



The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Rosary prayers

Pope Francis composes two new prayers to add to the rosary for an end to the pandemic, page 2.

CriterionOnline.com

May 1, 2020

Vol. LX, No. 29 75¢

'This is why I'm a priest'



Father Sengole Thomas Gnanaraj, administrator of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, stands outside Reid Health, a hospital in the eastern Indiana city. He is among a select group of priests in the archdiocese who are ministering to the dying during the coronavirus pandemic. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Local priests care for the dying during coronavirus pandemic

By Sean Gallagher

RICHMOND—Robert Muldoon was close to death, infected with the coronavirus, as he waited for a visit from Dominican Father Patrick Hyde.

When the priest greeted him as he came into his room at a nursing home in Bloomington, Muldoon was overjoyed.

"Father, I'm so glad you're here," he said. "Now I can go in peace."

Father Patrick, administrator of the St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, recounted the graced encounter on Twitter without identifying Muldoon at the time.

"This is the power of the sacraments

and why I'm a priest," he wrote.

For more than a month, churches have been empty. No baptisms. No weddings. No confessions heard. Priests celebrate Masses alone, livestreaming them on the Internet.

But they still go out to people who are dying to celebrate the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, even those who are suffering from the virus.

A select group of priests across central and southern Indiana have committed themselves to this ministry to people who are quarantined from the

rest of society. (*See article on page 11.*)

This dedication in a time of

social distancing and rigid quarantining of the infected is a solace for Catholics like Muldoon who yearn for the sacraments, and for members of their families.

"It's very comforting to know that somebody will be there for him," said Paul Muldoon, one of Robert's sons. "That's a wonderful thing."

"It was beautiful just to be able to be there," said Father Patrick. "As we Catholics believe, the priest

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Fr. Patrick Hyde, O.P.

Bishops of U.S., Canada will consecrate their nations to Mary on May 1

WASHINGTON (CNS)—As the world continues to face the ongoing effects of the global coronavirus pandemic, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has announced the U.S. bishops will join the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on May 1 in consecrating the two nations to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title "Mary, Mother of the Church."

Archbishop Gomez will lead the prayer of re-consecration at 3 p.m. (EDT) on May 1, and has invited the bishops to join in from their respective dioceses, asking them to extend the invitation to the faithful in their dioceses for their participation.

Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is encouraging Catholics in central and southern Indiana to take part in the consecration.

The consecration can be viewed and prayed with at the USCCB's website usccb.org, and on the USCCB's social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. EWTN will air the gathering from Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles. The event will also be aired live on EWTN's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ewtnonline.

Archbishop Gomez will lead a brief liturgy with a prayer of re-consecration. A liturgy guide will be available on usccb.org to assist the faithful watching online and on social media platforms.

"This will give the Church the occasion to pray for Our Lady's continued protection of the vulnerable, healing of the unwell and wisdom for those who work to cure this terrible virus," said Archbishop Gomez in a letter to the U.S. bishops. Each year, the Church seeks the special intercession of the Mother of God during the month of May.

"This year, we seek the assistance of Our Lady all the more earnestly as we face together the effects of the global pandemic," he added.

This consecration reaffirms the bishops' previous consecrations of the United States to Mary. In 1792, the first bishop of the United States, Bishop John Carroll, consecrated the nation to Mary under the title Immaculate

See CONSECRATE, page 2

Archdiocesan Catholics seek answers from God during ongoing crisis marked with questions

(Editor's note: The Criterion invited five Catholics in the archdiocese to share their thoughts and experiences concerning the coronavirus crisis and how it has affected their faith and their relationship with God—whether it has made them question him, draw closer to him or both. Here are their stories.)

By John Shaughnessy

Matthew Krach has suffered the pain of losing his grandfather to the coronavirus.

Katherine Shepard misses the personal interaction she usually has with the homeless pregnant women and their children whom she helps.

At times during this COVID-19 crisis,

Jay Vennapusa has felt as lonely as he did six years ago when he left his family in India to come to the United States.

Allison Meyers sometimes worries about getting the deadly disease as she fills in as a nurse helping infected patients on a COVID unit in an Indianapolis hospital.

And Christa Hoyland has a list of fears and worries about the impact of the virus: "I see a desolate future where my parents don't get to leave their home for another year, where my son's September wedding won't get to happen, where the Catholic school where I work will close or continue with online learning into the next school



Christa Hoyland

year, and where the restaurant my husband and I own may not survive and we lose everything."

As the coronavirus crisis has touched each of their lives in challenging and meaningful ways, it has also had a powerful impact on their faith and their relationships with God.

'God is still near'

Christa Hoyland has experienced a wide-range of emotions and reactions as she struggles with the potential effects of the crisis on the people she loves.

"What I struggle with the most is

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CONSECRATE

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Conception, and in 1846, the bishops of the country unanimously chose Mary under that title as the patroness of the nation.

In 1959, Cardinal Patrick A. O'Boyle, archbishop of Washington, again consecrated the United States to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was the

year when construction of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington was completed. The national shrine was elevated to minor basilica status by St. John Paul II on Oct. 12, 1990. This consecration was renewed by the U.S. bishops on Nov. 11, 2006.

This latest consecration follows the Latin American bishops' council, which consecrated Latin America and the Caribbean to Our Lady of Guadalupe on Easter. †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

No public events scheduled at this time.

Pope composes prayers for end of pandemic to be recited after rosary

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis asked Catholics to make a special effort in May to pray the rosary, knowing that by doing so they will be united with believers around the world asking for Mary's intercession in stopping the coronavirus pandemic.

"Contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary, our mother, will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial," the pope said in a letter addressed to all Catholics and released by the Vatican on April 25.

The month of May is traditionally devoted to Mary, and many Catholics already are in the habit of praying the rosary at home during the month, he noted. "The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this 'family' aspect, also from a spiritual point of view."

"You can decide according to your own situations" whether to pray individually or in groups, he said, noting that "it is easy also on the Internet to find good models of prayers to follow."

Pope Francis composed two prayers to Mary that can be recited at the end of the rosary, prayers he said he would be reciting "in spiritual union with all of you."

Both prayers acknowledge Mary's closeness to her Son's followers and ask for her protection and for her intercession just as she interceded with Jesus on behalf of the newlyweds at Cana who had run out of wine for their wedding feast.

Pope Francis' prayers also include specific intentions for those who are sick, for those who care for them, for those who have died and those who mourn for them, for scientists seeking treatments and vaccines and for government leaders who must find a way to protect their people.

FIRST PRAYER

"O Mary, You shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who, at the foot of the cross, were united with Jesus' suffering, and persevered in your faith.

"Protectress of the Roman people," you know our needs, and we know that you will provide, so that, as at Cana in Galilee, joy and celebration may return after this time of trial.

"Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the will of the Father and to do what Jesus tells us.

"For he took upon himself our suffering, and burdened himself with our sorrows to bring us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

"We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God; do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from every danger, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin."

"Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes toward us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

"Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

"Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

"Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

"Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

"Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

"Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

"Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

"Mary,
Consolation
of the
afflicted,

embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

"To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves,
"O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen." †



(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

SECOND PRAYER

"We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God.

"In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

The Criterion

Phone Numbers:

Main office: 317-236-1570
Advertising 317-236-1585
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
Circulation: 317-236-1585
Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1585

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

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

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

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

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
Criterion Press Inc.

1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

The Criterion
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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 © 2020 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis to host virtual 5K, 'Stuff a Truck' in May

Criterion staff report

The Indianapolis Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) is hosting a virtual, self-paced "Love Your Neighbor 5K Run/Walk" and four "Stuff a Truck" opportunities in May.

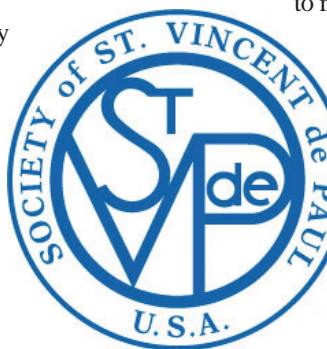
The self-paced 5K run/walk will raise funds to address the urgent needs of people in the Indianapolis area.

Participants can run or walk the race anytime during May 29-June 12 using one of four courses in Indianapolis, or wherever desired. Sponsorships are also available.

All gifts from participants and sponsors go directly to SVdP Indianapolis services, primarily its Food Pantry, where the number of households served has increased by more than 20 percent since the coronavirus outbreak.

To register or to learn about sponsorship opportunities, go to www.svdindy.org.

The organization is also offering four "Stuff a Truck" opportunities in the Indianapolis area in



May. An SVdP truck will be available to receive donations from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the following parishes:

- May 2: St. Pius X, 7200 Sarto Dr., Indy.
- May 9: Our Lady of the Greenwood, 335 S. Meridian St., in Greenwood.
- May 16: St. Christopher, 5301 W. 16th St., Indy.
- May 30: St. Mary, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indy.

To adhere to social distancing guidelines, donors are asked to unload their items and place them by the truck. SVdP staff will load the donations into the truck.

Please deliver clothing and other soft goods in closed, plastic trash bags, and household items in boxes. SVdP reserves the right to reject any donations of furniture that are broken, badly soiled or severely damaged in any way.

For a list of items SVdP does not accept, go to shorturl.at/dfi15.

For questions on either of these opportunities, contact Darlene Sweeney at dsweeney@svdindy.org. †

Fatima launches 'You Are Not Alone' program for suicide loss survivors on May 17

Criterion staff report

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis is launching a new program for suicide loss survivors called "You Are Not Alone: Hope and Healing for Survivors of Suicide Loss." It includes a series of three free, online sessions from 4-6 p.m. on May 17, 31 and June 14, and a scheduled in-person retreat on July 11 and 12.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Indiana for those ages 15-34. The online series addresses the emotional, spiritual and healing journey after suicide loss.

The sessions, which will be offered online via the video conference software, Zoom, are as follows:

• Part 1, May 17: "The Emotional Journey of Suicide Loss Survivors," presented by suicide loss survivor Christine Turo-Shields, LCSW and EMDR Certified Therapist. Includes panel discussion.

• Part 2, May 31: "The Spiritual Journey After Suicide Loss," presented by Father James Farrell, pastor of St. Pius X Parish and administrator of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish, both in Indianapolis.

• Part 3, June 14: "The Healing Journey Forward with Suicide Loss," presented by Providence Sister Connie Kramer, suicide loss survivor, spiritual director, retreat director and grief specialist, and

Lisa Thibault, suicide loss survivor.

The panel for the Part 1 discussion includes the above presenters and Judy Proctor, suicide loss survivor and founder of the Hope and Healing ministry in Indianapolis.

There is no cost to participate, but registration is required, and each session is limited to 100 participants. To register, go to www.archindy.org/fatima.

A "You Are Not Alone" two-day retreat is scheduled at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, from 1-8 p.m. on July 11 and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on July 12.

The speakers and panel participants from the online series will present the retreat, which provides a forum for faith believers—and Catholics in particular—to come together to grieve, share experiences and learn how God helps them on their journey of survival after a suicide tragedy.

The cost is \$25 for individuals and \$50 for married couples. It includes the program, meals, snacks and guest room use during the program. Optional overnight accommodations are available for an additional cost.

To register, go to www.archindy.org.

For questions or to register for the online series and/or the retreat, contact Jennifer Burger at 317-545-7681 or jburger@archindy.org. †

Share your stories on first Communion, the importance of the Eucharist

The Criterion is inviting our readers to share your stories of first holy Communion or how the Eucharist still is a meaningful part of your life.

Please send your stories to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at

jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †

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Online youth and young adult retreat centered on World Youth Day themes

A live online retreat for youths and young adults will be offered by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County from May 3-10. "Emmanuel: God Is with Us" will be a spiritual exploration of the biblical themes of World Youth Day over the past 20 years.

Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish, will celebrate Mass at 7:30 a.m. each day of the retreat and will offer a homily related to World Youth Day themes during the liturgies.

At 7:30 p.m. each night, Father Meyer will have a conversation with Catholic performing artists and leaders in youth and young adult ministry from around the world. They will include Catholic singer and songwriter Steve Angrisano; Malcolm Hart, who leads youth and young adult



Fr. Jonathan Meyer

ministry for the Catholic bishops of Australia; Bob McCarty, the retired executive director of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry; and Brenda Noriega, an American Catholic youth who was chosen to have dinner with Pope Francis during World Youth Day in Panama in 2019.

The Masses and conversations can be viewed on All Saints Parish's YouTube channel and on its Facebook and Twitter accounts. Links to these can be found at the homepage of the parish's website, allsaintscatholic.net.

Each Mass and conversation will be archived on the parish's YouTube channel for viewing at later times.

For more information, visit the parish's website, allsaintscatholic.net. †

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OPINION


The Criterion

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Publisher
Mike Krokos, Editor

Greg A. Otolski, Associate Publisher
John F. Fink, Editor Emeritus

Editorial

Mary was a tough woman

Catholics have always had a special devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, especially during May, which is traditionally observed as Mary's Month.

Artists have portrayed Mary in countless paintings, most often in mother-and-child paintings, as sweet, patient and holy—as she was. But she was also tough when she needed to be. Let's review some of her life's experiences:

The first thing we know for sure about Mary is that the angel Gabriel appeared to her and asked her to become Jesus' mother. She didn't just say, "Sure!" She wanted to know how that would happen since she has "no relations with a man" (Jn 1:34). After being told, she accepted because, as she said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38).

Gabriel also told her that her relative Elizabeth was six months pregnant. So she immediately decided to help her relative. That didn't entail just walking down the street though. Elizabeth lived in Ein Kerem, about 90 miles away. It is likely that Mary joined a caravan there and back, traveling about a week each way, probably on foot.

Back at Nazareth, she faced the problem that she was pregnant and Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, knew that the child wasn't his. We can only guess at the discussions they had about that, but Joseph eventually accepted the situation after learning through an angel in a dream that it was through the Holy Spirit that the child was conceived.

Then, unexpectedly, they had to travel again, this time to Bethlehem, near Ein Kerem, to register in a census. This time she rode a donkey while Joseph walked. Nevertheless, it took a tough woman to do that while she was nine months pregnant. And she had her baby in a cave where animals were stalled. Tough woman.

After that, Mary, Joseph and Jesus became refugees as they had to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's soldiers.



Mary holds the body of Jesus in this stained-glass window at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Greenlawn, N.Y. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, Long Island Catholic)

she felt when she met Jesus as he was carrying his cross, with blood flowing down his face from his head crowned with thorns, knowing that he was soon to be crucified. It's always tragic for a mother to lose a child in death, but that's what Mary experienced. Not just any death, but the tortuous death of a criminal.

Mary's later life, after Jesus' resurrection, was spent with John. Their home has traditionally been considered the first Christian church.

From her experiences, she is able to understand all of our problems. We should go to her with them frequently.

—John F. Fink

Reflection/John Shaughnessy

Celebrating the promise that Mary, mothers and godmothers make

The touching scene captures the tenderness of a mother for her child—a tenderness that is punctuated with emotional power when the mother says two words.

In that scene, a young woman is busy with a few of the hundred details that fill every mother's day when she notices from the corner of her eye that her small son—about 3 or so—has tripped and fallen. The young mother immediately leaves everything behind, rushes to her son, lifts him to hold him close, and when their eyes meet, she whispers, "I'm here."

A second scene immediately follows in the movie, a scene of haunting heartbreak between the same mother and son 30 years later.

Her eyes filled with tears and her face etched in utter agony, the Blessed Mother stays in the shadows as her Son carries his heavy cross to Calvary, overwhelmed by the brutality being inflicted on her son. Yet when she sees him fall, with the cross crashing down on him, she rushes through the crowd and dives on the ground, inches from him. As she touches her Son, their eyes meet in a moment of deep love, and she whispers, "I'm here."

The combination of those two scenes moved me to tears as I watched again *The Passion of the Christ* during this recent Holy Week. And the scenes are still with me as we begin another May, a month dedicated to Mary, a month when all mothers are honored.

During this month, the Blessed Mother will be put on a pedestal, adorned with a crown of spring flowers, and praised in song for her immaculate nature and her standing as the holy Queen of Heaven. And while I join in that chorus, I'm often more drawn to her everyday, earthly nature and legacy.

It's a legacy of moving beyond doubt and fear and saying "yes" to God, to life, to love.

It's a legacy of keeping that faith in God, life and love when the pain, the loss and the heartbreak become unbearable and overwhelming—as it will be for all of us at some point.

It's a legacy of strength, hope and commitment. And while it can be a legacy

for all of us, it's a legacy that is definitely embraced by mothers. That's certainly true of the mothers who have blessed my life.

I see the Blessed Mother's strength, tenderness and true heart in the life of my own mother. Her mother died when she was 2 so she has no memories of the woman who gave her life. Still, she and her older sister had the influence of an aunt who had no children, an aunt who lived on a farm and welcomed them every summer, giving the two sisters a real sense of a mother's love.

From those roots of loss and love, my mom has blessed her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren with the example of how to love unconditionally, how to give generously and how to embrace—and never take for granted—the gifts of life, health and family.

Even in a year when she has suffered the devastating losses of her husband of nearly 67 years and her only sibling, she still gives light, hope and comfort—qualities that also reflect the Blessed Mother.

I also find Mary's faithfulness in my mother-in-law, a mother of nine whose loving hug is as all-in as her belief that the best day of our lives will be when we die—because then we will see and be with God.

And it's there in the grace, love and endless support of my wife for our grown children, whose occasional need for their mother's help and advice still shines through in the phone calls that begin, "Hi, Dad. Is Mom there?"

I also see the legacy of the Blessed Mother in my sisters, my aunts, our daughter and our daughters-in-law—some of them mothers, some of them godmothers, and all of them bound by their faith and their love for a child.

And I have no doubt that you know women who live the legacy of the Blessed Mother every day, in nearly every breath.

They live the belief that love will always triumph.

They live the promise that Mary made to her Son and to all of us, the promise that endures today:

"I'm here."

"I'm here for you always."

(John Shaughnessy is the assistant editor of *The Criterion* and the author of *Then Something Wondrous Happened: Unlikely Encounters and Unexpected Graces in Search of a Friendship with God*.)

Letter to the Editor

A thanks to The Criterion staff for all its hard work

I wanted to thank you for all your work "from afar" with *The Criterion*. I think the last two issues have been especially wonderful; thoughtful and inspiring—just what everyone needs!

Please convey my thanks and appreciation

to the writers and editors as well.

We, the readers, are so blessed to be the recipients of all your continued efforts, insights and encouragement during these challenging times.

Blessings to you all! And prayers for your continued safety and good health.

With gratitude,

Linda Abner
Indianapolis

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

We need good shepherds now more than ever

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul" (Ps 23:1-3).

In the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Easter (Jn 10:1-10), which is known as Good Shepherd Sunday, Jesus speaks about pastoral ministry. More specifically, he talks about the characteristics necessary to be a *pastor bonus* (good shepherd).

This particular reading from St. John's Gospel introduces the idea that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the one whom the sheep follow because he is familiar to them and they recognize his voice.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him,

because they do not recognize the voice of strangers" (Jn 10:1-5).

This passage underscores the importance of personal knowledge. Those who wish to be good bishops, priests, deacons or pastoral leaders must know their people and, even more importantly, our people must know us; they must recognize our voices in order to distinguish them from the strange and misleading voices they hear every day.

Recent popes have stressed the fundamental importance of *a personal encounter with Jesus* to a vibrant, faith-filled experience of Christian discipleship. Unless we know Jesus personally, it is extremely difficult to love or serve him. Unless we know the mind and heart of Jesus, we cannot see his face in our brothers and sisters (especially "the least of these," the poor and vulnerable). A good pastor knows his people, and they attend to him because they recognize his voice.

What does it require of us pastors to know our people and for them to recognize our voices? In a large archdiocese covering 39 counties, or even in a mid-sized or large parish, it's not possible to know everyone by name.

That's no excuse. The Good Shepherd knows his people. He knows their hopes and fears. He recognizes their struggles, and he shares their joy.

A good pastor cannot be isolated from God's people even when we are required by law, and as an expression of pastoral charity, to stay in and to maintain "social distancing." As Pope Francis says often, especially in times of crisis, Church leaders must be attentive to their people. Just as the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11), our prayers and our concerns must always be focused outward toward both the spiritual and temporal needs of the people of God whom we are called to serve.

Good Shepherd Sunday is also known as Vocations Sunday. This is most appropriate because our parishes, our archdiocese and our Church universal has a critical need for bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated religious and lay people who can be good shepherds for God's people. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how important it is for the voices of pastoral leaders to be heard and recognized, especially in times of crisis.

Pope Francis has clearly been a good shepherd for troubled times. His voice has been heard all across the globe as he prays for, and with, all God's people. But the Holy Father is by no means a lone voice. The voices of bishops and pastors are being broadcast and livestreamed in all regions of the globe to bring Mass and the Church's prayers and devotions to people who are unable to come to them. This is a powerful example of the way pastoral leadership and missionary discipleship should be exercised. Instead of waiting for people to come to Church, the Church goes out to them, searching for the lost sheep and gathering them up with open and loving arms.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, let's pray for Pope Francis and all our pastors. Let's help them come to know us better so that we can recognize their voices and see in them the face of Jesus. Let's also pray for vocations to the ordained ministry, to consecrated life and to the many diverse forms of lay leadership.

We need good, holy pastors more than ever these days. May Jesus the Good Shepherd inspire us all by his words and example to give up our lives for the sheep. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Ahora más que nunca necesitamos buenos pastores

"El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará. En lugares de verdes pastos me hace descansar; junto a aguas de reposo me conduce. Él restaura mi alma; me guía por senderos de justicia por amor de Su nombre" (Sal 23:1-3).

En la lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Pascua (Jn 10:1-10), que se conoce como el Domingo del Buen Pastor, Jesús habla sobre el ministerio pastoral. Más específicamente, habla sobre las características necesarias para ser un *pastor bonus* (buen pastor).

Esta lectura específica del Evangelio según san Juan introduce la idea de que Jesús es el Buen Pastor, aquel al que siguen las ovejas porque les resulta conocido y reconocen su voz.

"En verdad les digo, que el que no entra por la puerta en el redil de las ovejas, sino que sube por otra parte, ese es ladrón y salteador. Pero el que entra por la puerta, es el pastor de las ovejas. A este le abre el portero, y las ovejas oyen su voz; llama a sus ovejas por nombre y las conduce afuera. Cuando saca todas las suyas, va delante de ellas, y las ovejas lo siguen porque conocen su voz. Pero a un desconocido no seguirán, sino que huirán de él, porque no conocen la voz de los extraños" (Jn 10:1-5).

Este pasaje subraya la importancia del conocimiento personal: los que deseamos ser buenos obispos, sacerdotes, diáconos o líderes pastorales debemos conocer a nuestro pueblo e, incluso más importante, nuestro pueblo debe conocernos a nosotros; deben reconocer nuestra voz para poder distinguirla de las voces extrañas y engañosas que escuchan todos los días.

Los papas recientes han destacado la importancia fundamental de un *encuentro personal con Jesús* para tener una experiencia de discipulado cristiano vibrante y llena de fe. A menos que conozcamos personalmente a Jesús resulta extremadamente difícil amarlo o servirlo. A menos que conozcamos la mente y el corazón de Jesús no podemos ver su rostro en nuestros hermanos (especialmente «los más pequeños de ellos», los pobres y los vulnerables). Un buen pastor conoce su pueblo y este lo sigue porque reconoce su voz.

¿Qué hace falta para que nosotros, los pastores, conozcamos a nuestro pueblo y este reconozca nuestra voz? En una arquidiócesis tan grande que abarca 39 condados, o incluso en una parroquia mediana o grande, no podemos conocer a todos por nombre. Pero eso no es excusa; el Buen Pastor conoce a su pueblo.

Conoce sus esperanzas y sus temores; reconoce las dificultades que enfrenta y comparte con él su alegría.

Un buen pastor no puede estar aislado del pueblo de Dios, aunque así nos lo exija la ley y como una expresión de caridad pastoral, para guardar y mantener el "distanciamiento social." Tal como lo expresa a menudo el papa Francisco, especialmente en momentos de crisis, los líderes de la Iglesia deben estar al servicio de su pueblo. Al igual que el Buen Pastor entrega su vida por su rebaño (Jn 10:11), nuestras oraciones y nuestra preocupación siempre deben volcarse hacia fuera, hacia las necesidades espirituales y temporales del pueblo de Dios al cual estamos llamados a servir.

El Domingo del Buen Pastor también se conoce como el Domingo de las Vocaciones. Esto es sumamente importante porque nuestras parroquias, nuestra arquidiócesis y nuestra Iglesia universal tienen una necesidad crítica de obispos, sacerdotes, diáconos, religiosos consagrados y laicos que puedan ser buenos pastores para el pueblo de Dios. La pandemia de la COVID-19 nos ha demostrado lo importante que es que se escuche y se reconozca la voz de los líderes pastorales, especialmente en momentos de crisis.

El papa Francisco claramente ha

sido un buen pastor en una época de tribulación. Su voz se ha escuchado en todo el mundo cuando reza por y con el pueblo de Dios. Pero el Santo Padre no es, en modo alguno, una voz solitaria. En todas las regiones del planeta se escuchan las voces de obispos y pastores difundidas por radio o transmitidas en vivo para llevar la misa, las oraciones y las devociones de la Iglesia a un pueblo que no puede acudir a ellos. Este es un ejemplo poderoso de cómo se debe ejercer el liderazgo pastoral y el discipulado misionario. En vez de esperar que el pueblo vaya a la Iglesia, la Iglesia va hasta ellos, buscando a las ovejas perdidas y reuniéndolas con brazos abiertos y amorosos.

En este domingo del Buen Pastor, recemos por el papa Francisco y por todos nuestros pastores. Ayudémoslos a conocerlos mejor para que podamos reconocer sus voces y ver en ellos el rostro de Jesús. Rezamos también por las vocaciones a los ministerios ordenados, la vida consagrada y a las muchas y diversas formas de liderazgo seglar.

En estos días, más que nunca, necesitamos pastores buenos y santos. Que Jesús, el Buen Pastor, nos inspire con sus palabras y su ejemplo a entregar nuestras vidas por el rebaño. †

Poets use their craft to cope with pandemic

Compiled by Natalie Hoefer

Shortly after Gov. Eric Holcomb issued stay-in-place orders for the citizens of Indiana on March 16, several Catholic poets in the central and southern portions of the state turned to their craft to help cope with, process and find meaning in the coronavirus crisis. Below are the poems on the topic submitted to The Criterion.

CHAOS

By Hilda Buck

In the beginning the Earth was a formless wasteland
with shrieking winds blowing
and an overall eerie darkness prevailing.

Nothing existed until the all powerful,
pre-existent One
calmly and methodically
brought order out of chaos.

Who can deny that we are now in the midst of chaos,
frantically trying to stem the course of the fearful affliction
that is rapidly overwhelming us?

Could the exhortation from the all powerful One,
“Be still and know that I am God,”
inspire us to turn to him for guidance
in bringing order out of chaos?

(Hilda Buck is a former member of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg who now resides in a retirement community in Anderson, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. Buck, 102, wrote the poem while missing visits from her family as her retirement community closed the facility to visitors during the coronavirus pandemic.)

EUCARIST DURING THESE TIMES (A MESSAGE TO PRIESTS)

By Cathy Lamperski Dearing

When you celebrate the Mass “Alone”
You (and we) know
You are not alone.
You unite all our souls
In your offering.
You are in the holy presence of Father, Son, and Spirit
And the great cloud of witnesses
All watching and nodding
To your every word and action.
The Eucharistic miracle
Still happens.

“TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT”

And we know that one day
We will again.

(Cathy Lamperski Dearing is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis and a Providence Associate of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. This poem is one of several she submitted in response to our call for readers to send in stories of how they’re staying connected with their faith during the coronavirus crisis.)

TIME

By Jená Hartman

The Coronavirus has given us TIME.

Time to: have more meaningful, genuine conversations with our family members.

Enjoy recalling happy memories. Have relaxing meals together that are not fast-food or rushed. Prepare a new recipe.

Time to: call a friend who is a shut-in. Or call someone with whom you have not spoken in a while. Or send a card with a happy note and surprise someone.

Time to: really see and appreciate the vivid bright yellow of the pretty daffodils. Enjoy the soft lavender color of the gentle blooms on the rhododendron bush. Smile at the day-to-day greening of our lawns. Rejoice in the blooms on last month’s naked tree limbs which will bring forth their leaves to create summer’s shade.

Time to: start (or finish) that craft project which had been put aside during our busier days. What about those simple household repairs? What about that woodworking project that has been on your mind? What about reading that book which was a gift last year?

Time to: pray for the medical workers, EMT personnel, fire and police officers during this overwhelming pandemic.

Time to: not just read the daily Scripture selections, but to let them “soak” deep into our souls and nourish us for that day.

Time to: envision Jesus with us as we accomplish our daily household tasks and talk to Him as the Friend that He is.

Time to: take an inventory of our many blessings and be truly thankful for each one of them.

Time to: visualize and rejoice that Our God is still on His throne and will guide us through this new health crisis.

Time to: smile.

(Jená Hartman is a member of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis and is the former coordinator of the archdiocese’s Birthline ministry.)

IN GOD CAN WE TRUST/ COVID-19

By Stephanie Jackson

Just wanted you to know,
I was thinking about you.
This is a challenging time,
but this too we’ll get through.

We are missing our family
and our friends as well.
We are keeping our distance
during this COVID-19 hell.

People are sick and suffering.
Many are dying or passed.
Each of our hearts breaking;
wondering how long it’ll last.

When a crisis hits home,
the good in people shine.
Our heroes take many forms,
willing to toe the line.

Reaching out to one another,
helping any way we can.
Some even taking selfless risks
to assist their fellow man.

Our normal may be changed,
we’re resilient and we’ll adjust.
We’re all in this together.

In God, we can trust.

(Stephanie Jackson is a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford. She is the author of two faith-based books.)

WHERE IS GOD’S LOVE?

By Paul Kreitl

Where is God’s Love?
Is it just in skies above?
Or is it underneath
Sheltering trees
And in others we’ve been thinking of?

Look for love, it doesn’t hide
It’s right in front and right beside
In and on and through
All of me and all of you
Give thanks for love and love applied

Little things, they mean a lot
He created all the good we’ve got
Open your eyes
To see hearts alive
And there you’ll see all that He begot

(Paul Kreitl is a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis. This is his first poem to be published in The Criterion.)

JESUS, MEET ME IN THIS PLACE

By Gina Langferman

Jesus, meet me in this place,
I need Your love and grace,
I need to feel You near.

Jesus, meet me in this place,
I’m trying hard to pray
And not give in to fear.

Please be always right beside me,
Let Your Spirit guide me,
Help me walk this road.

You will carry all my burdens,
You have come to save us,
You’ll carry this load.

Jesus, be my gentle shepherd,
Lead me through this valley,
To Your light and truth.

Jesus, thank You for Your promise
You will never leave me,
Hold me close to You.

Help me praise You as my heart grows
Stronger in my faith
And strengthen those I love.

Help us always to stay near You,
Offering our heartfelt prayers to God
above.

(Gina Langferman is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. She is a professional musician and teaches music for all grades at St. Rose of Lima School in Franklin. She wrote this poem as a song while “praying about this pandemic and praying for those I love.”)

HOMEBOUND

By Thomas J. Rillo

Just when you think your world is in balance and everything is placid and unruffled

Along comes something that is pandemic that shakes you from your roost
Because we live so close to others in the world and have freedom to travel
The larger and more confining is the living habitat, the greater the dissemination of disease.
Homebound

The more humans race ahead of their moral obligation and social responsibilities
The greater will be the physical disaster

that will result from these negative behaviors

The possibility of pandemic disaster will cause fear and hoarding essential household items
The super-structures of communities, states and nations will be forced to unprecedented action
Homebound

Unprecedented actions will include a lock-out of many places where people interact
To stop a pandemic virus is to stop all work, places of entertainment, even to be homebound
The threat of possible death is a greater motivator and promotes acceptance of self-isolation
All nonessential workers are urged to stay at home in an effort to contain the virus
Homebound

To stop all activities both at the local and national levels is not always a bad thing It brings families together where family activities become more interactive Being homebound forces family members to take time to play together and pray together
Knowing that with the Lord’s omnipotent love survival in a tough time is possible.
Homebound

(Thomas J. Rillo is a member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington and is an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. The retired Indiana University professor has published many books, including eight books of poetry.)

JESUS WEPT

By Sonny Shanks

I heard it started in Asia, I’m not sure where.
But there was suffering, and Jesus wept.
Soon it came to America, there was suffering,
and Jesus wept.

People wept too, but some not because of the suffering of others.
Some wept because of their loss of dining out options, movie tickets, golf, and March Madness.

Soon the churches all closed, and Jesus wept.
Some people, however, smiled; church had always been kind of a hassle.
A \$1,200 check came in the mail and although a lot of people were sick most of them weren’t dying.
So some people had a ‘corona party’ and went on singing and dancing into the night, confident that the sun would come up the next morning.

They were unaware and uncaring that their ship was burning and sinking at the same time.

Jesus appeared on the waves and in the storm, beckoning all to come to him for shelter. Some did not listen.

Mary appeared too, midway between the ship and Jesus, pointing the way to Jesus. Some did not listen. Jesus wept.

(Sonny Shanks is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon. He is the author of nine books, three of which include poems and reflections.) †

Faith Alive!

Five years after its release, more needs to done to implement ‘*Laudato Si’*

By Dan Misleh

As I write this in mid-March, the world is gripped by the pandemic caused by the coronavirus. Locally, nationally and globally, the world is mustering resources to slow the spread of COVID-19 to not overwhelm our health care systems and to buy time as researchers discover more effective treatments and a vaccine.

What strikes me is how quickly people have come together around a common purpose with a recognition that only through common effort can we get through this crisis.

As someone working on climate change full time, I can't help but imagine a world in which the climate crisis was met with the same urgency and resolve as this pandemic. In many ways, climate change is a slow-moving pandemic, but with the potential of far greater consequences even if they are spread out over a period of years or decades rather than several months.

In the five years since the release of Pope Francis' encyclical, “*Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,” I wish that more had been done in our faith community to take advantage of this remarkable document in which Pope Francis warns us of the environmental destruction caused by our own human actions, especially by those of us in wealthier nations.

He pleads with us to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, linking the fate of our Earth with the fate of humanity, especially the most vulnerable.

Catholic Climate Covenant, an organization I am pleased to pilot, has worked to take advantage of this new moment and encourage more Catholics to act. Many of our 19 national Catholic partners have worked side by side with us to educate constituents about “*Laudato Si'*” (which expands on the teaching of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI) and to spur action to save our common home from our foolishness.

One measure of success is that our parish Creation Care Team program has grown to more than 300 dedicated adults trying to make a difference in their communities. Another measure is that we counted 120 bishops' statements or articles written within a few



Workers in Washington are seen near solar panels on Oct. 17, 2019, on the property of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington. A 2-megawatt solar project generates a quarter million dollars in annual energy savings, money that can be used to counsel the lost, feed the hungry and shelter the homeless. (CNS photo/Andrew Biraj, Catholic Standard)

months of June 18, 2015, the date the Vatican released “*Laudato Si'*.”

Polls also indicate that there was an uptick of a few percentage points among Catholics who embraced the science of climate change, that the poor will be most impacted and that we have a responsibility to decrease our carbon footprint.

Young people—including Catholic youths—demonstrate a growing concern about their future. This is in evidence by the number of college students urging their Catholic universities to divest from fossil fuels. Some schools, like the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, embraced this strategy almost immediately, and others, like Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., have joined the movement recently.

A number of dioceses have made creation care a priority with the support and encouragement of their bishops. For the Diocese of Stockton, Calif., and Bishop Stephen E. Blaire, who went home to God in

June 2019, “*Laudato Si'*” was a boost to the efforts they had been leading for years. An environmental justice coordinator had been a key position within Catholic Charities of Stockton for nearly a decade before the encyclical was released.

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati was one of the first to have a diocesan-wide creation care team working with many of its parishes and schools to institute recycling programs, plant community gardens and educate Catholics on the many ways they could tread more gently on this good Earth.

Shortly after “*Laudato Si'*” was released, the Archdiocese of Atlanta, with Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory's approval, put together a 40-page plan to implement teachings from the encyclical, a blueprint that has been copied by many.

Many other dioceses and archdioceses have stepped up with similar programs and resources including San Diego, Indianapolis, Hartford, New York, Columbus and Chicago.

Frustrated in trying to answer a question I would get frequently from parishioners—“Why can't I get my pastor to talk about this?”—led me to try another approach: “What if we showed them how much money they could save through smart energy efficiency and renewable energy programs?”

Once we got their attention, we could then “backdoor” the teaching, saying: “This is more than saving money; it's also about being good stewards of precious resources on an abundant but finite planet.” The plan worked.

A 2-megawatt solar project for Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Washington generates a quarter million dollars in annual energy savings, money that can be used to counsel the lost, feed the hungry and shelter the homeless.

Parishes across Virginia are joining the solar energy party to be a witness to the wider community and their parishioners, as well as save money and lower emissions after Father John Grace of Immaculate Conception Parish in Hampton, Va., was the first to show off the work of our Catholic Energies team.

So, how has the Church in the U.S. responded five years after the release of “*Laudato Si'*”? If I'm honest, not nearly to the degree I would have hoped, nor commensurate with the scope of the challenge we are facing.

The pandemic is a lesson: We must all do something. We need individual, governmental, business and nonprofit solutions to a slow-moving crisis. Climate scientists, just like epidemiologists, are warning of the impending crisis. Will we listen?

(Dan Misleh is the founder and executive director of Catholic Climate Covenant. Previously, he was director of diocesan relations for the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.) †



A community garden stands on the grounds of St. Pius X Parish in Conyers, Ga. Spurred by the teaching of Pope Francis in his 2015 “*Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,” parishes and schools have instituted recycling programs, planted community gardens and educated Catholics on the many ways they can show greater respect for God's creation and those who are most vulnerable. (CNS photo/Michael Alexander, Georgia Bulletin)

A supplement to Catholic newspapers published by Catholic News Service, 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100. All contents are copyrighted © 2020 by Catholic News Service.

The Theology of Technology/Brett Robinson**In times of crisis, God's loving plan continues to unfold**

My son was having trouble graphing an equation for his algebra class, so he had to ask me for help. Poor kid. As I struggled to remember my eighth-grade algebra, he wondered aloud when he would ever use this stuff in "real life."

At that moment, I couldn't help but think of the dozens of graphs I have seen dotting news articles and social media feeds over the past several weeks.

Coronavirus case counts, death rates, regional breakdowns, demographic breakdowns. It seems everyone is an epidemiologist now as they interpret red and purple lines that seem to be always ascending and never descending. When's the peak going to hit? How is my state doing?

As we near the frightening apex of the pandemic curve, the models and graphs that have dominated the national discussion reveal another feature of this unsettling moment: the age of algorithmic

thinking is also reaching a peak of sorts.

Everything from public policy to stock prices to the individual behaviors of millions of people seems to follow the movement of mathematical models: when virus cases are down, perhaps restrictions are eased, investors gain confidence and people feel safer going to the grocery store.

If the line breaks the other way, the opposite occurs. This is certainly a prudent use of our scientific abilities, but it only provides a fleeting sense of control in the midst of so much chaos.

The belief that someone (or some computer) is crunching vast amounts of data to discern the behavior of a microscopic virus gives us a certain sense of security. It provides a small layer of cognitive protection between us and the reality that nature cannot be fully captured by graphs and algorithms.

Creation is an act of the divine Logos, not artificial intelligence. As such, God's loving plan unfolds with a reasoning beyond human understanding that is both universal in scope and extremely specific in its attention to the particularities of

each human person. We are not made in the image of statistics and demographics, rather, we are made in the image of God.

To put this theological truth in today's mathematical language, suppose you tried to "graph" our "model" Jesus Christ. His passion, death and resurrection would be "V-shaped." A descent into the depths of suffering and hell itself before a literal rising from the dead, ascension into heaven and life eternal. The V-shape stands for victory over death.

If there is a model we should follow as we navigate this uncertain time, it is derived from one simple equation: "The Son of God became man so that we might become God" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #460). Take heart in the things that mathematical models fail to capture—the unseen acts of sacrifice, mercy and compassion, even in the face of grave danger, that make us human and make us all like unto God.

(Brett Robinson is director of communications and Catholic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.) †

**It's All Good/Patti Lamb****Lessons worth remembering from the coronavirus pandemic**

Recently, I spoke with a co-worker by phone since we are currently working from home due to the coronavirus pandemic. After discussing our action items for that day, I mentioned how

much I missed her proximity to me. I suppose I had finally recognized how I've taken her physical presence for granted, assuming that she'd be at my side each week day—fielding my many questions and always making me laugh. How I miss her good energy.

Before the call ended, I pivoted the conversation from our action item list to our current reality. My co-worker, whom I also consider a friend, is a wise woman. She is a breast cancer survivor who has encountered dark days and leaned into her faith. When I asked her to share some encouraging thoughts to bolster my spirit, her words felt familiar—as if I'd heard them before.

"Whenever I encounter detours in life—or circumstances that feel beyond my control—I ask God, 'What are you teaching me, Lord?'" she said.

Then I remembered that those were the same words she shared with me after receiving her diagnosis years ago.

"What is the lesson I'm supposed to learn here, God?" she asked.

My friend reminded me that, even when we are adults, we never stop learning and we never outgrow encounters with "teachable moments."

Fast forward to the dinner table that evening. I shared my friend's question with the family, and we all agreed that the main lesson we learned from this "great pause" is that there are many things we've taken for granted.

I surveyed the family and we went around the table—multiple times—sharing those things we miss.

The list was long, so I'll only share a few:

- Going to church. Receiving the sacraments.
- Professional haircuts.

The Human Side/Fr. Eugene Hemrick**Novel reminds us moral responsibility, courage needed in life**

Since early March, the 1947 novel, *The Plague*, by Albert Camus, has been selling out in Japan. The story is reminiscent of today's coronavirus outbreak and the moral behaviors of those stricken by it.

The large Algerian city of Oran is hit with a plague caused by a rat infestation. At first, city officials won't admit it. When they finally do, the city is closed, trapping its inhabitants. This causes some to hire smugglers to escape.

In his first sermon on the crisis, a priest, Father Paneloux, points to God's wrath because of sinfulness. Later, he witnesses a young boy die and is shaken. He proclaims in his second sermon that the unexplainable deaths of innocents

compel Christians to choose to believe everything or nothing about God.

Another citizen, Rambert, plans to escape to be with his wife in Paris, but after a conversation with a friend, he feels ashamed and chooses to stay in Oran to fight the disease. As time goes by, most city dwellers come to see the epidemic as a collective disaster that affects everyone and requires each person's efforts. They accept their social responsibility and participate in efforts to quell the plague.

One commentator, Tony Judt, wrote that Camus was "placing individual moral responsibility at the heart of all public choices, [which] cuts sharply across the comfortable habits of our own age." Judt further pointed to Camus' definition of heroism, "ordinary people doing extraordinary things out of simple decency" as ringing "truer than we might once have acknowledged."

The book ends on the note that there is

more to admire than to detest in humans.

As undesirable as is a crisis, it can drive us deeper into considering who we really are as humans. For example, when faced with a calamity, do we face it truthfully or falsify it to save face?

Do we accept our moral responsibility and try to do our best in the worst of conditions, or turn our back on our collective responsibilities and run?

Does a crisis encourage us to go beyond the ordinary out of a sense of decency?

When overcome with fear, do we pray to a merciful God or see God's wrath punishing us?

My Greek professor would chide us that his tests were not scourges, but opportunities for improvement. Life's calamities are occasions to further develop our moral responsibility and courage.

(Father Eugene Hemrick writes for Catholic News Service.) †

**Amid the Fray/Greg Erlandson****Reflecting on the before and after of COVID-19**

I've been experiencing some weird side effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

For example, the obsessive critiquing of television advertisements. They are now divided into two categories: pre- and post-COVID-19. When I see pre-pandemic ads of happy people celebrating clear skin, fast food or car insurance, I am filled with alarm and resentment.

How dare they stand so close to each other, for Pete's sake! Talking and touching, being lighthearted without masks and gloves. Are they out of their minds?

Watching a pre-pandemic television show—which is just about every show except those where musicians and news anchors are broadcasting from their basements—I feel a kind of trepidation for the characters.

They go about their contrived comedies or cops-and-robbers showdowns completely unaware that the entire world is about to come screeching to a halt. They, poor naive fools that they are, have no idea that the big challenge they will face is not some sitcom farce, but how to stay 6 feet apart from everyone else in a grocery store.

Recently, I began thinking about the neutron bomb. For those too young to remember, the neutron bomb is an enhanced radiation weapon designed, as the 1980s rhetoric put it, to kill people but leave buildings intact. I thought about the neutron bomb when I went back to my office one day to fetch something I needed.

It was eerie walking through the quiet halls, as if a time machine had dropped me back into March 14, the last day those offices were occupied. Everything looked as I remembered, yet all the people, poof! The building was still here, but the people had vanished.

COVID-19 is a viral version of the neutron bomb: The department stores and barbershops and restaurants are still standing, as empty as a scene out of "The Twilight Zone."

We can't help but contrast now with then. One moment, record low unemployment. The next moment, 26 million seeking unemployment checks. One moment, oil at 50 dollars a barrel. The next moment, oil traders paying people to take their goo, and gas at 97 cents a gallon in some places.

One baby boomer joke circulating on the Internet is that we all feel like teenagers again: Gas is cheap, and we are grounded.

We seem stunned by the whiplash of these rapid changes. Some of us—volunteers, health care workers and first responders most of all—have heroically risen to the occasion. Elsewhere, we see citizens pitted against citizens, political scapegoating, and even the willingness to sacrifice the few for the financial needs of the many.

As is so often the case, there are spiritual lessons here. We want to return to the way it was just a few months ago, but we are absolutely not in control. We hope, but we must endure. And in our endurance, we are challenged to think of the needs of others: Our children. Our parents. The poor. The elderly. Our neighbors. The strangers near us in the supermarket.

Hardship reveals our character, tests our resilience and humbles us. We will get through this, but we won't be the same. I am hoping that our deep divides, our angry polarities, might ease and we recover the meaning of the aspirational phrase on our pocket change: "E pluribus unum." Out of many, one.

(Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.) †

Fourth Sunday of Easter/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, May 3, 2020

- Acts of the Apostles 2:14a, 36-41
- 1 Peter 2:20b-25
- John 10:1-10

The Acts of the Apostles again furnishes the first biblical reading for Mass this weekend. As was the case



last weekend, it is a passage recalling a time when St. Peter spoke in behalf of all the Apostles.

This event occurred on Pentecost, an important Jewish feast. The sermon is in the literary style of kerygmatic, that is, it goes to the essence of the Christian message. It highlights the basics of Christian belief. Jesus is Lord, the Son of God. He is the Redeemer. In Jesus, and only in Jesus, is salvation. Jesus bears God's mercy and eternal life.

Divine mercy and eternal life are not thrust upon us. We ourselves must accept Jesus. We must turn to God. With the help of God, we must repent and reform. This was Peter's plea.

The reference to Pentecost is not just simply to provide a date. Mentioning Pentecost reminds us that the Apostles stood at the center in the current of God's long process of salvation and protection, linking the salvation offered by Christ through the ministry of the Apostles in the Lord's name to the long history of God's constant loving care of his chosen people.

The First Letter of St. Peter once again supplies the second reading. Some scholars dispute that the Apostle Peter—Simon Peter, the Galilean fisherman—literally authored this epistle. Discussions in this regard in no way, however, demean or discount the assertion that this epistle is the authentic and revealed word of God.

The tests of the authenticity of Scriptures is that they were believed to be divinely inspired by the early Christian and, most importantly, that the Church accepted them and formally identified them as such.

First Peter fully meets these tests.

Its message is twofold. First, Jesus is the Savior. His blood, spilled on Calvary, reconciles God's relationship with created humanity for all time. Secondly, we must

link ourselves with Jesus, affirming by our faith and by our total rejection of sin our love for God through faith in the Lord.

St. John's Gospel is the source of the last reading. It dwells on a theme so often preferred by Jesus and emphasized in the Gospel of John, namely, that Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Raising sheep was a common livelihood in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Contemporaries of Christ instantly understood the imagery of sheep and shepherds. Jesus and the Evangelists employed these images to make clear and direct the message of salvation.

Their very technique in teaching reveals the holy yearning of God to be united with us.

This reading insists that Jesus is the only route to heaven. Without him, we search for heaven in vain.

Also important in this reading is its reference to a thief who slyly and under the cover of darkness steals away the unsuspecting and helpless sheep, taking them to death and destruction.

We need Jesus. Sheep are tame and unsuspecting in the face of danger. They are vulnerable. So are humans. Thieves lie in wait for us. Fear not. The Lord, the Victor over death itself, is our Good Shepherd.

Reflection

The Church continues to proclaim its joy and faith in the risen Lord now several weeks after Easter. It repeats the message long ago spoken by Peter on Pentecost. Jesus is Lord! He lives! Repent, renounce sin, and turn to God!

These readings present reality. We weak humans are prey before the devil and forces hostile to Jesus. We cannot withstand these threats without God's help. We are like sheep. We are limited. We are short-sighted. Temptation and the human condition limit us.

Nevertheless, if we are in and with Jesus, we are strong. No power can overwhelm us, because no power can overwhelm the Lord, the Victor over death itself.

The Church bids us to face the facts with faith and joy about ourselves—and about the power of the Lord. †

Daily Readings

Monday, May 4

Acts 11:1-18
Psalm 42:2-3; 43:3-4
John 10:11-18

Tuesday, May 5

Acts 11:19-26
Psalm 87:1b-7
John 10:22-30

Wednesday, May 6

Acts 12:24-13:5a
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
John 12:44-50

Thursday, May 7

Acts 13:13-25
Psalm 89:2-3, 21-22, 25, 27
John 13:16-20

Friday, May 8

Acts 13:26-33
Psalm 2:6-11b
John 14:1-6

Saturday, May 9

Acts 13:44-52
Psalm 98:1-4
John 14:7-14

Sunday, May 10

Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 6:1-7
Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19
1 Peter 2:4-9
John 14:1-12

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Many theologians help the faithful understand the mystery of Christ's death

Q This year during Holy Week, I was particularly troubled by the traditional teaching, promoted by St. Anselm in the 11th century, that Christ had to die that painful death to atone for our sins. This seems to me to contradict Jesus' identity as a loving Savior. Upon Googling the topic, I came across a column you did several years ago that seemed to give a straightforward and common sense answer.

Do you have any further thoughts which could help comfort me on this issue? (North Carolina)

A I couldn't agree more with your discomfort at the view of St. Anselm. Anselm believed that the sacrificial death of Jesus was necessary to restore humanity's communion with the Father, that the blood of Jesus was "payment" to God for human sin.

This theory, though, has been challenged by other theologians over the centuries. In fact, one of Anselm's contemporaries, the scholar Peter Abelard, insisted that Christ's death on the cross had been an act of love, not payment.

And even 700 years before that, St. Augustine had indicated his reservations about such a theory; Augustine asked, in his *"De Trinitate"* ("On the Trinity"), "Is it necessary to think that being God, the Father was angry with us, saw his Son die for us and thus abated his anger against us?" St. Thomas Aquinas, too, questioned Anselm's theory, saying that it took away God's freedom to be merciful. Theologians in our own day have also found difficulty with Anselm's view.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, wrote in his *Introduction to Christianity* that Anselm's attempt to blend the divine and human legal systems can "make the image of God appear in a sinister light." And so—thankfully—none of us is compelled to believe that God deliberately willed the suffering of his Son.

Q I am 28 years old, and over the past 10 years I have been in three serious romantic relationships, one of which reached the point where I became engaged. All three relationships ended for the same reason—the inability to find common ground on issues of faith.

It is easy to move toward hopelessness, believing that I may never find anyone who will meet my standards (being Catholic, desiring an active faith life and willing to accompany me on that faith journey). I do still believe that God hasn't forgotten me, that I can put my trust in his timing and persevere in the midst of doubt. But can you offer any words of encouragement for someone in my position? (Iowa)

A Well, right off the bat here is one encouraging thing: I just looked up the current average age of people getting married in the U.S., and it's your age or above. So, you still have time! But seriously, I am impressed and edified by the values you prize in a marriage; if the ultimate goal of each of us is to, one day, be with God in heaven, then we want every major decision in our life to lead us in that direction.

And since you put such a premium on faith, I can't believe that God does not have something good in store for you—and his timing is always better than ours! On a practical level, there are several dating services that invite users to comment on the role the Catholic faith plays in their life, and I have known couples who have found success in this way. Among such services are: CatholicMatch, Catholic Singles, Catholic Chemistry and Ave Maria Singles.

By Brother Macarius Bunch, O.P.

**At the Conception of Our Lord
it was the heart of Our Lady
that filled with joy while
her womb filled with the Son.**

**At the Epiphany of Our Lord
it was in the heart of Our Lady
that all these events were pondered
and discovered to be treasures.**

**In the citadel of Our Lord
it was the heart of Our Lady
that was wounded by
allowing her Son to leave.**

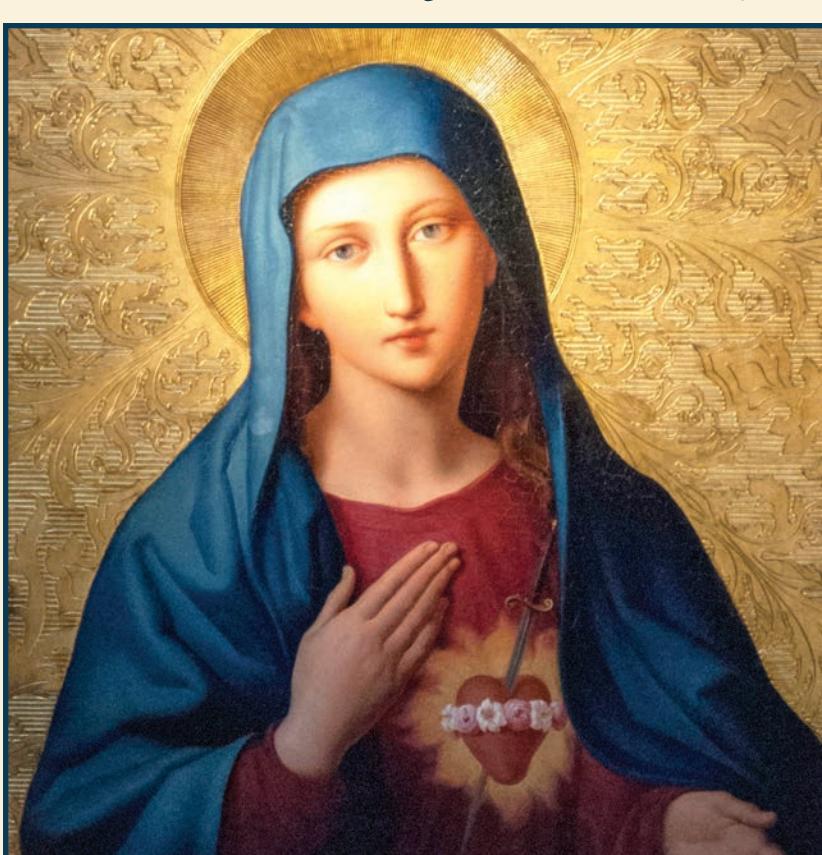
**At the death of Our Lord,
it was the heart of Our Lady
that broke when the Lord's
body was crushed for our sins.**

**At the empty tomb of Our Lord
it was the heart of Our Lady
that filled with quiet joy when
she knew her Son was risen.**

(Dominican Brother Macarius Bunch is a member of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Brazil who is in priestly formation with the Dominican Friars of the St. Joseph Province. Art: "The Heart of Mary" by Leopold Kupelwierser. (Photo courtesy of commons.wikimedia.org)

My Journey to God

The Heart of Our Lady



(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr, Albany, New York 12203.) †

CRISIS

continued from page 1

the loss of hope, especially if I read or watch the news," says the director of communications for Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville. "But, thank God, he pulls me back from the brink."

"I was weeping while taking a walk the other day, and God said, 'Look up.' And I saw my favorite tree, a dogwood, in bloom. And I felt a faint lift in my spirits. I began thanking God for the sun, for the freedom to walk. And hope again blossomed."

A mother of two grown children, 54-year-old Hoyland sometimes wonders if God "must feel like a parent on a road trip with a car full of impatient kids," all of them complaining, "How long, O Lord? Are we there yet?"

"I've wanted to know the answer for weeks," she admits. "When will this end, and what will it look like? Why us? Why now?"

"In these times of mourning, I grieve, but I eventually turn my face to God. I accept my cross, and I pray for those who need God's mercy so much more than I do—those who have lost family or have family gravely ill from this virus, those working long hours to save the ill and dying, those who are on the brink of losing all they own, or those who truly wonder from where their next meal will come."

Still, she acknowledges it has been "a painful process" for her.

"I'm reminded that trials are essential to salvation," says Hoyland, a member of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Jeffersonville.

"I have grieved, questioned, doubted, railed in anger at God, and felt desperately hopeless. But there is Jesus—on the crucifix on my wall, in the image of Divine Mercy in my prayer space, and in my heart. He comforts me, restores me, gives me rest, inspires me and gently calls me back when I flounder. God is still near."

Finding Christ's comfort in the pain

Matthew Krach describes the death of his grandfather in April from the coronavirus as "heart-wrenching."

"He had to spend weeks in isolation at his nursing home and was unable to have his loved ones near him at the hospital," recalls Krach, 24, a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis.

"Everyone deserves to have family and friends near them during the process of dying, and while I completely understand the guidelines not to visit, it was still heart-wrenching to know that he was suffering greatly and we couldn't be there."

Amid that heartbreak, Krach and his family still saw how being together and praying for their loved one created a feeling of being close to him.

"While we couldn't be there for him, Christ was able to provide comfort in our place. Our extended family was still able to talk to him and pray with him using video chat, as well as share our memories together of him in a Zoom meeting, which was such a blessing."

The use of video connections has also been a godsend for Krach in sharing his faith with others during this time.

"Thanks to video chat, I have still been able to help lead my Bible study, which includes some young men living in



Matthew Krach

the archdiocese. These chats have been such a great time for us all to come together, and still acknowledge and live in the Catholic community we are a part of."

The video connections have also led him to seek online Masses that, he says, have allowed him to experience "reflections and homilies of priests around the country."

"New perspectives and insights on my relationship with God have helped me to look past a lot of the negativity during this time."

It's also led him to a deeper relationship with God.

"Often I neglect personal prayer with God, favoring reading Scripture and praying the rosary," he says. "Without being able to go to Mass or adoration, I have spent a lot more time having intentional conversation with God. I hope to maintain that even after I can return to the sacraments."

I have encountered so much kindness'

When she comes home from her shifts of working as a nurse on her hospital's COVID-19 unit, Allison Meyers finds a measure of comfort and faith in the sacred space she has created during the pandemic.

"I made what I call a 'prayer altar' in my spare room," says Meyers, 32, a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis. "For the first time ever, I have a dedicated worship space in my house."

"I found my first holy Communion banner and hung it on the wall as part of the altar. It reminds me that Jesus Christ is truly present even if I am unable to physically receive the Eucharist."

The altar is just one of the ways she has tried to deepen her relationship with God during this crisis.

"I drew closer to God during Holy Week," she says. "Often, I feel like Holy Week and Easter sneak up on me and I rush into the Triduum without a sense of preparedness."

"This year, other than work, there were no events taking up my time. I devoted that extra time to prayer, attending all of the services through St. Joan of Arc, and reading the daily Scriptures and Father Guy Roberts' reflections."

That deeper connection has also helped her when she has filled in on the COVID unit at Eskenazi Hospital in Indianapolis.

"I think it is important to care for the sick and to give the regular staff on those units a break," says Meyers, who usually works as a labor and delivery nurse. "Although I worry about getting sick at times, I believe my faith has enabled me to stay calm and not dwell on this worry for more than a few moments."

Instead, she focuses on the wealth of kindnesses she has received from her neighbors, friends and family members who are aware of her contributions at the hospital.

"I have received a few meals, kind notes and gifts on my porch, all of which have been so thoughtful. They let me know that I am loved and well taken care of during this uncertain time."

"Although I don't know why we are experiencing this right now, I believe that God will bring good from it. I have encountered so much kindness already. My hope as I go forward in my relationship with God is to continue to set aside time for prayer. Even after we enter back into the church building, I plan to keep my prayer altar."

'He will uplift us'

When he looks back on the early days of the pandemic, Jay Vennapusa admits there were times when he questioned God.

"The one question in my mind was why the Lord is letting his people suffer," recalls Vennapusa, a member of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus.

"But I reminded myself of how much love the Lord has for us and this suffering might be for the greater good. I feel that when we are faithful to the Lord during the worst, he will uplift us and make us the best version of ourselves."

The 28-year-old Vennapusa embraces that belief because of a defining experience in his life six years ago—when he left his family in India to come to the United States to pursue a master's degree.

"I was at the rock bottom of my life, scared of new surroundings, confused, and had no friends. This is when the Lord drew me closer to him, and that is when I got back to my faith life. I constantly remind myself how the Lord helped me through my worst, and made me the



Jay Vennapusa



Allison Meyers stands in front of a personal prayer altar she created in her home, which includes her first Communion banner, as a way of keeping her focus on her relationship with God during the coronavirus pandemic. (Submitted photo)

person I am today. He made me stronger mentally and spiritually."

Vennapusa has been trying to deepen his faith—and the faith of others—during the lockdown by leading a weekly, virtual Bible study group organized by the archdiocese's young adult and college campus ministry.

"I've never lead a Bible study before, but this is providing me the opportunity to pray and talk about the Gospel with other young adults," he says.

"One of the group members is a nurse in an intensive care unit. She shared about the current situation in the hospital, and how she is turning to the Lord for the strength and grace to continue to help people who are suffering from the virus."

He's relying upon the strength and grace of Christ, too.

"It's not easy to carry the cross without his grace, and that is what I need to continue my journey. I'll keep leading the Bible study so that I can be held accountable in my faith."

A time of sacrifices and joys

As the pandemic and the lockdown in Indiana continue, Katherine Shepard often feels she is experiencing the sacrifices of Lent and the joys of Easter at the same time.

"This pandemic has led to so much suffering, solitude and sacrifice. It kind of feels like Lent has just continued on," says the 29-year-old Shepard. "But it also has allowed me to slow down and devote more time to prayer and my relationship with God."

"I have also drawn closer to God by holding onto the hope that he will bring light in this time of darkness. Pope Francis's Easter homily really resonated with me. He talked about how we need to respond to sorrow, fear and darkness with trust in the Lord rather than being paralyzed by it. He said that through prayer, love and small gestures of care we can sow the seeds of hope and even make that hope begin to flower."

She says she has seen those seeds of hope bloom in the dedication of teachers, health care workers and food bank volunteers during this time.

She has also experienced it in the increased interaction of neighbors in the downtown Indianapolis area where she lives with her husband Eric and their cat Little Miss.

She's even found some blessings in her work hours being "significantly decreased" at the faith-based organization that serves homeless pregnant women and their children.

"My schedule has become very flexible and has opened up so much more time for me to spend in prayer and reflection," says Shepard, a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis. "Each day, I have been able to set aside time to do my daily devotion, read the Bible or listen to a favorite faith-based podcast."

The downtime has also led to a deeper connection with the women in her weekly Bible study group, which has continued to meet virtually during the pandemic.

"Usually, there are at least a couple of women who cannot attend—myself included—due to work or other commitments. But now the quarantine has allowed us all to participate and have a sense of community. So many of us right now are feeling a bit of loneliness, so having just that one to two hours each week to check-in with each other and pray for one another has been so good for the soul."

Still, there are times when she feels "a lack of community and connection with others." She "really misses" the people she works with, and the women and children they serve together.

Through all the different feelings the pandemic has created, she has held onto one constant.

"I trust that God will walk with us through this time of uncertainty."

Katherine Shepard

Select priests ministering to the dying in pandemic use protective equipment

By Sean Gallagher

Early on after the coronavirus pandemic started to have significant effects on everyday life, archdiocesan vicar for clergy Father Eric Johnson and other archdiocesan leaders formulated protocols for the celebration of the sacraments for those close to death.

Because of the contagiousness of the virus and the dangers it poses to those infected by it, only priests who are young, free from complicating health conditions and live alone or could do so were asked to celebrate the sacraments for the dying.

Father Johnson spoke of the sacrifice this was for the priests who did not meet these conditions, including himself.

"That's been very painful for them," he said. "It's the right decision, but our clergy want to be there when people need them. This is a tough time for all of us, because all of us want to be there."

Archdiocesan Catholic Charities has supplied them with a wide array of protective equipment: gloves, face masks, glasses and even full-length protective suits that it has kept for use during relief work following natural disasters.

"We have the equipment to make priests as safe as they can be when they go into those situations," Father Johnson said. "In addition to that, we're choosing people to do that who are the least vulnerable."

The designated priests are spread throughout the archdiocese's 11 deaneries. Priests not on the list who receive a request for an anointing of a dying person pass it on to a priest who is.

"It's a great blessing to be able to be there with these people as they're dying and wanting the prayers of the Church and the sacrament of the sick," said Father Sean Danda, pastor of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, who is on the list. "I feel very blessed that I'm healthy enough to be able to go and do that for them."

At the same time, these priests also provide updates on the sick and dying to members of their family who are not able to visit them in person.

"Many of them asked me questions about how they looked," said Father Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, who is on the list. "Were they in pain? Were they suffering? All of these things that families are always concerned about and are able to see and experience because they're typically

there in the room. I've been kind of relaying that to them to some extent."

Archdiocesan leaders and priests at the local level have been working with hospitals and nursing homes across the archdiocese to ensure that priests can have access to the dying to offer the sacraments and pastoral care.

At times, priests have been denied access, even when they have the proper protective equipment. But Father Johnson emphasized that this is an "evolving situation" in which administrators of facilities often re-evaluate their policies and find creative ways to work with priests so they can minister to the dying.

"I worked with Hancock Regional pretty early on to get me in," said Father Jenkins of a hospital in Greenfield. "I really appreciate them doing that work with me."

Making these arrangements is important, Father Johnson said, because "the ability to provide the sacraments and pastoral care to the dying is a very high priority for us."

"As the Catholic Church in the community, we certainly recognize the very serious nature of the pandemic that we're facing and the need to support those in the medical community who are putting themselves in a difficult position in order to care for others," Father Johnson said. "At the same time, for Catholics, the sacraments are at the very center of our identity and experience of worship."

"That becomes particularly acute at the time when a person is stepping from this life to the next. It's at that point when the Church very particularly strives to be present to individuals as they are taking that transition."

Father Johnson has been impressed by the willingness of priests to minister in situations where they put their own health at risk.

"Our priests, overwhelmingly, have been willing to do whatever needs to be done to provide the sacraments for those who are moving from this life to the next," he said. "Aside from celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist, standing with somebody as they move from this life to the next ranks very high with regard to when priests feel that they are most authentically functioning as a priest." †



Father Sengole Thomas Gnanaraj, administrator of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, wears a protective suit outside a home in Connersville before going in to anoint three family members—two who had tested positive for the coronavirus, including one who was believed to be close to death, and a third who was presumed to have been infected by the virus. (Submitted photo)

PRIESTS

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acts in the person of Christ when he acts sacramentally. So, being able to bring and to be Jesus for him in that moment was a powerful experience."

'The priest is not his own'

Being asked to be a priest for the Connersville Deanery to minister to the dying led Father Sengole Thomas Gnanaraj to prayer.

"I was praying for the ministry and preparing myself mentally so that, if someone called me, I would go," said Father Gnanaraj, administrator of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond. "I really care for people, particularly for people who are in danger of death and have a last recourse to the sacraments."

In mid-April, that call came. Three people from the same family living in a home in Connersville were sick. Two had tested positive for the virus. A third was presumed to be infected. One was believed to be close to death.

Father Gnanaraj drove to their home in the southeastern Indiana town, put on a protective suit that covered him from head to foot and went in to anoint the three.

"It was a feeling that I've never had before," he said of the experience. "I couldn't describe what I felt. I was not scared."

It was a moving moment for the people.

"They thanked me profusely," Father Gnanaraj said. "Deep within myself, I was very happy to be able to do this ministry, giving God's mercy and sacraments when people are in dire need of it. We do what we can and God takes care of the rest. We are his instruments and his ministers, always serving the Lord. It's not our ministry. It's his ministry."

He has also anointed patients close to death infected with the virus who were

being treated at Reid Health in Richmond.

Father Patrick said being asked to minister to the dying during the pandemic emphasizes the commitment that priests make at their ordination.

"Just like [Archbishop] Fulton Sheen said, the priest is not his own," Father Patrick said. "It's a commitment to be faithful to what the good Lord is asking of us in whatever situation in which we find ourselves."

He admitted that the prospect of ministering to people with the coronavirus gives him pause.

"It's scary," he said. "You just don't know. At the same time, I became a priest not so that I could go to heaven, although I hope and pray that I go to heaven, but because I felt called to lead other people to heaven. And that's part of what the anointing of the sick is . . . It's about giving people peace of mind and soul and preparing them to see God face to face."

'The Church reaches out to them'

Father Sean Danda has done this a number of times since the start of the pandemic as a priest designated to minister to the dying in the Indianapolis West Deanery. He serves as pastor of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg.

While on a retreat in Belgium before his ordination in 2009, he prayed at the tomb of St. Damien of Molokai, a Belgian missionary priest who ministered in a leper colony in the 19th century on the Hawaiian island. Because of the contagiousness of leprosy (now known as Hansen's disease) and social stigmas connected to it, St. Damien could not leave the colony once he went there.

St. Damien has come to Father Danda's

mind during the pandemic.

"I'm called right now in my priesthood to go amongst those who are considered untouchable and to touch them," he reflected, "to minister to them, to put my life in harm's way to bring the healing hand of God to many people who are desirous to meet the Lord and his love."

"Damien of Molokai said, 'I am going to go into the heart of what the world fears, and I am going to bring the presence of God there.' I feel very much that the priests who are responding to this call now are doing this, too."

Father Gnanaraj said his ministry to people infected with the coronavirus is a way the Church reaches out to people on the margins of society, which Pope Francis has emphasized during his papacy.

"Who is on the periphery now? I would say it's those people who are affected by this illness," Father Gnanaraj said. "They are on the periphery. They're quarantined. No one can go near them. The Church reaches out to them through the priests and the sacraments."

This even applies to those dying of other conditions during this time of quarantine and social distancing.

Father Danda recently anointed

Bill Snoddy, a dying parishioner who had been isolated from all visitors in a nursing home until he entered hospice care and was allowed to live out his final days in the home of his daughter, Stacey Snoddy.

"It meant a lot to me," said Stacey tearfully. "I know my dad would have wanted this. I was very surprised that [Father Danda] came out in person. But it meant so much that he did. He really showed no fear or hesitation."

Stacey said her father, who was in and out of consciousness at the time of the anointing, seemed to appreciate it as well.

"I could see him relax," Stacey said. "After that, he was very calm and at peace until he passed. The formality of it a little bit gave me some calm, too."

Father Danda, like the other priests across central and southern Indiana who are ministering to the dying during the pandemic, finds happiness instead of fear when reaching out to them.

"Providing the grace of the sacraments and bringing God's presence to them is an honor and a joy for the people who are dying or close to death," he said. "It also eases the minds and hearts of their loved ones." †

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Bishops criticize immigration restrictions, say they will hurt families

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and two other Catholic bishops criticized President Donald J. Trump's April 22 executive order to temporarily restrict some forms of immigration during the coronavirus pandemic, saying it could "fuel polarization and animosity."

"While we welcome efforts to ensure that all Americans are recognized for the dignity of their work, the global crisis caused by COVID-19 demands unity and the creativity of love, not more division and the indifference of a throwaway mentality," the prelates said late on April 23.

They also said they are "extremely concerned" about how the proclamation will impact immigrant families "looking to reunify" as well as religious workers.

Issuing the joint statement were Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB president; Washington Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration; and Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, Calif., chairman of the board of directors of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., or CLINIC.

The executive order will be in effect for at least 60 days and will be reviewed 50 days from the effective date of April 23 to determine if it needs to be continued or modified. Trump issued it as part of his administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump said the restriction on immigration is necessary because of the pandemic's pressures on health care and its widespread negative impact on the

economy, and he cited "the impact of foreign workers on the United States labor market, particularly in an environment of high domestic unemployment and depressed demand for labor."

"In order to protect our great American workers, I've just signed an executive order temporarily suspending immigration into the United States," the president said during a White House coronavirus task force briefing. "This will ensure that unemployed Americans of all backgrounds will be first in line for jobs as our economy reopens."

In their response, Archbishop Gomez and Bishops Dorsonville and Soto said: "There is little evidence that immigrants take away jobs from citizens. Immigrants and citizens together are partners in reviving the nation's economy. We must always remember

that we are all sons and daughters of God joined together as one human family.

"We are extremely concerned about how the proclamation will impact immigrant families looking to reunify, as well as religious workers," they continued, noting the executive order prevents certain immigrant family members from reuniting with their loved ones living in the United States.

"Additionally, it bars religious workers seeking to come to the United States as lawful permanent residents from supporting the work of our Church, as well as many other religions, at this time," they said. "This will undoubtedly hurt the Catholic Church and other denominations in the United States, diminishing their overall ability to minister to those in need."

The prelates said the virus "is merciless in its preying upon human life;

it knows no borders or nationality," and at a time when "our common humanity is apparent more now than ever," they added, Trump's action "threatens instead to fuel polarization and animosity."

"Pope Francis teaches us that to live through these times we need to employ and embody the 'creativity of love,'" they added.

There are several exceptions to the order, including: It does not apply to nonimmigrant temporary visas, current green card holders, those seeking to come in as a health care professional, medical researcher, or other work related to combating, recovering from or alleviating the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak; a spouse or child of a U.S. citizen, and "any immigrant whose entry would seem to be 'in the national interest.'"

It also does not limit "the ability of individuals to seek asylum, refugee status, withholding of removal or protection under various humanitarian agreements."

A number of other faith-based immigrant advocacy groups also have weighed in against Trump's executive order, including Catholic Charities USA and its president and CEO, Dominican Sister Donna Markham.

"While we understand the desire to protect people from further exposure to the COVID-19 virus, we should not sacrifice our humanity in our willingness to welcome others," she said in an April 23 statement.

"We are a nation of immigrants. Many families in our communities await the arrival of their loved ones," she said. "The executive order unnecessarily disrupts migrant communities at a time when many immigration processes are already suspended and many families

are sheltering in place to slow the spread of COVID-19. The order will do little to combat a global pandemic that is present within our borders."

Sister Donna added: "Working with immigrant communities is a core part of our ministry and we take great pride in the programs and services we provide them. Our faith calls us to seek justice for newcomers, and we will continue to press Congress and the administration on their behalf to ensure they are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve."

Said Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: "The evils of racism and xenophobia do not stop during a pandemic. To suspend immigration is inhumane and will split up families seeking safety."

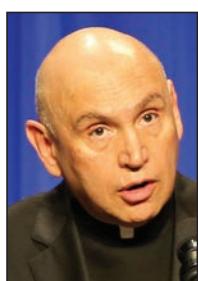
"The facts are that immigrants are good for the economy, especially during this pandemic," she said on April 23. "Some 25 percent of doctors and 70 percent of farm workers are immigrants, and we need more, not fewer, of these and other essential workers during the novel coronavirus pandemic."

Gunn said this latest action by Trump is all part of his "zero-tolerance" immigration policies, and "illustrate the next steps the United States has taken down an already dark path—a path clouded by fear and distorted ideologies that violate our core values and further diminish the United States' role as a world leader."

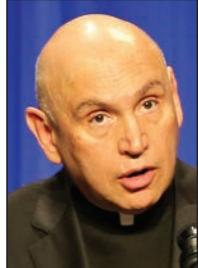
But Thomas Homan, the administration's former acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told the Reuters news agency that "it's really not about immigration."

"It's about the pandemic and keeping our country safer while protecting opportunities for unemployed Americans," he said.

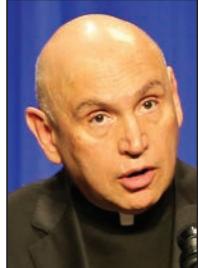
By April 23, more than 26 million Americans had filed for unemployment. †



Bishop Jaime Soto



Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville



Archbishop Jose H. Gomez

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