranger to stop in the village and eat with them, do they have the profound religious experience that opens their minds and hearts and reveals to them the Word incarnate, the risen Lord.

The “breaking of the bread” (the holy Eucharist) is the place where the disciples encounter Jesus. The disciples do not recognize him at first because they are “slow of heart” and, therefore, incapable of grasping the truth that is right before their eyes. The eucharistic encounter with Jesus that occurs in the meal they share makes a profound difference in their lives. It prompts them to turn around and return to Jerusalem so that they can share their experience with Peter and the rest of the disciples.

That makes them what Pope Francis

would call “Spirit-filled evangelizers,” and it is Christ’s gift of himself in the breaking of the bread that nourishes them in their mission to spread the good news, saying: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32)

The National Eucharistic Revival sponsored by the bishops of the United States is intended to inspire and prepare the people of God to be formed, healed, converted, united and sent out to a hurting and hungry world through a renewed encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist—the source and summit of our Catholic faith.

We bishops pray that all Catholics, but especially those who no longer participate actively in the Sunday Eucharist, will have an “Emmaus experience” that touches their hearts and causes them to burn with a holy zeal for Christ and his Church.

When this “pastoral and missionary conversion” happens, our hearts will be opened and with St. Peter’s successor, Pope Francis, and all the disciples throughout the ages, we will joyfully proclaim, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” (Lk 24:34) †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Nuestro encuentro con Jesús comienza al partir el pan

“Le dijeron: ‘Quédate con nosotros, porque ya es tarde, y es casi de noche.’ Y Jesús entró y se quedó con ellos” (Lc 24:29).

La lectura del Evangelio del tercer domingo de Pascua narra la maravillosa historia de los dos discípulos de Emaús (Lc 24:13-35).

Dos discípulos de Jesús mayormente desconocidos (sólo se conoce el nombre de uno de ellos, Cleopas) se marchan de Jerusalén tres días después de la crucifixión. A pesar de que les han contado acerca del sepulcro vacío, están sumamente tristes. Se sienten desesperanzados y, mientras caminan hacia Emaús, un pueblo situado a 11 kilómetros de Jerusalén, hablan sobre su decepción.

Un desconocido los acompaña y les pregunta de qué hablan. Los discípulos se asombran de que el forastero no esté familiarizado con los recientes acontecimientos de Jerusalén. “¿Eres tú el único forastero en Jerusalén que no sabe lo que ha sucedido en estos días?” “¿Y qué ha sucedido?” preguntó Jesús. Y ellos le respondieron: “Lo de Jesús de Nazaret, que ante Dios y ante todo el pueblo era un profeta poderoso en hechos y en palabra. Pero los principales sacerdotes y nuestros gobernantes lo entregaron para que lo

condenaran a muerte, y lo crucificaron” (Lc 24:18-20).

Los discípulos le explican que habían esperado que Jesús fuera el que redimiera a Israel (Lc 24:21), pero ahora esa esperanza parece haberse desvanecido. Jesús resucitado, a quien no reconocen y toman por un desconocido, les dice: “¡Ay, insensatos! ¿Cómo es lento su corazón para creer todo lo que los profetas han dicho! ¿Acaso no era necesario que el Cristo padeciera estas cosas, antes de entrar en su gloria?” (Lc 24:25-26). Seguidamente, san Lucas nos dice: “Y partiendo de Moisés, y siguiendo por todos los profetas, comenzó a explicarles todos los pasajes de las Escrituras que hablaban de él” (Lc 24:27).

A pesar de los esfuerzos de Jesús por abrir sus mentes y sus corazones enseñándoles lo que predecían las Escrituras, los discípulos no lo entienden. Aún no saben quién es el desconocido. En consecuencia, no pueden comprender la verdad sobre el Mesías, el que “habría de redimir a Israel” (Lc 24:21).

Lo cierto es que la fe cristiana no es una ideología, ni siquiera una mera colección de enseñanzas religiosas y morales; se trata de un encuentro con una persona. Tal como señaló recientemente el Papa Francisco en una

de sus audiencias semanales:

La evangelización es algo más que una simple transmisión de doctrinas y principios morales. Es, ante todo, testimonio ya que no se puede evangelizar sin dar testimonio del encuentro personal con Jesucristo, el Verbo encarnado en el que se realiza la salvación.

En el relato de la experiencia de los discípulos de Emaús, el encuentro personal con Jesús, esencial para que comprendan lo que ocurrió en Jerusalén, se produce “al partir el pan” (Lc 24:35). No es sino hasta que invitan al forastero a parar en la aldea y comer con ellos, que tienen la profunda experiencia religiosa que les abre la mente y el corazón y les revela al Verbo encarnado, al Señor resucitado.

Al “partir el pan” (la Sagrada Eucaristía) es cuando los discípulos se encuentran con Jesús. No lo reconocen al principio porque son “lentos de corazón” y, por tanto, incapaces de captar la verdad que tienen ante sus ojos. El encuentro eucarístico con Jesús que se produce en la comida que comparten marca una profunda diferencia en sus vidas que los impulsa a dar media vuelta y regresar a Jerusalén para compartir su experiencia con Pedro y el resto de los discípulos.

Eso los convierte en lo que el Papa

Francisco llama “evangelizadores llenos del Espíritu,” y es el don de Cristo al partir el pan lo que los alimenta en su misión de difundir la Buena Nueva, diciendo: “¿Acaso no ardía nuestro corazón mientras nos hablaba en el camino y nos explicaba las Escrituras?” (Lc 24:32)

El Renacimiento Eucarístico Nacional patrocinado por los obispos de los Estados Unidos tiene como finalidad inspirar y preparar al pueblo de Dios para que se forme, sane, se convierta, se unifique y se despliegue en un mundo herido y hambriento a través de un encuentro renovado con Jesús en la Eucaristía, el origen y la cumbre de nuestra fe católica.

Los obispos rezamos para que todos los católicos, pero especialmente aquellos que ya no participan activamente en la Eucaristía dominical, tengan una “Experiencia de Emaús” que toque sus corazones y les haga arder en un santo celo por Cristo y su Iglesia.

Cuando se produzca esta “conversión pastoral y misionera,” nuestros corazones se abrirán y junto con el sucesor de san Pedro, el Papa Francisco, y todos los discípulos de todos los tiempos, proclamaremos con alegría “¡El Señor ha resucitado de verdad y se ha aparecido a Simón!” (Lc 24:34) †

Events Calendar

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

April 21-May 28

RISE UP! Daily Easter Reflections, one- to two-minute video reflections led by Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, receive link via text or email, text "Riseup" to 84576, free. Information: 812-576-4302, clairkeck.asp@gmail.com.

April 21-29

Virtual St. Vincent de Paul Love Your Neighbor 5K Run/Walk, prices for one-three participants: \$39 ages 23 and older, \$25 ages 22 and younger; \$5 discount per person when registering four or more, register by April 29. Information, registration: 317-924-5769, ext. 238, dsweeney@svdpindy.org, svdpindy.org/neighbor.

April 27

Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Benedictine Room, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigrant Services Volunteer Information Session**, 10-11 a.m., refreshments provided. Information,

registration: cutt.ly/CCRIS or Laura Sheehan, lsheehan@archindy.org.

April 29

White River State Park, 801 W. Washington St., Indianapolis. **St. Vincent de Paul Love Your Neighbor 5K Run/Walk**, 9 a.m., prices for one-three participants: \$39 ages 23 and older, \$25 ages 22 and younger; **1-mile Family Fun Run** option \$19 per person; \$5 discount per person when registering four or more; walk-ups welcome. Information, registration: 317-924-5769 ext. 238, dsweeney@svdpindy.org, svdpindy.org/neighbor.

St. Pius X Parish, 7200 Sarto Dr., Indianapolis. **Farney Family Fun Walk and Run**, 9 a.m.-noon, benefitting St. Pius X general fund, \$20 individual, \$50 family. Information, registration: 317-615-0275, cutt.ly/piusfarneyfunrun23.

April 30

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Bluegrass Jam**, 5:30 p.m., free.

Information: franciscansusa.org/bluegrass-jam.

St. Mary Parish, 1331 E. Hunter Robbins Way, Greensburg. **Be My Disciples: How do I know if I'm Answering His Call**, 5 p.m., Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis, presenting, free. Information: 812-663-8427, anavarra@stmarysgreensburg.com.

May-August 2023

Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Rd., Indianapolis. **Summer Youth Camps**, Innovation Through Engineering, Missionary Disciples Institute, theatre, Launch Your Future 21st Century Scholars, SYO Summer Music, athletic camps; age levels, registration deadlines and fees vary. Information: 317-955-6102, camps@marian.edu, cutt.ly/mariancamps23.

May 3

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older,

new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605.

May 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, www.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 5:45 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, mross1@hotmail.com.

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Friday Devotion**, 11:45 a.m., litany, consecration to the Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by noon Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

May 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, confessions 8:10-8:30 a.m. followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Motorcycle Blessing and BBQ**, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., blessing and prayers for motorcyclists' safety, free admission, food available for purchase by Bon Appetit, register by May 1. Registration, information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or spsmw.org/events.

May 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 or 812-535-2952.

May 13

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. parking lot, Indianapolis. **St. Vincent de Paul Stuff A Truck**, 9-11 a.m., accepting clothing, household goods, linens, furniture, bicycles, helmets locks and backpacks. List of items most needed: cutt.ly/ItemsNeeded. Information: dsweeney@svdpindy.org.

May 13, 14

St. Louis Church, 13 E. St. Louis Pl., Batesville. **Bruté Weekend**, Sat. 5:30 p.m., Sun. 6:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., Masses celebrated by Father Daniel Bedel, Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary spiritual director, talks on how the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501, esanders@archindy.org.

May 14

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

Retreats and Programs

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

May 5, June 9

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

May 5, June 16

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$40, includes

room, lunch and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$30, dinner additional \$10. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

May 6

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Pause and Let Your Soul Catch Up**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.,

Cindy Sturgeon presenting, \$75 includes lunch. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

May 9, June 7

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.

May 13

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **A Day with Mary**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Judy Ribar facilitator, registration required, \$75. Information: retreatcommunications@mountsaintfrancis.org or 812-923-8817.

May 19-21

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius**, 6:30 p.m. Fri.-11 a.m. Sun., Franciscans of the Immaculata Father Ignatius Manfredonia facilitating, \$241 per adult, includes meals and accommodations. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, or motheroftheredeemer.com.

May 20

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **"Laudato Si" Spirituality: Challenges**

and Opportunities, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Carolyn Cromer facilitating, \$30, \$45 CEU. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

May 25

Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Peace and Nature Garden Walk**, 7-8:30 p.m., Benedictine Sister Angela Jarboe presenting, free will contribution. Registration: www.benedictinn.org/programs. Information: benedictinn@benedictinn.org, 317-788-7581.

June 3

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Faith and the Arts**, 9 a.m.-noon, Indiana State University Professor Emeritus Dr. Arthur Feinsod presenting, \$25 includes materials and refreshments provided, register by May 31. Information, registration: 812-535-2952, jfrost@spsmw.org or spsmw.org/events.

June 5, 12

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat

House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **The Chosen Season 3: Discussion and Dinner Series**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., sessions one and two of eight sessions (June 19, 26; July 10, 17, 31; Aug. 7), episode viewing and discussion, \$16 per session or eight sessions for \$115, includes dinner, popcorn and refreshments. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

June 7

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

June 8

Virtual Guided Meditation Retreat, 6:30-7:30 p.m., sponsored by Sister of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Providence Sister Corbin Hannah presenter, registration required, free. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org. †

Head of the class



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson speaks to a class of students at St. Louis School in Batesville on March 29 about the National Eucharistic Revival and his vocation story. He then spent an hour answering students' questions, took a tour of the school, visited a few classrooms then shared lunch with area priests. (Submitted photo)

Learn about holiness through prayer at retreat at Saint Meinrad on May 19-21

A retreat called "Contemplative Christianity: God's Call to Holiness" will be held at Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Dr., in St. Meinrad, on May 19-21.

All prayer has a contemplative dimension, the experience of God's presence grounding and supporting our prayer. This retreat will explore prayer as the basis of a conscientious life of service by recognizing Christ present in

the circumstances of ordinary life and responding to the call to charity with hearts overflowing with love.

Benedictine Father Adrian Burke will lead the retreat.

The cost is \$300 for one person per room or \$425 total for two persons attending the retreat and sharing a room.

For more information or to register, go to saintmeinrad.org/retreats or call 812-581-6905 or 800-357-6611. †



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



Living the joy of a life in Christ and witnessing it to others

Pope Francis has been speaking about evangelization in his weekly Wednesday audiences, and he loves to cite what he calls the “magna carta” or foundational document on the subject: Pope St. Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” (Announcing the Good News).

As the Holy Father says:

St. Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation, “Evangelii nuntiandi” (Dec. 8, 1975) is topical. It was written in 1975, but it is as though it had been written yesterday. Evangelization is more than just simple doctrinal and moral transmission. It is, first and foremost, witness—one cannot evangelize without witness—witness of the personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word in which salvation is fulfilled. An indispensable witness because, firstly, the world needs “evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with” (#76). It is not transmitting an ideology or a “doctrine” on God, no. It is transmitting God who is living in me.

Evangelization is not about knocking on doors or proselytizing (selling your religion). It is about witnesses to a person, Jesus Christ. It is about sharing

an experience that is life-changing, an encounter that has caused a dramatic shift in the way we look at the world and ourselves. It is about introducing others to “the God who is living in me.”

Pope Francis quotes his revered predecessor as saying, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (#41). If we want to teach the Gospel, we must live the Gospel. And living the Gospel means being filled with the joy of life in Christ.

What we teach as evangelizers who are living what we believe is what Pope Francis calls “a professed faith,” a faith that is integral to who we are as human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

As the Holy Father says:

It is necessary to remember that witness also includes professed faith, that is, convinced and manifest adherence to God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, who created us out of love, who redeemed us. A faith that transforms us, that transforms our relationships, the criteria and the values that determine our choices. Witness, therefore, cannot be

separated from consistency between what one believes and what one proclaims, and what one lives.

A “convinced and manifest adherence” to our triune God means that we are seen to be passionate about our commitment to Christ. This doesn’t mean that we brag about our Catholic faith in a simplistic or superficial way. Rather, it means that we take it quite seriously and we are eager to share the substance of what we profess as our relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pope asks us to consider three fundamental questions:

- Do you live what you are proclaiming?
- Do you live what you believe?
- Do you preach what you live?

“We cannot be satisfied with easy, pre-packaged answers,” the Holy Father says. “We are called upon to accept the risk, albeit destabilizing, of the search, trusting fully in the action of the Holy Spirit who works in each one of us, driving us ever further: beyond our boundaries, beyond our barriers, beyond our limits, of any type.”

A professed faith is not simply memorized the way we study catechism

questions. To be sure, the information that we learn in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is important to develop a mature, informed and adult faith, but it is not enough. We must make what we learn from the Scriptures and from Church teaching our own. We must live what we believe and preach what we live.

In order for the Church to effectively carry out her evangelizing mission, Pope Francis says:

The Church as such must also begin by evangelizing herself. If the Church does not evangelize herself, she remains a museum piece. Instead, it is by evangelizing herself that she is continually updated. She needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hope, to the new commandment of love.

Evangelization is the work of the Holy Spirit, and “without the Holy Spirit we can only publicize the Church, not evangelize.” We are called to become Spirit-filled evangelizers who proclaim what we live and believe.

(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

Vivir la alegría de una vida en Cristo y dar testimonio a los demás

En sus audiencias semanales de los miércoles, el Papa Francisco ha hablado últimamente sobre la evangelización y le encanta citar lo que él llama la “carta magna” o documento fundacional sobre el tema: la exhortación apostólica del Papa San Pablo VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Anunciar la Buena Nueva).

Tal como nuestro Santo Padre lo plantea:

La exhortación apostólica de San Pablo VI Evangelii nuntiandi (8 de diciembre de 1975) aborda temas de actualidad. Aunque fue escrita en 1975, es como si se hubiera publicado ayer. La evangelización es algo más que una simple transmisión de doctrinas y principios morales. Es, ante todo, testimonio ya que no se puede evangelizar sin dar testimonio del encuentro personal con Jesucristo, el Verbo encarnado en el que se realiza la salvación. Un testimonio indispensable porque, en primer lugar, el mundo necesita “evangelizadores que le hablen de un Dios a quien ellos mismos conocen y tratan familiarmente” (#76). No se trata de transmitir una ideología o una «doctrina» sobre Dios, no. Es transmitir al Dios que vive en mí.

La evangelización no consiste en llamar a las puertas o hacer proselitismo (vender la religión que profesamos), sino

de dar testimonio sobre una persona, Jesucristo. Se trata de compartir una experiencia que nos ha cambiado la vida, un encuentro que ha provocado un cambio drástico en nuestra forma de ver el mundo y a nosotros mismos. Se trata de presentar a los demás “al Dios que vive en mí.”

El Papa Francisco cita las palabras de su venerado predecesor: “El hombre contemporáneo escucha más a gusto a los que dan testimonio que a los que enseñan o si escuchan a los que enseñan, es porque dan testimonio” (#41). Si queremos enseñar el Evangelio, debemos vivirlo, y esto significa llenarse de la alegría de vivir en Cristo.

Lo que enseñamos como evangelizadores que vivimos lo que creemos es lo que el Papa Francisco llama “una fe profesada,” una fe que es parte integral de lo que somos como seres humanos hechos a imagen y semejanza de Dios.

Tal como nuestro Santo Padre lo plantea:

Es necesario recordar que el testimonio incluye también la fe profesada, es decir, la adhesión convencida y manifiesta a Dios Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo, que nos creó por amor, que nos redimió. Una fe que nos transforma, que transforma nuestras

relaciones, los criterios y los valores que determinan nuestras opciones. El testimonio, por tanto, no puede separarse de la coherencia entre lo que se cree y lo que se proclama, y lo que se vive.

Una “adhesión convencida y manifiesta” a nuestro Dios trino significa que se nos nota que nos apasiona nuestro compromiso con Cristo. Esto no significa que alardeemos de nuestra fe católica de forma simplista o superficial; más bien significa que nos lo tomamos muy en serio y que estamos deseosos de compartir la sustancia de lo que profesamos como nuestra relación con Jesucristo.

El Papa nos pide que consideremos tres cuestiones fundamentales:

- ¿Vivimos lo que proclamamos?
- ¿Vivimos lo que creemos?
- ¿Predicamos lo que vivimos?

“No podemos contentarnos con respuestas fáciles y preconfeccionadas,” afirma el Santo Padre. “Estamos llamados a aceptar el riesgo, aunque desestabilizador, de la búsqueda, confiando plenamente en la acción del Espíritu Santo que actúa en cada uno de nosotros, impulsándonos cada vez más lejos: más allá de nuestras fronteras, más allá de nuestras barreras, más allá de nuestros límites, de cualquier tipo.”

Una fe profesada no es un mero ejercicio de memoria como cuando estudiamos las preguntas del catecismo. Sin duda, la información que aprendemos en el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* es importante para una fe madura, informada y adulta, pero no es suficiente. Debemos hacer nuestro lo que aprendemos de las Escrituras y de las enseñanzas de la Iglesia. Debemos vivir lo que creemos y predicar lo que vivimos.

Para que la Iglesia pueda llevar a cabo eficazmente su misión evangelizadora, dice el Papa Francisco:

La Iglesia como tal también debe empezar por evangelizarse a sí misma. Si la Iglesia no se evangeliza a sí misma, es apenas una pieza en un museo. En cambio, es evangelizándose a sí misma como se actualiza continuamente. Necesita escuchar sin cesar aquello en lo que debe creer, sus razones para tener esperanza, el mandamiento nuevo del amor.

La evangelización es obra del Espíritu Santo, y “sin el Espíritu Santo sólo podemos publicitar la Iglesia, no evangelizar.” Estamos llamados a ser evangelizadores llenos del Espíritu que proclaman lo que vivimos y creemos.

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

YOUNG WOMAN

continued from page 1

able to be there in honor of God. It was just like a great big hug, an affirmation. There was so much peace there.”

She especially felt that peace at the shrine in Fatima, built at the place where the Blessed Mother first appeared to three shepherd children—Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia—on May 13, 1917.

“My favorite day was going to Fatima on March 29,” Mastronicola says. “They have a statue of Our Lady that represents the spot where she appeared to the children in a tree. It’s very peaceful and beautiful there.

“You have pilgrims there in the evening praying, going to Mass, lighting candles. To have a place completely dedicated to Our Lady, it’s like a paradise and a taste of what heaven could be like. Just being able to pray all day, not having any worries in the world, and just being able to rest—rest just like a child, like Jacinta, Lucia or Francisco.”

Best of all, being there led her to a deeper connection with the Blessed Mother, a relationship that hasn’t always been meaningful to her.

‘Have you called your mother today?’

“I didn’t always have the best relationship with Our Lady,” she says. “I really didn’t find much fruit in praying the rosary, mainly because it takes a good, long time. And I’m always like, ‘Go, go, go!’”

That close connection started when she was a student at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., when a friend asked her a question that befuddled her at first.

“He would always say, ‘Emily, have you called your mother today?’ I’d say, ‘I just talked to my mother last night.’ And he would say, ‘No, have you talked to your mother?’”

When it sunk in that her friend was talking about the Blessed Mother, Mastronicola did start calling her, slowing down enough to pray the rosary, because another reality sunk in for her—that “Mary is ultimately the connection between her son Jesus and us.”

“That really started to grow in me. Then I had a different friend who went to stay with the sisters of Mother Teresa in Calcutta. He brought me back a rosary that’s a third-degree relic of Mother Teresa made by the same guy who makes rosaries for the sisters.

“Whenever I get scared or I’m nervous about something—or especially during the pandemic—that rosary just gives me a lot of comfort in moments of fear in my life. And it deepened my relationship with [Mary] as someone who is there, even when I’m alone.”

That closeness with the Blessed Mother also grew when she worked part time at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis for a while. There she found comfort at the retreat house’s grotto to Our Lady of Fatima, a scenic setting that captures images of the three children kneeling before the Blessed Mother. Experiencing the shrine in Portugal added extra layers of beauty and peace, drawing Mastronicola even closer to Mary.

“It was really impactful,” she says, seeing her own connection to the three shepherd children. “I feel like the children were very afraid. But once they saw Mary, they were very affirmed, and they were consoled.

“Even though some people thought they were completely crazy, they totally surrendered and trusted Mary. And that’s ultimately what we’re called to do. That’s what I felt like there. After the trip, I just feel a little bit braver.”

Honoring ‘the dignity of the person you are with’

After her advanced scouting trip, she also feels more confident that she will be able to help make the experience of World Youth Day a blessed and memorable journey for the young pilgrims from the archdiocese.

As World Youth Day actually lasts almost a week—Aug. 1-6—there’s a need for someone to coordinate and corral the archdiocesan group attending the event, which will feature a journey to the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima and a closing Mass with Pope Francis in Lisbon.

“This is going to be my first World Youth Day,” Mastronicola says. “I’m going to be excited, having seen a lot of the places ahead of time. I have a working knowledge of the cities, to let them know whether they need to take a bus there or this is going to be a long walk.

“All of our groups for World Youth Day are going to be together. We’re all staying in the same hotel. From the diocesan perspective, we’re just making sure everybody gets abroad, everybody gets to the hotel, and especially on the days we go to Fatima that we keep everybody on the buses. We’ll just be making sure everybody arrives together and goes home together.”

Beyond helping to make the trip as seamless as possible, Mastronicola will also offer some of the insights she has gained from her scouting—insights to help put everyone in the right mindset for the journey. Her advice seems meaningful for people of all ages in our ever-connected, technology-driven culture.

“One thing I would say about Fatima and Portugal in general, the culture is very rooted,” she says. “The people were very present to one another. At dinner, I noticed that people wouldn’t be checking their phones. You’d go walking down the street and people wouldn’t be texting on their phones.

“It was very much a feeling of, ‘I’m going to interact with people. I’m not going to interact with my device and people at the same time.’ So that was really refreshing, just to be able to honor the dignity of the person that you are with.”

Staying open to the possibilities of life and faith

She also noticed that people seemed to place an emphasis on leaving time for relaxing, re-energizing and being open and present to the possibilities of life and faith—and not just to the structure of one’s life.

“When you’re out in the streets, in the churches or in the chapels, people aren’t really in a rush to be anywhere or to do anything. I think about some of our young adults today who are getting up to go to work. [They’re thinking,] ‘I have a social thing after work, I have to be with my family on the weekend, I have my whole entire month scheduled outright, and I know I’m going to church on Sunday, but I only have an hour scheduled for that. And, oh, I have to meal prep.’”

She takes a deep breath and smiles before continuing. “That is not European life. It’s very much in the moment. I hope what people on the pilgrimage can take

more modest growth due to religious switching. Overall, the share of Latinos identifying as Protestants—about 21% of all Hispanic adults—has been relatively stable.

Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, assistant director of the Subcommittee of Hispanic Affairs of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), spoke about the historical context for Latinos in the U.S. leaving the Catholic faith. In decades past, during what Aguilera-Titus described as a time of “aggressive proselytizing” from other denominations that reached out to new Hispanic immigrants, the U.S. bishops responded with the first *Encuentro* (Encounter) process, which helped to formulate a national pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry in 1987.

“That [1987] plan really opened wide the door for thousands of parishes to begin to engage in Hispanic ministry,” he told OSV News. “And today, we have more than 4,500 parishes with a Hispanic Latino ministry, which means that they conduct ministry in Spanish, in an adequate cultural context.”

Aguilera-Titus added that—with more than 16,000 parishes in the United States—the effort to develop and strengthen Hispanic ministry continues. “The more parishes engage in Hispanic Latino ministry, the less necessity Hispanic Latino Catholics will have to go to other churches,” he said.

For Ospino, secularization is the biggest challenge to Catholic Christianity and Protestant Christianity. “The younger generation, particularly, does not feel that organized religion serves a purpose in their lives,” he said.

According to the Pew analysis, disaffiliation from religion is more common among U.S.-born Hispanics: About a quarter of U.S.-born Hispanics (23%) who



A marker in Fatima, Portugal, shows the three shepherd children—Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia—whom the Blessed Mother first appeared to on May 13, 1917. (Submitted photo)

away is to just leave more room for the Spirit to work in their lives, and just leave more room for God to work in their lives and not have everything so structured and planned. Leave room for silence, for prayer, so you can be able to witness the presence of the beauty in these churches, but also in the different people you’re meeting from different countries.

“That’s my biggest hope, for people to surrender their schedules to the Spirit.”

She also offers one more defining hope from a scouting trip that gave her time to stroll by the Atlantic Ocean, savor croissants and jam for breakfast, enjoy fresh seafood for dinner, and relax with a cup of espresso while people-watching.

“I hope that people believe in Jesus, and they believe that the Church is not asleep, that the Church is very much alive.

“I hope people are able to come and just remember their roots, their roots of the Church and the promises of Our Lady coming from the rosary. I also hope they remember the promises in our salvation history—that we are still living and telling the greatest story ever told.”

(Anyone interested in getting more information about the archdiocesan trip to World Youth Day should contact Meagan Morrissey, director of young adult and college campus ministry for the archdiocese, at mmorrissey@archindy.org.) †

LATINO

continued from page 1

while 30% identify as Catholic and 15% identify as Protestant. For comparison, only about one in five Latinos ages 50 and older are unaffiliated, with most older Latinos (56%) in this group born outside the U.S.

The survey also pointed out that U.S.-born Latinos, in general, are nearly twice as likely (39%) than foreign-born Latinos (21%) to identify as religiously unaffiliated, with young Latinos driving the trend.

“What this [Pew study] reveals in many ways is that the Catholic Church somehow was banking on the large growth of immigrant Hispanics who are Catholic,” Ospino said. “Now the question is: Are we ready to face the reality that evangelization in the following decades is going to be largely focused on those children and grandchildren of immigrants from Latin America, the U.S.-born generation?”

Despite the 24% decline in the last decade, Catholics remain the largest religious group among Latinos in the United States, the Pew report said. Latinos also remain about “twice as likely as U.S. adults overall to identify as Catholic and less likely to be Protestant.”

The Pew study also indicated that “Catholicism has seen the greatest losses due to religious switching among Hispanics,” with nearly a quarter of all U.S. Hispanics being former Catholics. The survey the study was based on stated that while about two out of three Hispanic adults (65%) said they were raised Catholic, 43% are currently Catholic.

For every 23 Latinos who have left the Catholic Church, the study said, only one has converted to Catholicism. The report also said Protestantism had seen

say they were raised within a faith are now religiously unaffiliated, compared with 16% of foreign-born Hispanics.

Overall, 52% of Latino immigrants identify as Catholic and 21% are unaffiliated, it said.

These steady shifts could have wide-ranging implications in the future. Hispanic Catholics make up close to 45% of all Catholics in the country. Yet, about 60% of all Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic. So is the case for nearly half of all young adult Catholics (roughly ages 18 to 39), Ospino said.

A recent estimate by the Fifth National *Encuentro* of Hispanic/Latino Ministry research team, which the U.S. bishops support, estimated that in 2021, there were 31 million Hispanic Catholics. Ospino called this a “sign of hope,” but—combined with the current Pew analysis—it is also a call to “shift gears.”

“The U.S. Church as a whole, institutionally, at the pastoral level, at all levels should treasure the gift of the Hispanic community” that still self-identifies as Roman Catholic, Ospino said. “That means immigrants, that means young people, that means U.S.-born as well, but we have to treasure and invest in the Hispanic community,” he said.

Ospino suggested trying to increase the number of young Hispanic children enrolled in Catholic schools and investing in youth ministry and parish-level programs designed to serve the U.S.-born Hispanic population, and the need for outreach and catechesis that is not only in Spanish but also in English and bilingual programs.

“Let’s keep investing in the immigrant Hispanic community, but also redouble the energy and resources bringing the Gospel among those who are U.S.-born and try to retain them. Otherwise, we will lose them,” he said. †

Biography shows how providence guided Cardinal George to Church leadership

By Sean Gallagher

Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago traveled to Indianapolis in 2009 for the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Vincennes, Ind., which later became the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

At the time of its founding in 1834, the Diocese of Vincennes included the eastern third of Illinois in which was located a village on the shores of Lake Michigan called Chicago.

In an interview with *The Criterion* at the time of the anniversary, Cardinal George reflected on the work of providence in the life of the Church, noting that “every once in a while the curtain of ordinary living is drawn back to reveal the greater significance of what our lives are about,” adding that such moments show “how God’s providence guides the Church through the centuries.”

Cardinal George knew the mysterious reality of divine providence well in his own life.

His story, shot through with providence, is ably told in a new biography about him, *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I.* by Michael Heinlein (Our Sunday Visitor 2023).



Michael Heinlein

Born in Chicago in 1937, Cardinal George felt a call to the priesthood while a young student at St. Pascal School. His dream of serving as a priest in the Chicago Archdiocese came to an end, though, when he contracted polio as an eighth-grade student and lost some of the use of his right leg as a result.

Leaders at the archdiocese’s high school seminary made it clear to young Francis George that he could never expect to be ordained.

Providence, it seemed, had turned him away from serving the Church in Chicago. So, Cardinal George enrolled instead at a high school seminary operated in southern Illinois by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate religious order.

Discerning a call to serve the Church in the worldwide missionary congregation, Cardinal George was ordained a priest in 1963. Soon showing his worth, intellect and leadership abilities, Cardinal George rose within a decade to serve as second in authority in the order.

In 1990, he was appointed bishop of Yakima, Wash. Seven years later, providence turned the journey of Cardinal George back to Chicago when St. John Paul II appointed him to serve as the shepherd of the Church there.

Heinlein included a quip by Cardinal George upon his return to St. Pascal Parish to celebrate Mass there shortly after he was installed as archbishop: “I never expected, as one going to Mass here, to stand here as archbishop. So it better be God’s will or else we’re all in trouble.”

Cardinal George could take lightly such a momentous turn in his life because he knew in humility that it wasn’t himself in control of his life, but the loving providence of God.

Heinlein highlights well throughout his book Cardinal George’s humor, intelligence and insight into the persisting relevance of faith in an increasingly secular society.

But Heinlein’s exploration of the role of suffering in Cardinal George’s life and how it helped him minister to others in their own darkness and pain was truly compelling.

He lived with physical hardships most of his life through the ongoing effects of polio and in later bouts with cancer, which eventually led to his death.

The tensions in the Church through the past half century in the implementation of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, and in the effects of contemporary culture on the faithful were other ongoing sources of suffering for Cardinal George.

He helped lead the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the 1970s and early 1980s when many of its members left the order. Heinlein describes well the difficulties Cardinal George faced in leading the frequently fractious presbyterate of the Chicago Archdiocese.

Perhaps the most challenging suffering of all that Cardinal George faced—but one that he never tried to avoid—was the heartrending effect of clergy sexual abuse on victims and the broader Church.

Heinlein documented in detail how Cardinal George, as archbishop of Chicago and later president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, was a leading voice of reform in the Church in the U.S. and at the Holy See in response to revelations of clergy sexual abuse.

Constantly bearing many crosses didn’t embitter Cardinal George, however. Instead, it made him more sympathetic to others whose lives were marked by pain.

Heinlein poignantly recalls how Cardinal George always took time from his weighty responsibilities as the pastoral leader of one of the nation’s largest archdioceses to spend time ministering to the sick, those in need, victims of clergy sexual abuse and priests struggling to live out their calling.



Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago confirms Alisha Webber, a member of Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg, during a May 3, 2009, Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis that celebrated the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Vincennes, Ind., which later became the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Criterion file photo by Sean Gallagher)

God’s providence may have led Cardinal George to positions of high leadership in the Church, but he never lost sight of his vocation in ordained ministry to show forth the mercy and compassion of Christ to others in personal encounters.

Heinlein emphasized how Cardinal George, ordained a priest in the midst of Vatican II, sought to embody the fullness of the council’s teachings in his ordained ministry by keeping Christ at the center of his life and seeking to share the Gospel in ways fit for the culture of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

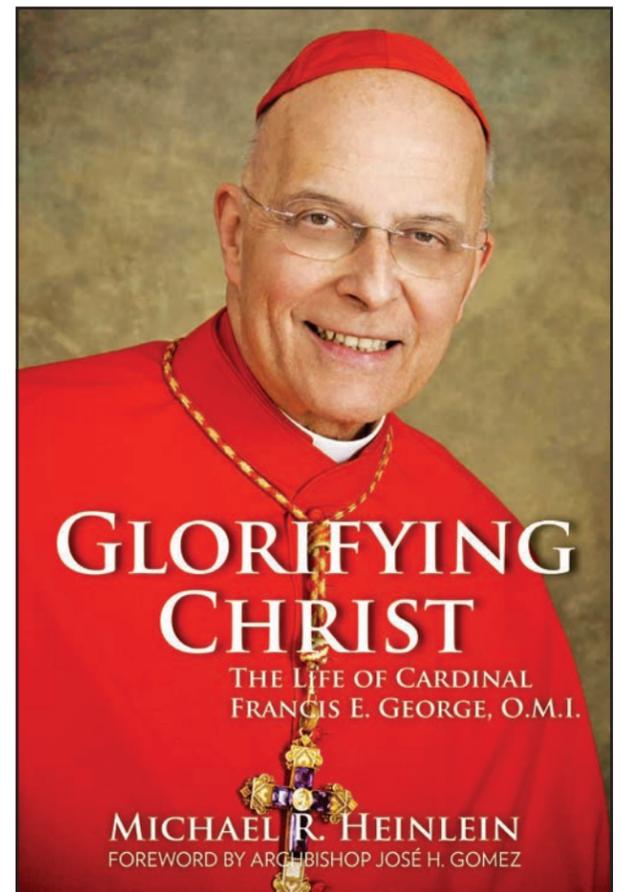
Cardinal George was determined to keep to this course when many around him in the Church retreated to different competing camps of interpretations of the council, putting on themselves any number of labels—conservative, liberal, traditional, progressive—to mark themselves off from others.

Cardinal George strongly rejected this divisive trend and dedicated himself to fostering unity in the Church.

This work was left undone at his death in 2015. In the years that have followed, its importance has arguably only increased.

So, Heinlein’s biography of a leader of the Church in America who sought, as noted in his episcopal motto, to glorify Christ in the Church, has come at an important time, perhaps a providential time.

If reading this detailed and sensitive biography can in some small way advance the work of building up unity in the Church, then the power of providence will be shown by God’s ability to work today through the life of Cardinal George, eight years after God called him to himself. †



Embrace Grace in Greenfield helps moms in need

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.

Embrace Grace

St. Michael Parish
519 Jefferson Blvd.
Greenfield, IN 46140

Weekly meetings in Parish Life Center, Room 2,
from 7-9 p.m.

Contact for moms: Tanya Livingston, 317-498-4239
(call or text), livingston.tanya@yahoo.com

Services: 12-week programs offering emotional, spiritual and material support for parenting moms or moms experiencing an unexpected pregnancy. Themed weekly sessions allow moms to work on their relationship with God through Scripture, journaling and other homework, and to develop a support system with other participants. Each 12-week program culminates with a baby shower for each mom.

Volunteer needs: Organizing, decorating and



providing food and gifts for baby showers; prayer support. Contact Mary Beth Sifferlen, 317-408-5476, mjsifferlen@comcast.net. †

Walking with
Moms in Need



Blessed Mother's life of faith offers compelling witness at Indiana Catholic Women's Conference

By Jennifer Lindberg

More than 400 women participated in this year's Indiana Catholic Women's Conference to find that walking together allowed them to more fully understand the conference's theme: "Holding Mary's hand in Faith and Hope."

The conference at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on March 11 provided a line-up of speakers with inspiring talks on the Seven Sorrows of Mary, miracles of the Miraculous Medal and Catholic teaching regarding abortion and infertility.

"I do better with my faith when I'm with a community," said Olivia Kitchell of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis. "I see so many women here who have done this before me, kids in tow even, and that's inspiring to me."

Kitchell brought her 3-month-old daughter Olivia with her to the conference. "I know that I'm not alone or in a bubble when it comes to practicing my faith."

'Medicine follows natural law'

Dr. Casey Delcoco has seen her practice, Magnificat Medicine in Indianapolis, flourish since it began in 2014.

"You have to ask what God is calling you to be and really pray about it," said Delcoco, a member of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

She is known for helping with crisis pregnancies, saving babies through the medical abortion reversal protocol and helping her patients in all pro-life issues.

She advocates natural family planning, Natural Procreative (NaPro) Technology and adoption for couples struggling with fertility. Delcoco also incorporates St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body teachings into her medical practice.

"Medicine follows natural law," she said. "We don't need to be afraid of the truth or following the Church."

As a family practice physician, Delcoco said she wrote her business plan based on a study at the time that showed that 90% of patients wanted their spiritual needs addressed as well as their health care needs. However, only 30% of doctors were comfortable addressing those needs. In her practice, combining those needs is normal.

"It was inspiring to me to hear how [Delcoco] helps women choose life and not abortion," said Sarah Winterheimer. She and her mother Karen Winterheimer,

both members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, attended the conference to deepen their devotions with women also seeking to grow in their faith.

The power of the Miraculous Medal

The day also included two talks about Mary from Jennifer Waldyke and Sister Mary Augustine McMenemy of the Sisters of the Reparation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus based in Steubenville, Ohio.

Waldyke hosts the "Catholic Mom and Daughter: Real Life, Living the Faith" YouTube channel. She gave attendees an overview of the Miraculous Medal by focusing on the conversion of Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne in the 19th century. His hatred of the Catholic Church increased after his brother became a Jesuit priest. He began wearing the Miraculous Medal as a sort of bet when he spent time in Italy. It led to an appearance of the Virgin Mary, his conversion and his becoming a priest as well.

Understand Mary 'through her sorrows'

Sister Mary Augustine of the Sisters of Reparation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus guided the women through an in-depth meditation on the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

"She wants to take you into her arms," said Sister Mary Augustine. "We need to understand Mary, and one way to do that is through her sorrows. She stepped onto the path of reparation and suffering out of love for each of us."

Uniting our sorrows with the Blessed Mother has great efficacy, she said.

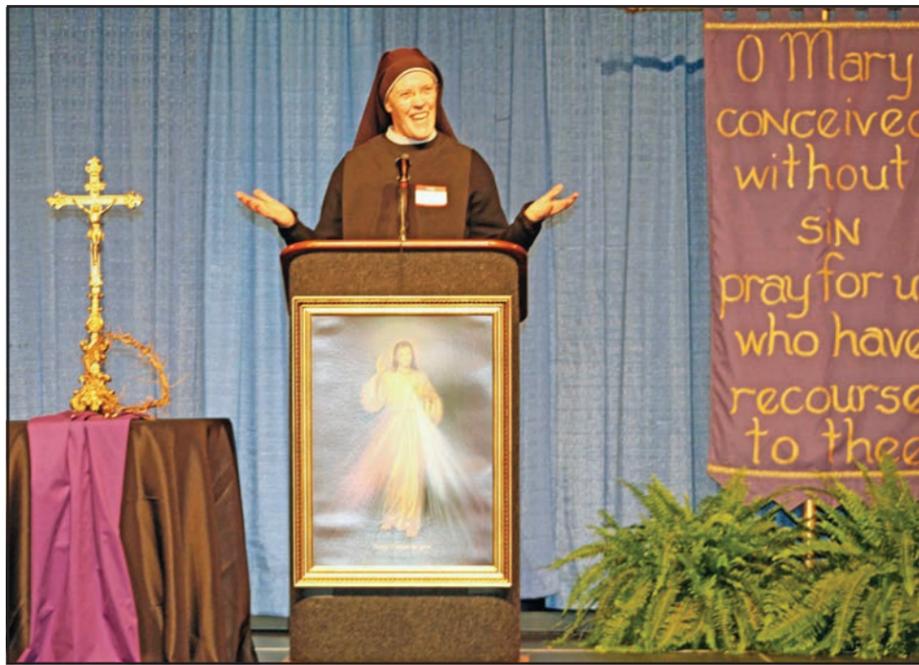
"There are griefs that lie too deep for tears in a mother's broken heart," said Sister Mary Augustine.

Those griefs include the indignities that women experience through abuse and pornography, watching a child die, pleading for a lost child to come back to the Catholic faith and other sufferings that can be united with Mary, she said.

Sister Mary Augustine's meditation outlined the sins and virtues present in each of the Seven Sorrows of Mary:

- The Prophecy of Simeon: Mary is told that she will suffer with a sword piercing her heart. This sorrow reveals the sin of wrath, which is countered by the virtue of forgiveness.

- The Flight into Egypt: Just after the magi presented the Christ child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, St. Joseph was told in a dream to take



Sister Mary Augustine McMenemy, a member of the Sisters of Reparation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Steubenville, Ohio, speaks at the Indiana Catholic Women's Conference on March 11 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. (Photos by Jennifer Lindberg)

Jesus and Mary to Egypt to protect them from the wrath of King Herod. This sorrow represents the sin of envy, which is countered by the virtue of gratitude. It was a 300-mile journey that took 30 days on foot through a land full of robbers and little water.

"Mary understands your grief if you ever had to fear for your safety or the safety of your children," said Sister Mary Augustine.

- The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple: This was the first time Mary did not know where Jesus was and went searching for him. This sorrow represents the sin of sloth—or lack of hope—which is countered by the virtue of persistence, as well as practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

This sorrow includes losing someone to drugs, alcohol, depression or a child blaming you for their problems.

The sorrow shows the sin of sloth and how sloth begets gossip, said Sister Mary Augustine.

Mary and Joseph were probably blamed for losing Jesus, or people thought they were bad parents. It also shows how people want to look at other people's lives instead of their own, she said.

"Sloth is the opposite way of how Mary lived her life," said Sister Mary Augustine. "She made haste to her cousin Elizabeth. She helped when the wine ran out at Cana. We must take ownership of our own lives and who we are."

- Mary meets Jesus on the Way of the Cross: This sorrow reflects on the sin of lust, which leads to treating "other people like objects—it hardens our hearts [and] causes violence," Sister Mary Augustine said. This sin is countered by the virtue of chastity.

"Lust treats other people like objects," she said. "It hardens our hearts. It causes violence."

The way to overcome this is modesty. "Our role as women is to nurture our children and show that there is a holy expression of love for the world," she said.

- The Crucifixion: Sister Mary Augustine said that when Mary stood at the foot of the cross, watching Christ die, the Blessed Mother saw what pride can do. The opposing virtue is humility. God is rebuked. He will not be served, just as when the angels rebelled in heaven. The sin of pride encompasses indifference, ridicule, being pompous, and not being able to take any criticism, said Sister Mary Augustine.

"Don't be afraid to fail," she said. "Don't be afraid to be last. It's OK if someone is better than you. And be willing to ask for forgiveness."

- Jesus is taken down from the Cross: Sister Mary Augustine said this sorrow represents the sin of gluttony in that Christ used the opposing virtue of



Catholic composer and songwriter Francesca Larosa, former music director of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, leads women in songs during the Indiana Catholic Women's Conference on March 11.

temperance to empty himself. Mary held the dead Christ in her arms, who emptied himself of everything; yet we cannot deny ourselves even simple pleasures. This can lead to over consumption of food, alcohol and drugs, she said.

"Temperance is how we repair this," she said.

- Jesus is laid in the Tomb: This sorrow is a meditation on the sin of greed and its opposing virtue of generosity, said Sister Mary Augustine. Mary had to rely on the generosity of another to provide Christ's tomb. Jesus could not have the traditional burial because he was considered a criminal. Mary had to borrow a burial place for him. It is the sin of greed represented in this sorrow.

"One way to make reparation for this is generosity and to live simply," she said.

Walking in faith

At the end of the day, the soothing music of Catholic composer Francesca Larosa helped the women process all they learned. Larosa, the former music director at St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, sang her newest song, "Let Me Hear Your Voice," about St. Teresa of Avila's writings.

Her song, using the words of the saint, summed up a conference day meant to strengthen the women's faith life as she sang: "You are God's beloved. You are not forsaken. You are not alone."

(Jennifer Lindberg is a freelance writer and a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.) †



In the foreground, Olivia Kitchell of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis holds her daughter Olivia during the Indiana Catholic Women's Conference on March 11 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. Also pictured are Mary Dorhauer of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, right, and Emma LaMar of St. Mary Parish in Rushville.

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Eucharistic revival a time to renew love for Christ in Blessed Sacrament

(OSV News)—The Eucharist is the summit of our faith, in which the entire story of our salvation is made real in a miraculous and powerful way.

St. Thomas Aquinas in his liturgical text for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (traditionally called *Corpus Christi*) calls the Eucharist the “sacred banquet, in which Christ is received; the memory of his passion is renewed; the mind is filled with grace; and a pledge of future glory is given unto us.”

Yet how often do we take time to reflect on this priceless gift? Even in Mass, we can become distracted and what is miraculous and precious becomes routine.

The three-year National Eucharistic Revival can be an opportunity for reflection and for deepening our love for what God has given us—his Son, Jesus, whom we receive into our bodies and souls.

The culminating event of the revival will be the National Eucharistic Congress on July 17-21, 2024, in Indianapolis.

During the revival, we can make a point to focus on the Eucharist—in the Mass, in our reading, in our faith formation classes and in the quiet of our own hearts. We can use this time well to pay closer attention to this gift.

At every Mass, we are witnesses to a miracle. The Eucharist is not a symbol of our Lord. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, bread and wine actually become the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. At the altar, he truly comes to us, again and again, in his Real Presence.

The bishops at the Second Vatican Council taught that Christ himself instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper as a “memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (“*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” #47).

The Eucharist calls us to make present here and now with the help of God’s grace Christ’s passion and death on the cross, the sacrifice in which he won for us our salvation and eternity with the Father. It also is a tremendous sign of our unity as believers.

We call it holy Communion because when we approach the altar, we are acknowledging our unity with Christ, his Church, and one another. Christ, through our participation in the Eucharist, makes this communion a living reality.

Yet these words can only partially express a mystery that is beyond words: “If you understood him, it would not be God,” wrote St. Augustine. So, too, with the Eucharist.

During the National Eucharistic Revival, we can plumb this mystery more and more deeply—not just when we come together for Mass, but in every situation of life.

The Church asks all of us to examine our consciences to make sure we are truly prepared to receive Jesus:

- Are we in what has been traditionally called a “state of grace,” that is, not aware of any unconfessed grave sin? If we are not in a state of grace, then the Church asks us, for



Father Patrick Beidelman elevates the Eucharist during a June 19, 2022, Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis to start the National Eucharistic Revival in the archdiocese. Concelebrating the Mass are Fathers Jude Meril Sahayam, center, and Minh Quang Duong. (Criterion file Photo by Sean Gallagher)

our own good, to receive God’s mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of penance before receiving Communion.

- Have we observed the one-hour fast from food and drink (except for water and medicine) before receiving Our Lord?

- Do we believe in the Real Presence? Do we believe that Christ is truly present, body and blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist?

- Are we faithful to the moral teachings of the Church in our personal and public lives?

There are many ways that the Church can celebrate the National Eucharistic Revival:

- **Corpus Christi processions**—The National Eucharistic Revival began on the feast of *Corpus Christi* in the United States on June 19, 2022.

The feast of *Corpus Christi* began in 1246 in France and became a feast for the entire Western Church only 18 years later. It was itself meant to be a celebration of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

In this centuries-old Catholic tradition, the faithful take part in a procession to honor the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, singing eucharistic hymns as they process in a church or an outdoor public setting as a testimony of their faith.

- **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**—Parishes often celebrate exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. During exposition, Catholics spend time praying and worshipping the Lord in the Eucharist while a host is exposed on an altar, ordinarily displayed in a special brass receptacle called a monstrance.

- **Adult Faith Formation**—Throughout the revival, parishes around the country are offering programs and other types of study on the

Eucharist. Catholics are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to join with others in deepening their faith in and understanding of the Eucharist.

- **At Mass**—When we recognize that Jesus himself is present in the Eucharist, we come to realize that participation every week at Sunday Mass (or Saturday vigil Mass) is more than an obligation. It is a privilege.

When you are in the presence of the consecrated host, pray with heartfelt sincerity, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” With St. Thomas, who touched the wounds of the Lord, simply say, “My Lord and my God.”

- **Make a spiritual communion**—When we desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist but are unable to do so, we may make what is traditionally called a “spiritual communion.”

Wherever we may be, we need only ask the Lord to come into our hearts and renew his life within us. We can then spend a few moments in prayer and praise and resolve to receive Communion as soon as possible.

- **Prayer before a tabernacle**—Jesus is present in the hosts reserved in a tabernacle. We can take time out regularly to visit a church and talk to him there. Make it a “holy hour.”

- **Prayer in an adoration chapel**—Many parishes provide a place where the Blessed Sacrament remains exposed for prayer and adoration every day—sometimes even around the clock in a perpetual adoration chapel.

This arrangement provides an excellent and ongoing opportunity to draw close to Jesus in his eucharistic presence outside of Mass. If possible, sign up for a regular time to visit the church or chapel.

- **Cultivating an attitude of gratitude**—Finally, keep in mind that the Greek word that is the root of our word Eucharist literally means “thanksgiving.” In holy Communion, as Jesus gives himself to us, we give ourselves to him as well in gratitude. His sacrifice on the cross—presented on the altar—takes away the sins of the world and makes possible for us a life of intimate union with God.

The National Eucharistic Revival is still only in its first of three years. This is a wonderful time for Catholics across the U.S. to grow in a deeper love for Christ in the Eucharist and allow him through his presence in it to transform us as individuals and as a Church in our country.

(For more information on the National Eucharistic Revival, visit www.eucharisticrevival.org. To learn more about the National Eucharistic Congress, including how to purchase tickets for it, visit www.eucharisticcongress.org. For information on the eucharistic revival in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit eucharisticrevivalindy.org.) †



Father Michael Keucher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville, carries a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament at the head of a eucharistic procession on June 23, 2019, at the Batesville Deanery faith community. The procession ended with the blessing of the Divine Mercy Chapel, a perpetual adoration chapel at the parish. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Anita Bardo

Workshop will share how to spread the good news

“... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Pt 3:15).



In the archdiocesan Office of Evangelization, we are here to help give you the opportunity to share and be a witness to one another by affording you the resources to take steps to build upon your commitment to Christ.

Evangelization should become more important in our faith communities by being able to share the Gospel and our own experiences, our own stories with one another, which leads to our own spiritual growth.

We are all called to be disciples of Christ. We are called to follow Jesus' authority, and that is to go and “make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:19).

In some aspects of our lives, we find ourselves somewhat lost in our faith, a faith of truly not understanding where we fit in, the direction where God may

be leading us. By accompanying one another in our faith, we can find solace in knowing that we can encounter God together. We can share our story with one another; this is one of the greatest resources for evangelizing.

Our upcoming workshop, Evangelization 101, is a basic training designed to reach targeted audiences in our parish territories: the unchurched; those who have been alienated and those who are practicing the faith.

The workshop is being hosted by St. Agnes Parish, 1008 McLary Road, in Nashville, and being sponsored by the Office of Evangelization. It is from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 29, and includes lunch. A modest fee will be assessed to your parish, or scholarships are available. Visit [Evangelization101Workshop.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/evangelization101workshop) to register.

To understand more fully what the day will entail, there are two main paths that would lead someone to attend.

First path: Your parish has decided to have an evangelization team and you are coming with support of your pastor, seeking a definite plan to take back and put into action.

Second path: You're not sure what an evangelization team is, but you are passionate about evangelization and want to learn more about the role such a team could play in helping your parish grow by God's grace.

The training is about starting an evangelization team. You don't have to know all the answers; it's an opportunity to find out more about how you can try to start your team. If you sign up today, you'll learn more. If you're not sure, sign up and come learn more by participating in the workshop.

Jesus was led by the Spirit of God to a life of preaching and of service. We also have that same Spirit to share, with others.

The Office of Evangelization is excited about hosting a day-long, engaging workshop on the tools you'll need to guide, teach and inspire. Reserve your seat at the table, and invite and encourage others to do the same.

For more information, call 317-236-1466.

(Anita Bardo is the coordinator of evangelization and discipleship in the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis. She can be reached at abardo@archindy.org.) †

Senior Standing/Lisa Hendey

Traveling while older: Patience and wisdom go with us

I write this having freshly returned from a journey of a lifetime, spent in the company of storytellers. We embarked



with a purpose: to hear and share stories of hope and faith. Our destination was the Dominican Republic, specifically its rocky coasts, verdant hills and ample sugar cane fields. Traveling with ministry professionals from Cross Catholic

Outreach, we witnessed firsthand their work with the poorest of the poor.

Strangely, the older I get, the more I find myself eager to pack my bags and explore the world. My work has carried me to Africa, Asia, Australia and South America. These days, I prefer mission trips that carry me directly into the lives and homes of new friends just waiting to be met.

When I pour over the stamps in my passport, it's not the museums or restaurants I remember most. Don't get me wrong: I love a beautiful beach or a tourist attraction. But what captures my heart are the memories of the people I meet along the way. They've fundamentally changed the way I experience the world and how I hope to travel in the years I have ahead of me.

On my way home, I sat next to a couple around my age who were just returning home from a week in the Caribbean. As they described their trip, I recognized commonalities between our experiences. Their favorite moments were spent in the company of locals, savoring the sights, sounds and smells of the “real” place they were visiting. As they reminisced, my mind flashed to the pack of fraternity brothers who had been in front of me in the customs line and likely had a very different plan for their spring break. Same destination. Different agendas.

We seniors travel with purpose.

We embark on pilgrimages in the company of our faith families to pray in sacred spaces.

We remember eras of the past and the lessons their monuments, battlefields and memorials teach us.

We journey to see and sometimes minister to our loved ones.

We retrace our roots.

We take to the road to marvel at the natural world around us, and dream of adventures yet to come.

I carried two recent stories of traveling seniors in my heart when I embarked for Santo Domingo.

First was an account about St. Teresa of Calcutta, who in 1989 finally received a travel visa to return to her native Albania after more than 60 years of exile away from home and family. She has become my new traveling companion and intercessor for travel-related delays.

Second was *In Viaggio*, a recent film documenting Pope Francis' 37 trips visiting 53 countries during the first nine years of his pontificate. The filmmakers intimately captured the pontiff's human connections in these places. People matter.

Traveling as we age challenges yet enlivens. For some of us, the way is slow and burdensome. Yet we endure the hardships with a sense of patience. We know the reward that awaits us when we arrive at our destination will be worth the trials.

Unpacking from this most recent trip involves more than simply laundering my clothes. There's a stubborn stain I picked up from the afternoon I spent learning to make cement forms for simple, storm-

See RUPPRECHT, page 14

See HENDEY, page 14

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Common humanity of faith traditions is on display in spring

Spring: the season of greening, colors and growing warmth.
Spring: the time of year for a variety of religious festivals or seasons.



Holi (Hindu) and *Vesak* (Buddhist) are two festivals of note.

Holi celebrates with bright colors. Its focus is playful (daubing bright colors of liquid or powder upon a friend or neighbor). It is also serious, celebrating divine love and spring.

Vesak celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha.

Both *Holi* and *Vesak* are one day and very important religious festivals.

The three Abrahamic faiths—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—celebrate holy seasons in spring. This year, there was a rare overlap in the worship calendars of the three faiths.

Western Christians began the Easter season on April 9. It stretches until the feast of Pentecost on May 28.

Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrated Easter on April 16. The season stretches from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. It is known as *Pentecostarion*.

The first full day Passover was on April 6. It ended on April 12. Such proximity to Western and Eastern Christian Easter happens on occasion.

Jewish Pentecost is 49 days (seven weeks) after the first day of Passover.

Ramadan began on March 22 and ends on April 20. Like Passover for Jews, it is a movable feast based on a lunar calendar. For Easter and Passover to straddle Ramadan is rare.

There are some common threads among these festivals and seasons.

The first is obvious: Each occurs in and is related to the season of spring.

The second thread: Each speaks of life or new life.

The third thread: Each speaks to a release from imposed bondage.

The thread of life: lives saved at the Red Sea experience (Judaism). New life after physical death—resurrection

(Christianity). One's life dedicated to the pillar of Ramadan fasting (Islam). The joy of life in playful colors and the rising from the earth of vegetation (Hinduism). And life blossoming into nirvana (Buddhism).

The thread of release from bondage: from of sin and death (Christianity), from imposed slavery and cruel injustice (Judaism), from human passions trying to dominate one's mind and spirit (Islam), and from physical concerns to spiritual enlightenment (Buddhism).

These festivals and seasons are very important. It is good to recognize them and rejoice in their meaning for those who celebrate them.

Nevertheless, they are not equal in their importance. For among these religious celebrations, only one has a universal impact: the paschal mystery.

The salvation won by Christ is a gift for all humanity. As our liturgy states, “Christ died, once for all, for the forgiveness of sins.” No human being is excluded from the effect.

While Judaism names Jesus Christ as a prophet and Islam sees Jesus Christ as the prophet who will bring to fruition the end times, these Abrahamic faiths do not believe him to be “Son of God,” “Messiah” or “Savior.”

Both Hinduism and Buddhism sprang up without knowledge of Jesus Christ. He does not factor into their belief systems.

This Easter season, we Catholic Christians embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior. We profess that he came for the salvation of all.

Our joy is not for just ourselves, but for how God mysteriously works out the salvation of all.

We prayed in our Good Friday intercessions (see my March column) for both believers and non-believers.

Let us embrace the common humanity of all religious people. Let us see in their religious festivals and seasons common threads that invite understanding and respect.

And while we are doing so, let us sing out: Alleluia!

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. He is also the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Guest Column/Sr. Hosea Rupprecht, E.S.P.

A ‘normalized’ culture needs a ‘normalized’ Christianity

Do you ever air quote the word “normal” in a conversation? I do, because what is “normal” seems to be something different for everyone.



The definition of the word changes with shifts in society. Prevailing attitudes toward gender identity, casual sex, abortion and same-sex marriage are among those things that have become more “normalized”—more culturally acceptable—in recent years.

These attitudes often filter into society through film, television, music and social media. Because they're “normal,”

right? Well, maybe for some, but not for everyone.

Does the entertainment media's presentation of what is “normal” match your experience? There's a saying in media literacy education: “Media normalize behavior.” In other words, media stories can influence the way we perceive what is or is not socially acceptable, or what is or is not considered “normal.”

For example, in many shows or films, when a couple goes out on a date they end up in bed together. If life were like TV, that would be considered “normal” and acceptable. Presenting this kind of behavior constantly in shows could influence how kids and teens, but also

adults, think of sexuality in real-life relationships.

For Catholics, though, the Church teaches that the gift of intimacy through sexual relations is exclusive to marriage between one man and one woman. Do casual attitudes toward sex depicted in film, TV and on social media make it seem more acceptable? Yes. Does that mean it *is* acceptable? Indeed, no.

When a good friend of mine was engaged, both she and her fiancé—as practicing Catholics—were following the teachings of the Church. She shared some frustration she was experiencing, saying, “Why does everyone assume we're either living together or sleeping

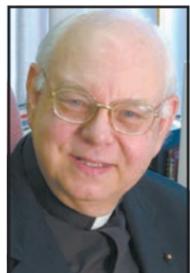
Third Sunday of Easter/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 23, 2023

- Acts 2:14, 22-33
- 1 Peter 1:17-21
- Luke 24:13-35

Again, as is usual for the Easter season, the Acts of the Apostles provides the first reading for Mass this weekend.



This reading recalls an event like several others in Acts. St. Peter preached in the name of all the 11 surviving Apostles. His remarks recorded in this passage were brief and crisp.

The term used by biblical scholars is that Peter's message was kerygmatic, drawing from *kerygma*, the Greek word for "message." It means that Peter's words contained the basic information about Jesus and God's plan of salvation.

Despite the small number of Christians at the time and the fact that the Jewish culture and the effects of Roman domination were overwhelming, the Apostles were still determined to speak aloud about Jesus.

Their resolve revealed their trust and faith in Jesus as Savior and Son of God. The world desperately needed Jesus. Only Jesus could fill what the world needs—then and now. Remembering last weekend's first reading that described both the early Church's love for the Lord and its outreach to the troubled and needy, this reading shows that the first followers of Christ saw informing others about the Redeemer as a loving service.

Note also, here as elsewhere in Acts, Peter alone spoke on behalf of the Apostles, even when they were present.

The First Epistle of St. Peter supplies the next reading. Scholars debate the authorship of this epistle. Was Peter the author? Or was someone writing in Peter's name the author, or was the author presenting ideas that had come from Peter?

In any case, the reading shows how totally committed to Jesus the Savior the early Christians were, and how aware they were that salvation had come through the Lord's death and resurrection.

The last reading, from St. Luke's Gospel, is the powerful and lovely story of the risen Lord's walk to Emmaus with two disciples. The Emmaus narrative appears only in Luke. It is one of the most renowned and beloved pieces in the New Testament.

Important in its message is the fact that, regardless of their devotion to Jesus, the disciples still do not understand everything. They are limited human beings, bewildered by the events of the Lord's death and resurrection. They need Jesus to understand the deep meaning and purpose of all that they had seen.

Secondly, Jesus meets this need. He teaches them. Thirdly, Jesus is with them. Finally, as they share a meal, with its eucharistic overtones, Jesus is the central figure presiding as they "break the bread" (Lk 24:35). The connection with the Eucharist is too strong to overlook.

Reflection

Beginning with the Scripture readings for Easter itself and continuing this weekend, the Church expresses to us forcefully and clearly its unflinching belief that after his crucifixion and death the Lord Jesus rose to new life.

With equal vigor and faith, it also insists that Jesus did not rise and then disappear. Instead, the Lord was with the Apostles, showing to Thomas his wounds and blessing those who believe. He was alive, present and still teaching during the journey to Emmaus. The supper at Emmaus was the culmination of the two disciples' time with Jesus.

The use of the technique of *kerygma* gives us the basic facts of the Lord's identity and mission. The experience of the Apostles shows us that they literally knew the risen Christ. We turn to them to know Jesus ourselves.

Knowing Jesus is more than possessing data. It confronts us with the obligation to follow Jesus if we know him.

By our discipleship, we extend Christ to those whom we meet. †

Daily Readings

Monday, April 24

St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, priest and martyr
Acts 6:8-15
Psalm 119:23-24, 26-27, 29-30
John 6:22-29

Tuesday, April 25

St. Mark, Evangelist
1 Peter 5:5b-14
Psalm 89:2-3, 6-7, 16-17
Mark 16:15-20

Wednesday, April 26

Acts 8:1b-8
Psalm 66:1-3a, 4-7a
John 6:35-40

Thursday, April 27

Acts 8:26-40
Psalm 66:8-9, 16-17, 20
John 6:44-51

Friday, April 28

St. Peter Chanel, priest and martyr
St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, priest
Acts 9:1-20
Psalm 117:1-2
John 6:52-59

Saturday, April 29

St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor of the Church
Acts 9:31-42
Psalm 116:12-17
John 6:60-69

Sunday, April 30

Fourth Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 23:1-6
1 Peter 2:20b-25
John 10:1-10

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

No clear Church teaching on status of souls of the dead raised by Jesus

Regarding the people Jesus raised from the dead, where were their souls while they were dead? (Location withheld)



Among the many miracles Jesus performed as part of his public ministry, some of the most remarkable include his raising several recently-deceased people from the dead.

In the Gospels, we read of the raising of Jairus' young daughter (see Mt 9:18-26; Mk 5:21-43; and Lk 8:40-56) and the only son of a widow in the city of Nain (Lk 7:11-17). Perhaps most notably, chapter 11 of St. John's Gospel recounts the raising of Jesus' friend Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary.

While each of these were indeed truly raised from the dead in a miraculous way, it would be more appropriate to speak of their "revival" rather than their "resurrection."

That is, Jairus' daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus would all eventually die a second time—and definitively. In contrast to this, when Jesus was resurrected in the proper sense of the term, he moved completely beyond death and could never die again (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #646).

To your question, it's notable that in accounts of Jesus raising these people from the dead, the Gospels give us plenty of what we might call human interest details.

Jesus tells Jairus to give his newly-raised daughter something to eat (Lk 8:55). Jesus wept upon hearing of his friend Lazarus' death (Jn 11:35). But they do not tell us clearly where these people's spirits went or what was experienced in death.

Likewise, as far as I have been able to find, the Church doesn't give us a direct, specific answer to your question. But we may take into account the Church's traditional understanding of what happened on Holy Saturday, namely that Jesus descended into "hell" (understood in this sense as simply the underworld or the realm of the dead, rather than a freely-chosen state of separation from God).

He did this to triumphally open the gates of heaven to all of God's faithful, who were awaiting their redemption from his sacrifice on the cross.

The Office of Readings from the Liturgy of the Hours for Holy Saturday includes an ancient homily which contains an imaginative meditation on Jesus' descent to the dead during the time between his death and resurrection:

"He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. ... At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: 'My Lord be with you all.' Christ answered him: 'And with your spirit.' He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' ... 'Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.'"

So, if we wish to speculate a little, my own guess is that Lazarus and the others would have—for however brief a time—shared in the hope and longing of all the other souls of the dead who were awaiting their salvation in Christ.

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

My Journey to God

Signs and Wonders

By Gayle Schrank

The meaning of your life
Was set in motion long ago
Take time to pay attention
Signs and wonders you will know
The God of all creation
Pours forth splendors for you to see
Honor the gifts you have been given
Find your purpose and be set free
Whatever it is you were made for
Will increase your faith, hope and love
Discover the gifts that dwell within you
Receive the miracles that come from above
God's peace is waiting to be awakened
It dwells deep within all hearts
May each of us find Christ's heartbeat of joy
All goodness it is sure to impart

(Gayle Schrank is a member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton. Photo: A butterfly is pictured with orange flowers.) (OSV News photo/Linda Rusinko, courtesy Pixabay)



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.

BEAM, Mary Lee, 89, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, March 28. Mother of Nancy Christian, Mary Motter and Allan Beam. Grandmother of two.

BRAUN, Gloria J., 65, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, March 26. Sister of Cynthia Banet, Donna Gibson, Deborah Pryor, Daniel and Timothy Braun. Aunt and great-aunt of several.

BROADUS, Emilia, 90, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, March 28. Mother of Anna Sellers, Alberto, Bernard, Carmelo and Ciro Broadus. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 17.

DAUBY, Alene, 81, St. Paul, Tell City, April 2. Mother of Amy Ramsey, Cindy, Jim, Kevin and Neil Dauby. Sister of Phyllis Bender. Grandmother of six.

ENDRIS, Janet, 82, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, March 28. Wife of Mike Endris. Mother of Carla Brock, Paula Ikerd, Wendy Scherschel and Tom Endris. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 13. Great-great-grandmother of two.

GALLE, Eugene J., 93, Holy Family, Oldenburg, April 6. Father of Sandi Rohde, Cindy Wanstrath, John, Michael, Richard, Ronald and Steven Galle. Brother of Margie Rauch and Shirley Robbins. Grandfather of 31. Great-grandfather of four.

GOSS, Carol A., 77, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, April 1. Wife of Fred Goss. Mother of Doug, Gregg, Mark and Rick Goss. Sister of Joe Goebel. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of three.

Good Friday in Nicaragua



People gather for a Good Friday procession on April 7 outside the Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua, Nicaragua, as the government of dictator Daniel Ortega banned Holy Week street processions on city streets this year due to unspecified security concerns. Parishes in Nicaragua conducted traditional *Via Crucis* processions on church grounds or inside churches. (OSV News photo/Reuters)

ITTENBACH, John, 79, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, April 2. Husband of Janet Ittenbach. Father of Lynne Hammond. Brother of Cathy Hurcomb, Dave, Dennis, Jim and Walter Ittenbach.

KOOPMAN, Raymond G., 91, St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County, April 9. Husband of Shirley Koopman. Father of Mary Jennings, Michelle Johnson, Dr. Anton, Bruce and Glenn Koopman. Brother of Charles and Norbert Koopman. Grandfather of 18. Great-grandfather of 16.

LAURENZANA, Steven T., 51, Christ the King, Indianapolis, April 3. Husband of Bobbi-jo Purkiss. Father of Lilly-Mae and Landon Laurenzana. Stepfather of Marissa and Alex Garrod. Son of Anthony and Elinor-Sue Laurenzana. Brother of Jennifer Eve.

LOESCH, Linda S., 72, St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County, April 3. Wife of John Loesch. Mother of Aaron and Andrew Loesch. Sister of Janet Grantz, Marguerite Hartlage, Michelle Mires and Jim Stilller. Grandmother of four.

MARLEY, Jack, 88, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, April 5. Father of Michelle Malina, Kent and Kirk Marley. Grandfather of seven.

MORITZ, John D., 94, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora, March 28. Husband of Myrna Moritz. Father of Rahe Bergman, Clair Magnesio, Leslie and John Moritz III. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of three.

NEAFUS, Barbara L., 89, St. Joseph, Corydon, April 4. Mother of Jimmy, Jr., and Kevin Neafus. Grandmother of four. Great-great-grandmother of seven.

NORRIS, Barbara, 85, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, April 6. Wife of Dale Norris. Mother of Beth Brittenham, Kim Chaplin, Sherri Spotts and Mike Norris. Sister of Jane Marlatt. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of eight. Great-great-grandmother of one.

PETTINGER, Roita M., 75, St. Mary, North Vernon, April 9. Wife of Robert Pettinger. Mother of Annette Jobe and Craig Pettinger. Sister of Anthony and William Eaken. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of one.

PURDY, William, 95, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, March 23. Father of Teresa Davis, Terry and Tony Purdy. Brother of Vivian McKee. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of five.

PUTNICK, Richard C., 69, St. Michael, Brookville, April 3. Husband of Melissa Putnick. Father of Kathryn and Adam Putnick. Grandfather of one.

SCHULER, Jerome, 89, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, March 7. Father of Stephanie Rauck, Michelle Schuler and

Melanie Wilkinson. Brother of Marilyn Zurchmeide. Grandfather of six.

STOREY, Mary E., 93, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, March 30. Mother of Peggy Obergfell, Joe, Mark and Matt Storey. Grandmother of 18. Great-grandmother of 43. Great-great-grandmother of six.

TUCKER, Joey R., 83, St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County, April 5. Father of Eric and Greg Tucker. Brother of Suzanne Blunk. Grandfather of four. †

RUPPRECHT

continued from page 12

together already? We're not." Cohabitation and sex before marriage happens a lot in entertainment media, but that doesn't mean everyone's doing it or that it's acceptable for followers of Christ.

There's a psychological phrase that has been getting attention recently: "social contagion." It means that people can pick up on behaviors or emotions from crowds or networks of people around them, sometimes all-unawares. For example, laughing at a movie might be an emotional response, just because the people around you are laughing. An example of behavioral contagion had store shelves devoid of toilet paper at the beginning of the pandemic.

If the influences around us are "socially contagious," can we become "contaminated" by the ideas and messages we let into our minds through the media we experience? Sadly, yes, and young people are particularly susceptible.

Have no doubt about it: social influences are strong. I know of a Catholic school that experienced a group of seventh-grade girls who considered transitioning genders together, which resulted in the pastor and principal talking with the girls and their families. A February 2022 article by Anastasia Hanonick in *The University News* out of St. Louis University confirms that 60-80% of American college students have experienced a "hook-up" (sex without emotional connection) in some way. There's

no denying that social influence contributes to these troubling statistics.

Some influences are good. Parents influencing children in learning to live their faith is a good thing, as is the Church influencing Christians to develop and deepen relationships with God. The question is: how can we counteract influences that are contrary to our faith, especially the influence of media stories? Here are a few tips:

—Learn, share, and live your faith. Know what the Church teaches, share it and model it in your life. Influence society for the good by living an authentic relationship with God.

—Talk about media stories with children and teens. Ask them what they think of characters and their behavior. If characters exhibit problematic behavior, ask what a better way would be. If virtuous behavior is on display, ask how that could translate into real life.

—Be courageous. It's not easy to embrace values and beliefs that are countercultural. Pray and ask God for the strength to witness to your faith, even when it's not popular.

Yes, we need to acknowledge the "normalizing" effects of media messages and the influences of social contagion but without fear. Just remember that, as Christians, we are called to "normalize" Gospel behavior in all our personal, faith, social and media interactions.

(Daughters of St. Paul Sister Hosea Rupprecht is the associate director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies, a ministry of the Daughters of St. Paul.) †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

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

HENDEY

continued from page 12

proof houses in San Juan de la Maguana. The patient workers allowed me to "help" them even though my efforts probably needed fixing afterward. The stain, in truth, is a precious memory.

I also will unpack fragrant recollections from the mountain community who welcomed us to the grand opening of their women-owned cheese factory, and the commencement ceremony of the first-ever graduating class of the Blessed Carlo Acutis technology center.

I will ponder the futures of the children of the housing communities of Bateyes 412 and 106, who danced with me while their Haitian fathers labored for hours

in the scorching heat of the nearby sugar cane fields. I will channel the example of Maggy, a woman who has devoted her life to ministering to the young single mothers of her *barrio*. Maggy helps them find a way to become educated as they dream of something better for themselves and their babies.

I travel to see the world, meet God's people and connect more deeply with our common stories. My confidence rests in the One who loves us all and continues to guard my steps and point the way. And because I am older—and hopefully wiser—than I once was, my prayers travel with me and remain with all of my new friends.

(Lisa Hendey is the founder of CatholicMom.com, a best-selling author and an international speaker. Her column appears monthly at OSV News.) †

Find your gift, then give it away: How lives are touched by sharing God's presence

(Editor's note: The Criterion has invited our readers to share a favorite Bible verse or a favorite quote that helps remind them of God's presence in their lives and/or helps center them in their relationships with other people. Here is part three of their responses.)

By John Shaughnessy

In her own way, Sally Meyer is trying to live out the wisdom of one of her favorite quotes—a quote that also represents all her fellow teachers in Catholic schools across the archdiocese.

The quote is from the renowned artist, Pablo Picasso: “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.”

“I absolutely believe that I try to live out Picasso's quote,” says Meyer, a sixth-grade teacher at St. Jude School in Indianapolis, where she has taught for 37 of her 38 years as an educator in the archdiocese. “There is a fine line in knowing what to do with God's gift and not letting pride get in the way. But there's no point in hiding or withholding the gift when it could be given to help someone else.

“I was lucky enough to feel a calling to teach. It's sad to think some people can't find their gift or don't think they have one. Some days are much better than others, but, regardless, I still feel my purpose is to give the gift away.”

Similar to many Catholic school teachers, she views her profession as a way to share the gift of her faith with her students. After all, her life has been touched in many ways by her relationship with Jesus, a bond that's represented in her favorite Bible verse, from Proverbs 3:5-6.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not; in all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.”

“This Bible passage symbolizes my journey with Christ,” says Meyer, a member of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “I have experienced significant endings and beginnings in my life—changes at work, broken friendships, the death of a loved one.

“This passage from Proverbs connects to a time when my mother was gravely ill and death was imminent.

I wasn't sure how to pray or what to pray for, but I felt God calling me to let go. This was a time at which I approached a threshold—a time when it was necessary to leave someone behind, and with trust, surrender to what was to come. I could not rely on my thoughts alone.

“With this event, and with so many others since then, I have learned that God will provide the way for me. My hope lies on this renewed path, straightened by God's unending love for me.”

An uplifting touch of kindness

Sometimes, it's our seemingly small acts of kindness that make such a big difference to people.

Barbara Davis of St. Paul Parish in Tell City experienced that truth when she



Barbara Davis

went looking for a “get well” card for a neighbor who was in a nursing home after suffering a bad fall at home.

She knew she had the right one when she read her favorite Bible verse on the card, the verse from Isaiah 41:10—“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

“I could not wait to go see him and give it to him,” she recalls. “He opened it and was so taken with the verse that he placed it on his table for all to see.”

'The key to life's success'

The words that John “Jack” Fink has lived by are captured on a frame near his desk.

It's a quote from Holy Cross Father Theodore Hesburgh, the late president of the University of Notre Dame:

“The key to life's success is the ambition to do as much as you can, as well as you can, and for as long as you can, and do not despair over the things you cannot do.”

As the 91-year-old editor emeritus of *The Criterion*, Fink has had a storied career in Catholic journalism in more ways than one.



In her 38 years of teaching at Catholic schools in the archdiocese, Sally Meyer has always tried to share the gift of her faith and her gifts as a teacher with her students. Here, the sixth-grade teacher at St. Jude School in Indianapolis poses for a photo with two of her students, Macy Tilson, left, and Josephine Clark. (Submitted photo)

Through the years, he has traveled the world extensively, including in his former role as president of the International Federation of Catholic Press Associations.

He has also been non-stop in sharing his writings on the Catholic faith through his books, columns and editorials—and he continues to do so in a monthly column he writes for the Catholic

Chapel newsletter at Marquette Manor in Indianapolis.

He continues to write and exercise as he deals with a number of health issues, including being blind in his right eye and requiring nightly dialysis because of kidney failure.

“Despite those things,” he notes, “I'm continuing to follow Father Ted's advice.” †

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‘The key to life's success is the ambition to do as much as you can, as well as you can, and for as long as you can, and do not despair over the things you cannot do.’

—A quote from the late Holy Cross Father Theodore Hesburgh that John Fink has tried to live by

Vatican announces theme for World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has chosen “His mercy is from age to age,” a passage from the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1:50), as the theme for the 2023 celebration of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.



Pope Francis

On the world day, which will be celebrated on July 23, Pope Francis will celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, according to the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life.

Catholic parishes, dioceses, movements and associations are asked to organize local celebrations as well, the dicastery said in a short note on April 13.

Pope Francis chose the theme—which is a line from Mary's “Magnificat” in the first chapter of Luke—to tie the celebration of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly to World Youth Day, which will be celebrated about a week later, in Lisbon, Portugal, the dicastery said.

The theme for the youth gathering on Aug. 1-6 is “Mary arose and went with haste” from Luke 1:39, the dicastery said, and it describes how Mary sets out to visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth and “proclaims, in the *Magnificat*, the strength of the alliance between young and old.”

Pope Francis celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021 and decreed that it be observed each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of SS. Joachim and Anne, Jesus' grandparents. †

SYNOD

continued from page 1

consisting of eight bishops, three laywomen, two priests, two laymen and two women religious—spent time in prayer, silence and discussion to distill responses for inclusion in the text, which forms a response to the Document for the Continental Stage issued by the Holy See's General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops in October 2022.

The final document for the continental stage from North America, along with the contributions of the six other continental assemblies, will form the basis of the *"Instrumentum Laboris,"* the global synod's working document, to be released by the General Secretariat in June.

Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine, who leads the North American team with Canadian Bishop Raymond Poisson of Saint-Jérôme-Mont-Laurier, Quebec, presented the document at the Vatican on April 12.

Launched by Pope Francis in October 2021, the multi-year synod of bishops—the theme of which is "communion, participation and mission"—seeks to cultivate an ongoing dynamic of discernment, listening, humility and engagement within the Catholic Church.

The North American report highlighted three key themes: the implications of baptism, communion with Christ and one another, and missionary discipleship as a living out of the baptismal calling.

"Our baptismal dignity is inseparable from our baptismal responsibility, which sends us forth on mission," the document stated. "Every human person possesses the dignity that comes from being created in the image of God. Through baptism, Christians share in an exalted dignity and vocation to holiness, with no inequality based on race, nationality, social condition, or sex, because we are one in Christ Jesus."

By virtue of their baptism, participants in the synod's North American phase expressed "a desire for a greater recognition of, and opportunities for, co-responsibility within the Church and

her mission," with greater collaboration "among the laity and the clergy, including bishops," said the document. It stressed "there can be no true co-responsibility in the Church without fully honoring the dignity of women."

An "authentic acknowledgment and respect for the gifts and talents of young people is another vital aspect of a co-responsible Church in North America," said the document.

Amid "polarization and a strong pull toward fragmentation," synod participants in North America emphasized the need to "maintain the centrality of Christ," especially in the Eucharist.

The document candidly acknowledged that a "significant threat to communion within the Church is a lack of trust, especially between bishops and the laity, but also between the clergy in general and the lay faithful."

The clergy sexual abuse crisis in particular has caused "major areas of tension in North America," as have "the historical wrongs found in the residential [and] boarding schools for Indigenous people, which ... included abuse of all kinds," said the document.

In their introduction to the document, Bishop Flores and Bishop Poisson admitted the need to "[make] efforts to listen more effectively to those from whom we have not heard, including many who have been relegated to the margins of our communities, society and Church." They noted their "absence" in the synodal process was



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson speaks on March 5, 2022, at St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus to participants of a meeting to review a draft report on a synodal process in the archdiocese that started in October of 2021. (Criterion file photo by Sean Gallagher)

"not easily interpreted but was palpably felt."

Among those often missing from synodal sessions were priests, with bishops acknowledging their responsibility to address that lack "by example and by conveying the transparency and spiritual/pastoral fruitfulness of synodality."

Synod participants listed women, young people, immigrants, racial or linguistic minorities, LGBTQ+ persons, people who are divorced and civilly remarried without an annulment, and those with varying degrees of physical or mental abilities as marginalized within the Church.

Outreach and inclusion of these groups is ultimately driven at the local level by the faithful actively living out their baptism, McStravog told OSV News.

At the same time, "the bishops really

took to heart the call ... to reach out to the periphery," Coll told OSV News, who added that virtual synod sessions enabled broader participation.

Synod participants consistently articulated a longing for better formation in the faith and in Catholic social teaching, the document said.

As the synod process moves into its next phase, Coll and McStravog pointed to the need for humility and openness to God's will.

"We don't have all the answers, and none of this is pre-packaged," said Coll. "You have to trust that the Spirit will be there to guide us despite the messiness—or maybe because of it."

(The final document for the Continental Stage in North America, available in English, Spanish and French, can be viewed and downloaded at usccb.org/synod.) †

North American Catholics identify harm of polarization, bishop says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In their discussions about the life of the Church and "synodality," or walking together, Catholics in United States and Canada noted the negative impact "polarization" is having on the Church, said Bishop Daniel



Bishop Daniel E. Flores

E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas.

"Politics gets mixed into it, and it's not that politics doesn't have a place in the way the Church thinks about things," he said, but the situation seems to have gotten to where Catholics "immediately sort of categorize people. I think people are aware of that and really want to find a way out of that, so that we can talk to each other as Catholics, as baptized trying to be faithful to Christ."

Figuring out how to deal with social issues in a Christian way "is going to take a lot of work, and it's OK to disagree," he said. "But you don't have to demonize the other person who thinks differently than you do."

Bishop Flores, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine, spoke to Catholic News Service on April 12 about the release of the final document from the North American continental stage of the process leading up to the assemblies of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican in 2023 and 2024.

The Texas bishop, who had shepherded the U.S. portion of the synod process, was at the Vatican for a weeklong meeting of the synod preparatory commission.

The discussion of polarization in the 12 listening sessions for the U.S.-Canadian continental consultation is related to participants' emphasis on "baptismal dignity" as the source of communion in the Church, of shared responsibility for the Church's mission in the world, and of the call to be more inclusive, Bishop Flores said.

"We're bound to Christ by baptism," he said, which "also necessarily means we're connected to each other.

And that's part of the of the whole reality of who we are. We don't control who we're connected to—Jesus does, and so we need to let that dignity show itself."

Bishop Flores encouraged people to read the continental report trying "to imagine the voices of people speaking from many, many different walks of life" and remembering that all of them making the effort to participate in the sessions is "a sign of their love for the Church and their desire to do something good together."

Reading the document "with an open heart," people will find things they agree with and ideas they do not share, "but that's OK," the bishop said. "It's a big Church, and we need to at least hear each other before we can kind of think together as to how to move forward."

From the listening sessions held for participants from the United States and Canada, Bishop Flores said one of the themes that came out most strongly was "wanting to be a Church that continues this experience of communion in a practical sense, of being able to get together and speak about matters of the faith and matters of the Church that are very important to people."

People "were really happy just to have been asked to share their experience of the life of the Church," Bishop Flores said, and they would like to have similar opportunities in the future.

In the North American report and in the other regional reports he has read, Bishop Flores said he sees a common theme of Catholics feeling "the world is changing so fast" and wanting to find the best ways for the Church to respond to those changes.

Certainly in North America, but also in most other parts of the world, he said, Catholics highlighted a need for "formation" and not primarily as a call for religious education classes, but "formation in a synodal mindset," one that helps people understand and appreciate being "a people of the word of God who gather together and talk about it and pray together and then let that inform us as we move forward."

On a whole range of issues, including on the repeatedly stressed issue of reaching out to and involving young people in the life of the Church, Bishop Flores said the discussions were not about "what the Church needs to do" but "how can we do this better"—and that's an important shift."

The North American synthesis also includes a separate section, titled "Bishops' Reflections on the Experience of Synodality in North America."

Bishop Flores said the key reflection was that bishops found their diocesan listening sessions "very invigorating," and want to find ways to continue having that kind of interaction with the variety of people that make up the Church in their dioceses.

"A bishop needs to find new ways to kind of stay in touch with what his people are living, are thinking and are praying about," he said.

The bishops, like many other people who participated in some stage of the synod process, he said, also have questions about what it means, on a practical level, to be a "synodal Church" that listens to and relies on the gifts of everyone while also being a "hierarchical Church."

And that is a discussion that will continue, he said, including at the synod assemblies.

The continental phase also again heard calls for the Church to be more welcoming and inclusive. "The groups named during the continental stage included women, young people, immigrants, racial or linguistic minorities, LGBTQ+ persons, people who are divorced and remarried without an annulment, and those with varying degrees of physical or mental abilities," the report said.

Bishop Flores said he expects "lively discussion" on that topic as well.

"What does it mean as a Church to be open and welcoming to people, especially in the context of the dignity of the baptized," is a question to be explored, he said. "The continental document does not offer us a solution to these things, it just raises them up. This is what people really are thinking about." †