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Providence Associate Priscilla Hutton speaks during a press conference on the morning of July 13 outside the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute. Behind her, Providence Sister Paula Damiano holds a banner. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Bells toll, sharing the piercing news of the first federal execution in 17 years

By Natalie Hoefler

TERRE HAUTE—On the grounds of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods near Terre Haute, news of the execution pierced the morning quiet on July 14.

The bells of the Church of the Immaculate Conception toll after any

See related editorial, page 4, and related Question Corner, page 9.

execution in the nation, explained Providence Sister Paula Damiano.

But that morning, "For the first time in 17 years," she said, "a sister tolled the bells following [a] federal execution."

The bells announced the 8:07 a.m. death of Daniel Lewis Lee.

Less than 24 hours before, a temporary stay of all scheduled federal executions was announced by the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia due to evidence that the drug to be administered causes severe pain.

The decision was immediately appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court by the federal Department of Justice.

At 2 a.m. on July 14, the Supreme Court overturned the ruling. Lee was executed and pronounced dead six hours later, according to a Reuters report.

In sharing her reaction with *The Criterion*, Sister Paula said the sisters "believe that forgiveness is vital to faith. We are called to forgive every day."

See EXECUTION, page 7

Court sides with Catholic schools in discrimination suit, rules in favor of Little Sisters in employer exemption

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Two significant religious liberty victories occurred at the U.S. Supreme Court on July 8.



Justice Samuel Alito

On that day, the court reaffirmed the right of religious schools to be free from governmental intrusion in employment decisions, and ruled that the administration of President Donald J. Trump was free to give employers the ability to opt out of providing

contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage in their health plans.

The 7-2 schools ruling came in a combination of two cases: *St. James School v. Biel* and *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berrum*, both involving schools in the Los Angeles Archdiocese.

The 7-2 health care plan ruling likewise came in a combination of two cases: *Little Sisters of the Poor Saints Peter and Paul Home v. Pennsylvania* and *Trump v. Pennsylvania*. It involved the order of women religious who care for the elderly poor.

The schools ruling, written by Justice Samuel Alito, said: "What matters, at bottom, is what an employee does," noting that, even though the elementary school teachers "were not given the title of 'minister,'" they still had been hired to help form the faith of the students in religious schools.

"The religious education and formation of students is the very reason for the existence of most private religious schools, and therefore the selection and supervision of the teachers upon whom the schools rely to do this work lie at the core of their mission," Alito wrote.

Dissenting votes were by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor.

See COURT, page 2

A graduation surprise: \$1,000 gifts for the 'fortunate few'

By John Shaughnessy

Curt Gardner wanted to add a touch of drama before the graduating seniors learned which of their classmates would receive a special \$1,000 graduation gift.

When the revelation came, it stunned the graduates—and nearly everyone else at the graduation ceremony of Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison on June 21.

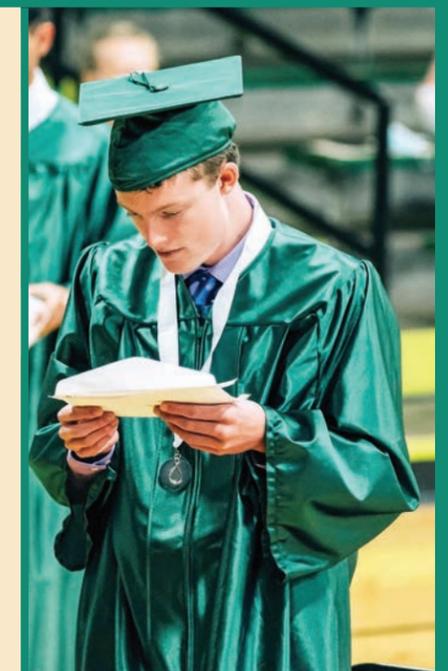
As the school's principal, Gardner told the 19 graduates that an anonymous group of Shawe alumni wanted to give a "fortunate few" of

them the special gift—as a sign of their support for the senior class that was impacted in so many ways by the coronavirus during their final months of high school.

"I would like each graduate to remove the envelope that is currently taped under your seat," Gardner instructed the members of the Class of

See GRADUATION, page 7

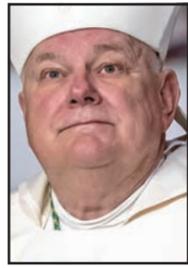
Jason Minnick, a senior at Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison, opens an envelope to see if he is one of the "fortunate few" of his graduating class to receive a \$1,000 gift from an anonymous alumni group. (Submitted photo)



COURT

continued from page 1

Miami Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, chairman of the Committee for Religious Liberty of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, Calif., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Catholic Education, issued a statement regarding the schools decision.



Archbishop Thomas J. Wenski

"Education is a central aspect of the Church's mission," the bishops said. "As institutions carrying out a ministry of the Church, Catholic schools have a right, recognized by the Constitution, to select people who will perform ministry."

The government has no authority to second-guess those ministerial decisions."

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis also issued a statement on the ruling, saying "We welcome the Supreme Court's decision recognizing that Catholic schools must be free to make decisions about those entrusted to educate and form students in the Catholic faith. Catholic educators play a vital role in guiding their students, by word and deed, and passing on the faith to future generations."

The schools case examined if courts can hear employment discrimination claims brought by teachers at Catholic elementary schools. It involved California Catholic school teachers who claimed they had been victims of job discrimination, and the schools that fired them that said they were exempt from anti-discrimination laws due to ministerial exception spelled out in a previous Supreme Court case about a fired teacher at a Lutheran school.

At St. James School in Torrance, Calif., former fifth-grade teacher Kristen Biel said she was fired after informing school administrators that she had breast cancer and would have to take time off for surgery and chemotherapy. She sued under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Biel died last summer, but her husband is seeking damages. Becket, a nonprofit religious liberty law firm representing the schools, said that in 2015, the school chose not to renew Biel's one-year contract based on classroom performance.

Our Lady of Guadalupe School in Hermosa Beach, Calif., did not renew the contract in 2013 for Agnes Morrissey-

Berru, who had taught both fifth and sixth grades since 1999, saying she had a problem keeping order in her classroom and meeting expectations under a new reading program. Morrissey-Berru sued, alleging age bias under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967.

In both cases, federal district courts ruled in favor of the schools, citing ministerial exception. But two separate panels of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit reversed these decisions.

The 2012 decision these schools were standing on is *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, where a teacher at a Lutheran school in Michigan said she was fired for pursuing an employment discrimination claim based on a disability.

In that ruling, the court said the ministerial exception to anti-discrimination laws meant that religious organizations couldn't be sued for firing an employee classified as a minister.

Richard Garnett, law professor at the University of Notre Dame Law School and director of the university's Program on Church, State and Society, said at the time of the oral arguments that, even though these teachers were not giving theology instruction and were not ordained clergy, "their role is, and is understood as, a ministerial one, and secular courts are not in a good position to second-guess or override religious institutions' decisions about their ministerial employees' role."

He also said the cases were not, "as some have complained, about a supposed right of churches to 'ignore' civil-rights laws. Quite the contrary. These cases are about protecting the civil and constitutional rights of religious institutions to decide religious questions for themselves."

In a tweet after the decision was announced, Garnett said it was no surprise that the court reaffirmed "its *Hosanna-Tabor* decision and the religious-freedom rights of schools and reverses the Ninth Circuit's narrowing of that decision."

The health plan decision, written by Justice Clarence Thomas, said the administration had "the authority to provide exemptions from the regulatory contraceptive requirements for employers with religious and conscientious objections."

Dissenting votes were by Ginsburg and Sotomayor.

"This is a saga that did not need to occur. Contraception is not health care, and the government should never have mandated that employers provide it in the first place," the USCCB said.



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

July 22-23, 2020

July 22 – 2 p.m. CDT
Installation of Belleville, Ill., bishop-elect Michael G. McGovern at Cathedral of Saint Peter in Belleville.

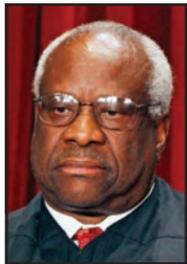
July 23 – 2 p.m. CDT
Installation of Peoria, Ill., coadjutor bishop-elect Louis Tylka at Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria.

The statement was issued by Archbishop Wenski, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The case examined if the expansion of the conscience exemption from the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate violated the health care law and laws governing federal administrative agencies.

It highlighted—as it has before when the Affordable Care Act's mandate has come before the high court—the Little Sisters of the Poor. The sisters were represented, as they have been previously, by Becket.

The U.S. bishops said there had been "multiple opportunities for government officials to do the right thing and exempt conscientious objectors. Time after time, administrators and attorneys refused to respect the rights of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the Catholic faith they exemplify, to operate in accordance with the truth about sex and the human person."



Justice Clarence Thomas

Thomas, describing the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor and their involvement in this case, wrote: "For over 150 years, the Little Sisters have engaged in faithful service and sacrifice, motivated by a religious calling to surrender all for the sake of their brother."

... But for the past seven years, they—like many other religious objectors who have participated in the litigation and rulemakings leading up to today's decision—have had to fight for the ability to continue in their noble work without violating their sincerely held religious beliefs."

Mother Loraine Marie Maguire, the order's U.S. provincial, said the Little Sisters of the Poor were "overjoyed that, once again, the Supreme Court has

no longer steal our attention from our calling."

A recap of the sisters' involvement in this case goes back to 2013 when religious groups and houses of worship were granted a religious exemption by the Supreme Court from the government's mandate to include contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage in their employee health plans.

Three years later, religious nonprofit groups challenged the requirement to comply with the mandate and the court sent the cases back to the lower courts with instructions for the federal government and the challengers to try to work out an agreeable solution.

Then in 2017, religious groups were given further protection from the mandate through an executive order issued by President Trump requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to write a comprehensive exemption to benefit religious ministries, including the Little Sisters of the Poor, from the contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate.

HHS provided this exemption in 2018, but several states challenged it, including California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, saying HHS didn't have the power to give this exemption.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey obtained a nationwide injunction against the rules protecting religious objectors from the contraceptive mandate; that injunction was then upheld by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Philadelphia.

In one of the two consolidated cases, *Trump v. Pennsylvania*, the administration argued that the exceptions to the mandate for religious groups were authorized by the health care law and required by the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, known as RFRA.

Lawyers for Pennsylvania and New Jersey said the administration lacked statutory authority to issue such regulations and said the government did not follow proper administrative procedures.

The second case examines whether the Little Sisters of the Poor had the standing to appeal the 3rd Circuit ruling since a separate court order had already allowed them to refuse to provide contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage in their employee health plans.

The USCCB filed a friend-of-the-court brief siding with the Little Sisters of the Poor, which stressed that the court needs to set the record straight, particularly with its interpretation of RFRA, which says "governments should not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification." †

protected our right to serve the elderly without violating our faith. Our life's work and great joy is serving the elderly poor, and we are so grateful that the contraceptive mandate will

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Fire ravages historic mission, community vows to rebuild

LOS ANGELES (CNS)—The fire that ravaged Mission San Gabriel Archangel Church in the predawn hours of July 11 left behind a haunting scene.

In a matter of minutes, the mission's 230-year-old roof was nearly gone. The sunlight pouring down through the holes revealed the charred planks that had crashed down on the church's pews. The altar, along with the mission's bell tower and museum, were spared, but the thick adobe walls were blackened.

As bad as the damage is, it could have been worse. Because the church had been undergoing renovations, much of the artwork in the sanctuary, including historic paintings and other devotional artifacts, had been removed prior to the fire.

But for Anthony Morales, tribal chief of the San Gabrielino Mission Indians and a member of San Gabriel, the damage was more than material.

"These are my roots," said Morales, holding back tears as he surveyed the scene just hours after the fire had been contained. "This is my church. All my ancestors are buried in the cemetery next door. Six thousand of my ancestors are buried on these grounds, and this is the church that they built. It's just very devastating."

The devastation was just the latest blow to be suffered this year by Los Angeles' oldest Catholic outpost.

As 2020 started, preparations were underway to celebrate a "Jubilee Year" leading to the 250th anniversary of St. Junipero Serra's founding of the mission on Sept. 8, 1771, which has been postponed to 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

As the church reopened for public Masses, waves of anti-racism protests had broken out across the country, protests that included attacks on public monuments and statues of figures from U.S. history, including statues of St. Junipero, like those found on the mission's campus.

In late June, statues to the California missionary were toppled in San Francisco and in Los Angeles, and the weekend before the fire, a long-standing St. Junipero statue outside the state Capitol in Sacramento was felled.

The July 11 blaze at San Gabriel was part of a weekend that saw churches vandalized in other parts of the country. Statues of Mary were damaged in Queens, N.Y., and in Boston; in Ocala, Fla., a man drove a minivan into a Catholic church before pouring gasoline in the foyer and setting fire to the building.

While there was no immediate word on the cause of the fire, investigators from a regional task force and from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives spent the afternoon of July 11 investigating.

Local Catholics who showed up at the mission the next day to pray were suspicious. The timing of the fire—and the broader attacks on St. Junipero statues and other church properties—was too much of a coincidence for them.

Resilience was the theme that morning inside the mission's Chapel of the Annunciation, where the mission's pastor, Claretian Father John Molyneux, made a bold pledge to Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles.

"You will be back to celebrate our 250th anniversary in a rebuilt church," Father Molyneux promised the archbishop at the start of Mass.

"This fire changes nothing," the archbishop said in his homily. "Mission San Gabriel will always be the spiritual heart of the Church in Los Angeles, the place from which the Gospel still goes forth."

(The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has created the San Gabriel Mission Restoration Fund: <https://lacatholics.org/restoration>.) †



Mission San Gabriel Archangel in San Gabriel, Calif., caught fire before sunrise on July 11. (CNS photo/Victor Aleman, Angelus News)



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Mark 10:45

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Editorial



Pope Francis is seen in a file photo making a point. In his revision of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 2018, the pope made it clear that the death penalty should no longer be a part of society. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Scheduled executions remind us of dignity of all human life

The Catholic Church believes that all human life is sacred—from conception to natural death. And there are no exceptions to that tenet.

As our faith teaches us, that includes the unborn, the hungry, the homeless, the elderly. Even the prisoner on death row.

We are all God's children.

But understanding how those who have committed heinous crimes—including taking the lives of young, innocent children—can still be loved by God and others is a challenge for many members of society.

And how some individuals have the courage to minister in prison to those who have committed these capital crimes is another life lesson many don't understand.

We do not condone the unthinkable crimes committed by such inmates. We pray for the victims' families, that God is with them and helps them heal from their deep and personal wounds.

Here in central and southern Indiana, we've had three shepherds in recent times who have made it a priority to minister to those in prison: the late Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein; Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, now shepherd of the Archdiocese of Newark N.J.; and Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

All three visited men and women who were incarcerated to let them know they were not forgotten, and that Christ's love was still available to them.

Archbishop Thompson said as much when he visited the Indiana Women's Prison in Indianapolis in 2018 and baptized and confirmed two inmates, and later gave them their first Communion.

"These are the ones that Pope Francis reminds us are on the margins, on the peripheries, that society tends to want to brush aside or forget," the archbishop said during his visit. "We have to remember that Christ is present here, and remember the goodness and dignity of every person."

The vision of the Archdiocesan Corrections Ministry, led by Deacon Marc Kellams, is to build a Christ-centered Catholic community that upholds the dignity of every human person touched by crime in order to practice mercy and foster hope and peace. Its mission is to create an environment of trust through a lens of Catholic social teaching by witnessing the Gospel to the incarcerated, formerly incarcerated and victims/families, through healing and mentoring processes.

We understand that practicing mercy and fostering hope and peace are no easy tasks, especially when talking about individuals who have committed grave criminal acts.

But our faith teaches us that God's forgiveness is available to each of us—if we truly seek repentance for our sins, even the most heinous ones. And the priests, deacons, religious and lay Catholics who minister to incarcerated men and women can share stories of conversion by the most hardened of criminals.

Despite several legal challenges, death-row inmate Daniel Lewis Lee was executed by lethal injection at the Federal Correctional Complex (FCC) in Terre Haute on the morning of July 14. Lee was the first federal prisoner put to death since 2003.

As *The Criterion* went to press this week, the future of three other death-row inmates scheduled for execution at the FCC was uncertain.

The July 17 execution of Dustin Lee Honken was still scheduled to take place—even though Cardinal Tobin has written a letter to President Donald J. Trump asking that he grant him clemency. Cardinal Tobin ministered to Honken on death row while he was shepherd of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Another death-row inmate, Wesley Purkey, was granted a temporary stay of his July 15 execution by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit on July 6. A fourth inmate, Keith Nelson, is scheduled to be executed in Terre Haute on Aug. 28. As part of their guilty verdicts, all were convicted of killing children in separate crimes.

Pope Francis, in his revision of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 2018, made it clear the death penalty should no longer be a part of society:

"Today ... there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

"Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that 'the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person,' and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide" (#2267), the updated catechism reads.

As our Church leaders, including our Holy Father, have said, we believe the death penalty is another act of violence. And like our shepherds, we believe life without parole also offers justice.

—Mike Krokos

Sight Unseen/Brandon A. Evans

More important than knowledge

When I was in high school, my science classroom had a poster of Albert Einstein with a short and powerful quote—although one that seemed a bit odd for a place of learning.



It was something published in a 1929 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* at the point in Einstein's life that he had come up with the General Theory of Relativity, become a scientific celebrity and won the Nobel Prize in Physics.

Those are accomplishments that take a great deal of *knowledge*, which he certainly had in abundance, and not just any knowledge, but the type that befuddles many of us: calculus, physics, geometry.

In our age, such things are highly valued, and most certainly necessary as the *raw fuel* for expanding our technological grasp over the world we inhabit.

But Einstein saw something more: that there is a *spark* required for knowledge to be useful; there is a shining jewel beyond the reach of the merely intellectual that can be obtained without any academic degree at all.

His simple quote is a note of inspiration spoken to a world of progress and learning:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

It seems at first like an all-too-smart bit of arrogance from a person already gifted with a great mind.

But he was quite serious. To come up with the idea of relativity took looking at things in a new way. It meant *imagining beyond* the entire framework of Newtonian physics to a cosmos wherein matter could become energy, and gravity could bend light and velocity could alter time.

And Einstein proved it on paper, it took an *absolutely brilliant* stroke of imagination on the part of another researcher to come up with the idea of proving once and for all by observing the stars just on the edge of a solar eclipse.

When looking at the real history of the world, at the actual levers of power that create change, it often begins not with a fact but with an idea—be it a good idea or

a bad one. Histories begin with *stories*.

Imagination is the conduit by which our stories form, by which we share the beauty of the world with one another, and its horrors. The power of sub-creation does not lie in strength, nor money, nor influence, nor even learning: its nascent seed is in each of us—the sparkle that won't die at the center of our consciousness.

By our *nature* we are creative and by our imagination flows the light which illumines our paths, which gives shape to the formless. Our songs, our poems, our works of art: they all require patience and knowledge and practice and skill, but they require imagination *more*.

Imagination, even more boldly put, is the pathway God uses to bring wisdom to the simple. It is a focusing lens that inverts our perception of who are actually the greatest among us.

As if proving the point, a recent article in a Catholic publication mentioned that the bulk of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's education came from two books: the Bible and *The Imitation of Christ*.

Two books. And yet, in her remarkably short life and having produced only a scant amount of writing, she gave to Christianity such a treasure through her "Little Way" that she was proclaimed not only a saint, but a *doctor* of the Church.

A simple girl, derided at times by her peers and a mischievous glint always barely hidden in her smile, was given a title of authority rarer than cardinal, or queen, or even *pope*; one of only 36 people to have walked the Earth in the 2,000 years since Christ did to earn it.

She is *his* lesson to us, *his* reflection and *his* admonition to the prestigious and clever and learned of each generation; a reminder the Spirit blows where it wills, and you never know upon whose head the invisible crown of wisdom will come to lie.

For God is the master of imagination, and the keeper of the keys of the invisible doors through which light comes into each mind—light which allows the unseen to be seen and the unimagined to become real.

(*Sight Unseen* is an occasional column that explores God and the world. Brandon A. Evans is the online editor and graphic designer of *The Criterion* and a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †

Letters to the Editor

Our faith calls us to stand up for victims of injustice, racism

Our Christian faith calls us to stand up for those who suffer injustice. Our Christian faith also calls us to stand up for those who are victims of racism.

Often we can make excuses in order to avoid issues of justice because such action is not popular. Jesus stood up for people who were ignored, not the "right kind." He stood up for sinners, and he

was crucified for this.

We, too, know that by being Christ's followers and working for those who are victims of racism, sexism, unfair practices, violence, we can also, as Jesus, be put on a cross.

Ron Stegman
Guilford

Chrism Mass reminds us of our 'unity with God and our neighbors'

The pastoral message from our shepherd, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, at the June 29 Chrism Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis was the core of our prayer and mission: "unity with God and our neighbors."

This unity is exemplified in the existential within our Church, which is an immediate presence in action of unity amid diversity. Daily we celebrate this divine reality through grace.

We are a presence of life and love to

the world. We celebrate every day the mystical communion of Christ in the Eucharist.

In solidarity, we confront and make an effort to convert and transform the adversities within our human condition.

We as a Catholic Church, a Church instituted by Christ, desire with him to bring fully to his creation his divine grace and presence.

Gary Taylor
Milan



Christ the Cornerstone

Longing for God's kingdom in today's troubled times

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches" (Mt 13:31-32).

Although it's only mid-July, it's already been a rough year for all of us—especially for those seriously affected by grave illness, economic hardship, racial injustice, violence, fear and anxiety. We understandably raise our voices heavenward and cry out: "Thy kingdom, come!"

Longing for a better world where peace and justice reign, and where every tear will be wiped away because there is no more sadness, suffering or fear, is an integral part of the human condition.

Regardless of who we are, where we come from, or what we believe, we all desire something more—often much more—than we experience here and now in what is sometimes referred to as "this vale of tears."

As Pope Francis reminds us frequently, the Good News that Jesus preached addresses this universal

longing in powerful ways. Our Lord's life, death and resurrection have overcome the evil effects of sin and death. They proclaim Christ's unconditional victory over all the forces of gloom and doom, and they make it possible for us to truly be people of hope and joy.

We are rightly sad to witness the devastating effects of evil and injustice in our world. But as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, our response cannot be disillusionment or despair. Jesus tells us in the Gospel reading for next Sunday (Mt 13:24-43) that we are called to be "sowers of good seeds" who prepare for a better world to come by planting, cultivating and then harvesting the fruits of God's bounty.

Our job is to work together with all our sisters and brothers everywhere to prepare for, and build, the kingdom of God. As Pope Francis says, our work is to build bridges, not walls, and to share the joy of the Gospel with everyone we encounter in our daily lives.

In the first reading from the Book of Wisdom, we are told that although the Lord is almighty, he judges with clemency, and with much lenience he

governs us. "For power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins" (Wis 12:18-19). Our hope is based on God's mercy and compassion for sinners like us.

In the second reading, St. Paul tells us that "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will" (Rom 8:26-27). We don't have to worry about what to say or do in the face of injustice or violence. If we're listening attentively to God's word, the Holy Spirit will show us the way.

Of course, we are impatient. We want the kingdom of God to come "now" and we balk at the idea that we must wait for the smallest of seeds planted by us, and many others, to become full-grown plants.

Jesus admonishes us not to be

impatient—or to expect the effects of sin and evil (the weeds that choke the healthy plants) to be removed too soon. "Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn" (Mt 13:30). The day of reckoning will come. On that day, Jesus says, evildoers will be punished and "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13:43).

During these troubled times, we should not lose hope. The kingdom of God is coming. In fact, it is already here in seminal form waiting to be sown, cultivated and harvested by us. We dare not give in to darkness and despair, but we also can't afford to take things for granted.

As missionary disciples of Jesus, we are called to be women and men of hope who work tirelessly for peace through justice and mercy, the hallmarks of God's reign among us.

Let's pray for the grace to overcome our doubts and fears. Let's work hard for the kingdom that is to come by making this world a far better place than it is right now. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Anhelar el reino de Dios en los tiempos difíciles de hoy en día

"El reino de los cielos es como un grano de mostaza que un hombre sembró en su campo. Aunque es la más pequeña de todas las semillas, cuando crece es la más grande de las hortalizas y se convierte en árbol, de modo que vienen las aves y anidan en sus ramas" (Mt 13:31-32).

Aunque tan solo estamos a mediados de julio, ya ha sido un año difícil para todos nosotros, especialmente para los que se han visto seriamente afectados por enfermedades graves, dificultades económicas, injusticia racial, violencia, miedo y ansiedad. Comprensiblemente elevamos nuestras voces al cielo y exclamamos: "¡Venga a nosotros tu reino!"

Anhelar un mundo mejor donde reinen la paz y la justicia, y donde cada lágrima sea enjugada porque ya no hay tristeza, sufrimiento o miedo, es una parte integral de la condición humana.

Independientemente de quiénes seamos, de dónde vengamos, o en qué creamos, todos deseamos algo más (a menudo mucho más) de lo que experimentamos aquí y ahora en lo que a veces se denomina "este valle de lágrimas."

Tal como el papa Francisco nos recuerda a menudo, la Buena Nueva que Jesús predicó aborda este anhelo

universal de manera poderosa. La vida, la muerte y la resurrección de nuestro Señor han superado los malos efectos del pecado y la muerte. Proclaman la victoria incondicional de Cristo sobre todas las fuerzas de la penumbra y la perdición, y hacen posible que seamos realmente personas de esperanza y alegría.

Tenemos justa razón para estar tristes al ser testigos de los efectos devastadores del mal y la injusticia en nuestro mundo. Pero como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo, nuestra respuesta no puede ser la desilusión o la desesperación. Jesús nos dice en la lectura del Evangelio del próximo domingo (Mt 13:24-43) que estamos llamados a ser "sembradores de buenas semillas" que se preparan para un mundo mejor que vendrá por plantar, cultivar y luego cosechar los frutos de la bondad de Dios.

Nuestro trabajo es trabajar junto con todos nuestros hermanos de todas partes para preparar y construir el reino de Dios. Como dice el papa Francisco, nuestro trabajo es construir puentes, no muros, y compartir la alegría del Evangelio con todos los que encontramos en nuestra vida diaria.

En la primera lectura del Libro de la Sabiduría, se nos dice que, aunque el Señor es todopoderoso, juzga con clemencia, y con mucha indulgencia

nos gobierna. "Porque puedes usar de tu poder en el momento que quieras. Actuando así, enseñaste a tu pueblo que el hombre justo debe ser bondadoso, y llenaste a tus hijos de una bella esperanza, al darles la oportunidad de arrepentirse de sus pecados" (Sab 12:18-19). Nuestra esperanza se basa en la misericordia y la compasión de Dios por los pecadores como nosotros.

En la segunda lectura, san Pablo nos dice que "el Espíritu nos ayuda en nuestra debilidad; porque no sabemos orar como debíamos, pero el Espíritu mismo intercede por nosotros con gemidos indecibles; y aquel que escudriña los corazones sabe cuál es el sentir del Espíritu, porque Él intercede por los santos conforme a la voluntad de Dios" (Rom 8:26-27). No tenemos que preocuparnos por qué decir o hacer frente a la injusticia o la violencia. Si escuchamos atentamente la palabra de Dios, el Espíritu Santo nos mostrará el camino.

Pero, por supuesto, somos impacientes; queremos que el reino de Dios venga "ahora" y nos resistimos a la idea de que debemos esperar a que la más pequeña de las semillas plantadas por nosotros, y muchas otras, se conviertan en plantas adultas.

Jesús nos advierte que no seamos impacientes, ni esperemos que

los efectos del pecado y el mal (las malas hierbas que asfixian a las plantas sanas) se erradiquen rápidamente. "Dejen que crezcan juntos hasta la cosecha. Entonces les diré a los segadores: Recojan primero la mala hierba, y átenla en manojos para quemarla; después recojan el trigo y guárdenlo en mi granero" (Mt 13:30). El día del juicio final llegará. Ese día, dice Jesús, los malvados serán castigados y "los justos brillarán en el reino de su Padre como el sol" (Mt 13:43).

En estos tiempos difíciles, no debemos perder la esperanza. El Reino de Dios viene; de hecho, ya está aquí en forma de una semilla que espera ser sembrada, cultivada y cosechada por nosotros. No nos atrevamos a ceder a la oscuridad y la desesperación, pero tampoco podemos darnos el lujo de dar las cosas por sentado.

Como discípulos misioneros de Jesús, estamos llamados a ser mujeres y hombres de esperanza que trabajan incansablemente por la paz a través de la justicia y la misericordia, los sellos distintivos del reino de Dios entre nosotros.

Recemos por la gracia de superar nuestras dudas y temores, y trabajemos arduamente por el reino que está por venir, haciendo de este mundo un lugar mucho mejor que el actual. †

VIPs

Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to bit.ly/2M4MQms or call 317-236-1585.

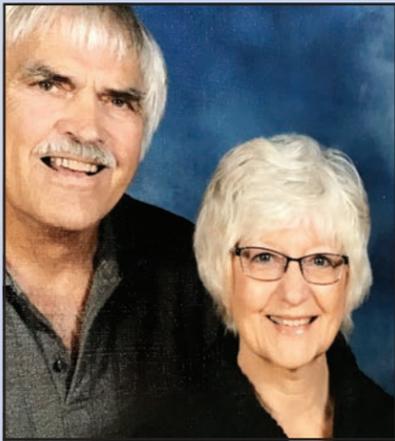


Ronald and Barbara (Meyer) Cooper, members of St. Michael Parish in Brookville, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on July 2. The couple was married in St. Michael Church in Brookville on July 2, 1960. They have four children: Kathy Orschell, Heidi Reece, Phil and Scott Cooper. The couple also has 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. †

Ralph and Beverly (Cross) Hahn, members of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on July 9. The couple was married in Holy Family Church in Richmond (now a campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish) on July 9, 1960. They have four children: Karla Billieu, Robin, Michael and the late Stephen Hahn. The couple also has seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. †



Stephen and Nancy (Dale) Beyer, members of St. Mary Parish in Rushville, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 13. The couple was married in St. Vincent de Paul Church in Shelby County, on June 13, 1970. They have three children: Brian, Joe and Scott Beyer. The couple also has eight grandchildren. †



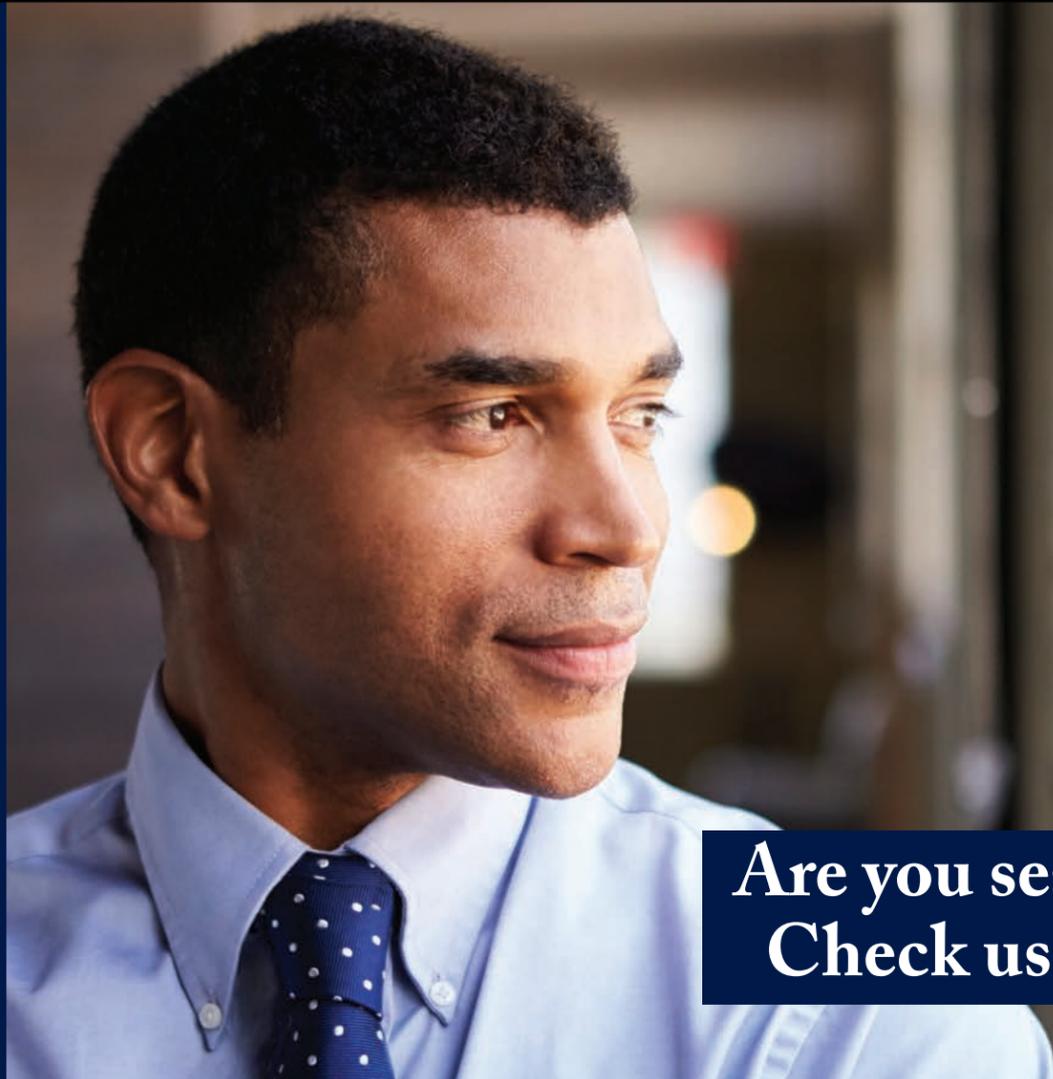
Ted and Barbara (Thompson) Brindle, members of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 6. The couple was married in St. Peter Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. (Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese), on June 6, 1970. They have two children: Douglas and Matthew Brindle. The couple also has three grandchildren. †

Peter and Pam (Pflumm) Chermansky, members of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 20. The couple was married in Holy Name of Jesus Church in Beech Grove on June 20, 1970. They have two children: Melanie Brown and Brett Chermansky. The couple also has two grandchildren. †



Larry and Peggy (Cissell) Richards, members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 27. The couple was married in St. Agnes Church in Louisville, Ky., on June 27, 1970. They have four children: Ellen Woods, Jack, Larry and Nathan Richards. The couple also has eight grandchildren. †

Paul and Suzanne (Lassuy) Whalen, members of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 27. The couple was married in St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on June 27, 1970. They have four children: Theresa Harvey, Colleen Sicuso, Erin and P.J. Whalen. The couple also has nine grandchildren. †



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GRADUATION

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2020. “I want you to open that envelope very carefully. Then if you find a \$1,000 check in your envelope, you are a winner and one of the ‘fortunate few.’ And I want you to stand and remain standing, so that your family and friends can see your good fortune.”

As the students reached under their seats and opened their envelopes, a few leaped to their feet quickly, their smiles of surprise and delight showing their good fortune. Then others stood, holding their checks high. And when everyone had finished opening their envelopes, they realized that each of them had received \$1,000 from the alumni group.

As the surprise and smiles spread throughout the school’s gym, Gardner told the graduates that they are now part of the “fortunate few” to become alumni of Shawe. He also encouraged the graduates to remember this gift as they go forward in their lives.

“In the future, find ways to bring this same happiness to others,” the principal said. “Be charitable.”

‘It was like a ‘wow’ moment’

As one of the 19 graduates in this year’s class at Shawe, Nate Pawlak says it’s a moment he will never forget. “My classmates and I have talked about it a lot since then. I remember thinking initially that this is awesome that a few of us would be getting it. But I thought, ‘There’s no way this is going to happen for me.’ All the people I’ve been

talking to had the same feeling.

“When we all started standing up, I thought, ‘This just makes sense.’ This is awesome that we all got it.”

Nate says his class especially appreciates the alumni group recognizing how hard it was for them to lose so much



Nate Pawlak

of the home stretch of their senior year, a time usually marked with a number of senior-related traditions.

“The thing I missed the most was the normalcy—missing all the people I would see on a day-to-day basis,” says Nate, the class valedictorian, student council president and a pitcher on the varsity baseball team.

“I missed going to baseball practice and seeing the teammates and the coaches. I missed the teachers and my classmates. I wished I was in the classroom with them.”

He says that feeling reflects the closeness of the 19 graduates, 18 of whom will attend college while the other one has enlisted in the U.S. Navy.

“Shawe, it means family,” Nate says. “Being such a tiny school, your entire class becomes your family. You learn things about them, and you’re surrounded by them for more than eight hours a day if you do sports and other extracurriculars. You build that relationship with them that goes past friendship or an acquaintanceship. It’s family.”

That feeling is shared by Ambar Materano-Sanchez, who arrived at the school 2 1/2 years ago after her family moved from Venezuela to Madison. Even with a starting point of very limited English when she came to Shawe, she ended up as the class salutatorian.

“I feel love for Shawe because they helped me with everything,” Ambar says. “I feel all the support my teachers and classmates gave me. When I started at Shawe, I didn’t know much English, but I felt welcome. It was just like a family, and it was like I was a part of that family.”

Her voice also fills with joy in talking about the gift from the alumni group.

“It was really cool,” says Ambar, who will use the gift to help begin her education in nursing. “When everyone got it, it was a big surprise for everyone.”



Ambar Materano-Sanchez



Social distancing was a priority during the June 21 graduation ceremony of the 19 members of the Class of 2020 of Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison in the school’s gym. (Photo courtesy of Laura Jayne Gardner Photography)

Beyond the special features of the graduation ceremony, Nate also praised the school’s administrators for “the ton of extra effort they did to make the seniors feel special” as their time in high school came to an end.

He mentioned the yard signs the administrators delivered to each of their homes, signs marked with their name and the news of their graduation from Shawe.

“They also had a parade for us,” he says. “We got in our cars and drove past the school, and all the teachers and parents were cheering us on.

“The administration had already done so much for us, and it was the icing on the cake that an alumni group would do this for us. It was like a ‘wow’ moment.”

The start of the surprise

As the president of Prince of Peace Schools in Madison, Phil Kahn was one of the few people at the graduation ceremony who wasn’t surprised by the \$1,000 gifts to the graduates. Yet even though he knew it was coming, he was still delighted by the generosity that the alumni group showed.

“One alum contacted me,” recalls Kahn, a 1987 graduate of Shawe. “The discussion started out just asking about the senior class and how they were holding up during this difficult school year.

“I told this person that they were a very strong group and have handled it as well as you could expect. They were very positive and supportive of the school and each other. We are very proud of each one of them.”

From that conversation, a group of alumni donors came up with a plan to give each of the seniors \$1,000—“as a scholarship to help with any expenses they have for college or their futures,” Kahn says.

The members of the alumni group just insisted that they remain anonymous.

“I thought this was a great example of how strong the ‘Shawe Family’ really is,” Kahn says. “This group of alumni is older, but still worried about the students graduating today.

“Shawe is a special place. This is just one more example of how, from the start, the Shawe family looks out for each other.” †

EXECUTION

continued from page 1

She noted that many sisters “past and present” have visited death-row inmates at the FCC, including one deceased sister who visited Lee.

“We will pray for Daniel Lewis Lee, his family, and the victims of the tragedy from 1996 and their family,” she said.

Lee was convicted of murdering a gun dealer, the man’s wife and her 8-year-old daughter in Arkansas in 1996.



Providence Sister Paula Damiano speaks during a Death Penalty Action press conference on the morning of July 13 outside the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

The Supreme Court decision also affects federal inmates Dustin Lee Honken and Keith Dwayne Nelson, whose executions were previously set for July 17 and Aug. 28, respectively.

The July 15 scheduled execution of Wesley Ira Purkey was already temporarily stayed through a separate case.

As *The Criterion* went to press at noon on July 14, the status of Purkey’s, Honken’s and Nelson’s pending executions were not known.

Deacon Steven Gretencord, who has ministered to death-row inmates at the FCC for nearly 10 years, shared his reaction to the news in an early morning call with *The Criterion*.

“I just am amazed that we as a nation continue to use such draconian methods of punishment,” he said.

“We’re so intent on revenge that we seem to lose sight of what justice is about. We only have one true judge, and all of us will face that judge. ...

“It’s just such a very sad, sad, state of affairs,” he said. “This is not going to bring closure to anyone. All it does is reopen the wounds and prove that we have no idea about justice, and certainly not about mercy.”

‘Every person can change their lives’

Delayed, appealed, overturned, appealed, overruled, temporarily delayed, appealed, overturned. Like a rapid-fire legal tennis match, the decisions on two cases unfolded in the courts between July 10 and 14.

At 10 a.m. on July 13, a press conference hosted by Death Penalty Action and Terre Haute Death Penalty Resistance was underway across the street from the FCC, where federal executions take place.

At that time, Lee’s 4 p.m. execution was in question pending a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on a denied appeal for a delay until travel was safer from the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus.

At about 10:15 a.m., the press conference was interrupted by news of the D.C. federal district court’s ruling to temporarily stay all federal executions.

Cheers and applause erupted among death penalty opponents present at the press conference.

Speaking at the event on behalf of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Paula said her congregation was “well-aware of the heinous crimes of those now on death row.

“But they are also people who deserve love, mercy and justice,” she added. “We don’t have to love the actions, but we have to love the people—it’s the Gospel message. To do anything less would be to deny the Gospel. ... [E]very person can change their lives.”

Priscilla Hutton agreed. The member of the Sisters of Providence’s lay association spoke at the press conference through her role with the international organization Social Justice Sector for Charter for Compassion.

“I visit a man on death row here in Terre Haute,” she said. “From all I know of the criminal justice system, and as I’ve walked these halls in the penitentiary, I’m here to say that many of these people are good people. And all we need to do is give them a chance.”

It’s not only the prisoners about whom the Church is concerned when it comes to execution, according to Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. He explained why in a recent statement regarding the rescheduled executions.

The “underlying Catholic teaching on [the death penalty] is grave concern for the care of souls of all involved—including the judge, jury, prison personnel, families of these officials and society itself,” he said. “Taking the life of any human being, even one who is guilty of grave crimes against humanity, weighs on the conscience of both individuals and society as a whole.”

Karen Burkhart agrees. The member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield spoke at the press conference through her role as the Indiana death penalty abolition coordinator for Amnesty International USA.

But she had other reasons for being present.

“I’m here because I want to protest the death penalty, but also because I feel just awful that people are being killed in my name,” Burkhart told *The Criterion*.

“America is supposed to be one of the best countries in the world, and we’re doing things that most [nations] have abolished. ... It’s just an awful example to kill people who kill people, to show that killing people is wrong.”

(For information and updates on federal and state executions, go to catholicismobilizing.org. For information on local efforts to oppose the death penalty, go to Terre Haute Death Penalty Resistance’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/terrehautedpr. To sign petitions opposing the death penalty and to learn about national efforts for the abolition of the death penalty, go to deathpenaltyaction.org.) †

Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Jim Wood

Daughter offers reminder why Mass and Sunday still matter

Our daughter, Sarah, was about 7 when, on New Year's Eve, some 90 minutes before midnight, she



exclaimed, "Hey, I'm going to bed because I'm tired and we have Mass in the morning. I suggest you guys come to bed, too!"

My wife Andrea and I looked at each other, then in unison we laughed out loud.

Sarah was not pleased, and she stormed off, running up the stairs. A few minutes later, we followed, and Sarah had tucked herself in. Since she was still awake, we sat on her bed and said we were sorry for laughing. She said it was OK.

Then she said something I'll never forget: "I want us to be fresh for Mass tomorrow because it's a special day." Then in unison Andrea and I both shed tears.

I relate that story not because it might draw an air of sentiment, which it should. I relate it because even a kid can have a notion of the transcendent goodness of Mass. Albeit, that holy day of obligation on Jan. 1 may not have been a Sunday, yet it was important for all of us as a family to come together to celebrate Mary, the Holy Mother of God, and to receive all the grace from God through the holy Eucharist.

And although that New Year's Eve we did not make it to midnight, we received

something far greater: the wisdom of a young girl, who to this day still believes Sunday is a special day because of Mass.

I have completed my first year of service with the archdiocese in the role of coordinator of catechetical resources. During this time, I became familiar with the inner workings of the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis, in particular the Office of Catechesis.

As a lifelong Catholic, I was amazed by the things I did not know about catechesis, evangelization and worship. I thought I could take on this position and put a fresh spin where everyone would pat me on the back and wonder why I wasn't here sooner. Yet, as humble a statement as that is, I realized that not only does my work matter to many people, but also Sunday matters to many as well.

We have recently returned to work full time at the office after a three-month period of working from home. Not only was our commute to the office severed, but our obligation to attend Mass on Sunday was detached, too.

Working from home had its challenges, yet we were able to complete many tasks and remain functional as an office.

Back in May, director of catechesis Ken Ogorek and I recorded a spot for Catholic Radio Indy. Not being there in person to record, not being able to see our colleagues, not being able to gain insight if our effort was well done, made

for an interesting morning of feeling out of place. Yet, being the professionals they are at Catholic Radio Indy, it turned out to be an awesome show about the great things we do in the Office of Catechesis.

We recently returned to Mass at St. Simon the Apostle Church in Indianapolis last month after a three-month interruption. Not only was our obligation commuted, but our physical presence had been forbidden.

Watching Mass from home, even with a missal in hand, presented its challenges. Do we need to fast for an hour, or can I sip coffee during the homily? Should we kneel and ring bells, or sit with phone in hand, checking our favorite app?

The Office of Catechesis strives to bring the understanding and appreciation of Sunday Mass to the forefront of our work in order to help our parishes continue to create disciples of Jesus. The joy of returning amid restrictions brought back a flood of memories and a prayer of thankfulness.

I was reminded by Sarah's insight as a young child to never take for granted our freedom to worship, the need to be fresh for Mass, and the desire of returning to the greatest hope we have—the liturgy. Thank you, Sarah.

(Jim Wood is archdiocesan coordinator of catechetical resources and a diaconal candidate for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He can be reached at jwood@archindy.org.) †

Amid the Fray/Greg Erlandson

Mass in three dimensions once again

Have you started going back to Mass yet?

Recently, I went to my first Mass in three months. I had been watching Masses livestreamed weekly, but of course it didn't feel the same. I looked forward to being able to return to a Mass celebrated in three dimensions.



Before I returned, I thought absence might make the heart more mystical. The heavens would open, and a booming voice would announce, "This is my son, who has been extraordinarily patient."

In truth, however, my first Mass was, well, extraordinarily ordinary. The celebrant didn't even remark on our long time apart. Perhaps for all of us, what we had been doing for decades, our spiritual muscle memory, kicked in. The routine that is ritual swept me along. It didn't feel like I had been away three months. In an abnormal year, it still felt normal.

There is a great deal of concern in church circles that I'm in the minority. Parish staff worry about how many people will return, or if they'll return. Diocesan finance officials worry that people who stop going stop giving, which will cripple parish and diocesan services worse than they already are.

There is reason for concern. More than one person has told me about the ease of watching Mass on TV. No dressing up. No crowds. No shame in getting up for water.

Others have commented on the wide selection available to them on the Internet. If they wanted high Church with incense and chant, they found it. If they wanted a quick Mass with a meaty sermon, they found it. Suddenly the streaming Church had become a supermarket of options. How can the local parish compete?

And if going to Mass might seem normal, there are still a lot of changes. Limits on attendance. No holy water. Masks required. Hand sanitizer encouraged.

Since we continue to live in a plague year, it is even possible that our churches could close again this fall (as some already have). Should there be a second wave, we might be sent back to our domestic catacombs.

If you are trying to decide what to do, please keep these things in mind. First, if you are vulnerable and worried about contagion, it is OK to be cautious.

But Mass on a screen or a prayer in your heart is not the same as being present at the Eucharist. Mass is about community, not spectators. Flesh and blood come together to share the flesh and blood of Jesus.

As Pope Francis said, the pandemic created a difficult situation to which the Church responded. "But the ideal of the Church is always with the people and with the sacraments—always," he stressed. It is communal, not virtual.

Second, the Church is struggling. Your parish, your diocese, your Church, all are hurting right now. Some Catholic schools have closed and many more are in danger of closing. Some people have kept giving—electronically or with envelopes—to their parish, but many people have not. If you have a job or have a steady income, consider upping your gift. If you give infrequently or never, consider giving now.

And if you are reading this in a diocesan publication, support it. The Church is losing its voice as it closes more of its local publications. A bishop said recently that "we must maintain our capacity to tell our story."

The Church has responded with patience, generosity and even heroism during this pandemic. That is the story we must be proud to tell today.

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

For the Journey/Effie Calderola

Reflecting on the 'Holy Saturday' we are experiencing

It was the Friday before the July Fourth holiday, and as I cleared the dinner dishes I said to my husband, "It's seemed like Saturday all day today."



"Every day is Saturday," he jokingly replied as he filled the dishwasher.

Welcome to the summer of COVID-19.

If you're going to work outside your home each day, Saturday may still have meaning. But if you're working from home, the days blur.

Like millions of Americans, I've missed the coffee dates, the committee meetings, dinner parties, restaurants, date nights in movie theaters, volunteer activities,

pilgrimages to the local library, Mass in person at my parish.

I did not board a flight for a scheduled trip to Europe. I have not flown to see my kids. My mother-in-law died, and was cremated without our presence. Her memorial service awaits a time when we can all travel from several states.

After dinner, sitting on the front porch on not-Saturday, I thought about one of the most significant Saturdays of the year, Holy Saturday.

Maybe I should sit in Holy Saturday for a while and feel the reality of the Holy Saturday we are experiencing as a nation.

I've heard it said we live much of our lives in a Holy Saturday frame of mind. Between the horror of Good Friday and the glory of Easter, that day was lived in questions. It encompassed bitter

disappointment, sorrow, the brutal dashing of hope, exhaustion.

For Christ's disciples on Holy Saturday, optimism was absent. Friends scattered and mourned. They hiked to Emmaus to get away, or like Thomas, they coupled their sorrow with doubt.

Maybe we've reached our COVID Holy Saturday moment.

It was almost easier in the beginning, when we all accepted shutdown, when we felt like we were in this together, when the rules seemed to apply to everyone, when we hoped it would end quickly.

Shutdowns are up to states, sometimes to cities. The governor of South Dakota tells people at the Mount Rushmore ceremony to disregard social distancing; the Texas governor pleads with his citizens to wear masks. And our numbers, among the worst in the world, frighten us.

Knowing that this pandemic will drag on, we adjust. Our parishes begin to reopen, but in restricted ways, older folks warned away.

Holy Saturday reminds us this too shall pass. We're in a limbo we didn't choose, but which we accept as Christians. We accept this may be a nadir for our nation right now, a dreary Holy Saturday but one from which we will emerge stronger.

Unlike the disciples who did not yet understand the Resurrection, we have the joy of placing our faith and hope in the risen Christ.

We spend time on our personal Holy Saturday with our risen Jesus, who reminds us once again not to fear.

(Effie Calderola writes for Catholic News Service.) †

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Find quiet moments in your life to listen to God speaking to you

I have a memory of my mother saying, sometimes quite forcefully, "Did you hear me?"



I was recently reflecting on a person's need to be heard. Do you like to feel that you are being heard and understood? I believe that humans have a basic need to be listened to and, maybe more importantly, to feel that the message

they are trying to communicate is being received by the listener.

But I have noticed there is a good deal of frustration when a person has a need to share something, and it becomes apparent that no one is receiving—much less comprehending—the message being sent.

For example, have you ever started to explain something or started to answer someone's question only to realize they aren't listening or waiting for your

response? I find this upsetting because it conveys the message that, in some way, I am not there. My presence is irrelevant or of no value, or something more important has captured their attention.

Why do we spend so much time talking on our cell phones? Is it a human need to be heard by another and validated as persons? In Psalm 61:2, we hear the psalmist say, "Hear my cry, O God." In Psalm 80:2, we hear "O, Shepherd of Israel, lend an ear."

There was a video a few years ago that went viral on the Internet where a young boy repeatedly asks to be heard.

This makes me wonder if God has a similar need to be heard as well. I am reminded of the Israelites who rebelled repeatedly in the desert. It is easy for us to look back, and see how they would not listen to or act upon the messages that God had sent through Moses. Many passages start with the phrase, "Hear, O Israel!" In Psalm 50:7, we read, "Listen,

my people, I will speak," and in Psalm 49:2, "Hear this, all you peoples!"

I also mention the Apostles, who seemed slow to understand what Jesus was saying and to see the larger picture as they moved toward Jerusalem. They often initially could not comprehend the message he was preaching. How often did Jesus say, "Amen, amen, I say to you?"

For many, it is even harder to see what is happening in the present. What message is God trying to send to his people? What is not being heard or acted on in my own life right now?

These questions are surely worth reflection during the moments of silence that one has to carve out of the noisy and busy life that surrounds so many of us.

Do you have a plan to find those quiet moments in your life today? What do you hear the Lord saying to you?

(Richard Etienne is a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh, Ind., in the Evansville Diocese.) †

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, July 19, 2020

- Wisdom 12:13, 16-19
- Romans 8:26-27
- Matthew 13:24-43

The Book of Wisdom provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. Wisdom is the name not only of this book of the Old Testament, but of an entire set of writings. Collectively, the purpose is to convey in human language, and for situations in human life, the wisdom that comes only from God.

Always important as a backdrop in reading the Wisdom literature, or in reading any Scripture for that matter, is the admission that humans necessarily are limited. We cannot understand everything. We cannot see everything. Even what we see at times, and perhaps more often than not, is distorted and blurred.

We need God. We simply cannot survive without divine wisdom. God offers this wisdom in the revealed Scriptures.

This weekend's reading salutes God, the Almighty, the perfect, and the perfectly just and all-knowing. The reading is highly poetic and lyrical, almost as if it were a hymn.

Marvelous for us, this supreme, perfect God assists us despite our limitations. We have nothing to desire or to fear if we listen to God, the source of all good.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is the source of the second reading, which is very brief.

Stressed here are our weaknesses and our limitations. Even our prayers are weak, handicapped by our sinfulness and selfishness all too frequently. God, however, supplies. As disciples of Jesus, truly born again in his life, we also speak with the life and strength of the Holy Spirit.

For the last reading, the Church presents a parable from St. Matthew's Gospel, using agricultural imagery. At the time of Jesus, the planting and growing of crops and the keeping of herds were the most popular livelihoods. This familiar story of the sower who planted good seed

in his field would have been understood by all who heard the Lord.

Jesus said that the story illustrates the kingdom of God. Each component—the landowner, the slave, the enemy, and so on—fits into the overall picture.

To recall the story, an enemy came at night and sowed the seeds of weeds in the landowner's field, tended by the slaves. In time, both grain and weeds come forth.

One yield is good, the other bad. God will separate the good from the bad. He will decide.

Another parable followed, the story of a mustard seed, which is tiny. Although only a seed, this insignificant particle has the potential of life and growth. In time, it can become a great tree.

Finally, Jesus gave the Apostles a special and much more detailed lesson. He prepared them to carry the Gospel to the world.

Reflection

The first step in learning about Christianity is to accept the Church's doctrine of original sin and its effects on all people. God created everyone, vesting free will in each. Some use this will to be loyal to God; others choose disloyalty. The devil tempts us to sin.

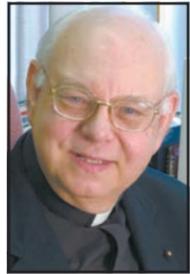
So, in God's creation, people are saints and sinners, blossoming plants or weeds. The devil's seeds produce weeds.

In the end, God will right all wrongs. Justice will prevail. In the meantime, it is essential that faith is a seed within us, planted by God. We must nourish it and protect it.

We can allow and assist the seed within us to grow to maturity, which is personal sanctity and final reward with God in heaven. Or we can reject God and fill our hearts with weeds.

With our free will, we choose to be faithful to God, or not.

God's kingdom is filled with life and reward, but it is not foisted upon us. God does not invade our souls. We must choose God, even as we endure life among the weeds. †



Daily Readings

Monday, July 20

St. Apollinaris, bishop and martyr
Micah 6:1-4, 6-8
Psalm 50:5-6, 8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23
Matthew 12:38-42

Tuesday, July 21

St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest and doctor of the Church
Micah 7:14-15, 18-20
Psalm 85:2-8
Matthew 12:46-50

Wednesday, July 22

St. Mary Magdalene
Song of Songs 3:1-4a
or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17
Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9
John 20:1-2, 11-18

Thursday, July 23

St. Bridget, religious
Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13

Psalm 36:6-7b, 8-11
Matthew 13:10-17

Friday, July 24

St. Sharbel Makhlūf, priest
Jeremiah 3:14-17
(Response) Jeremiah 31:10-13
Matthew 13:8-23

Saturday, July 25

St. James, Apostle
2 Corinthians 4:7-15
Psalm 126:1b, 2-6
Matthew 20:20-28

Sunday, July 26

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52
or Matthew 13:44-46

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Catechism now universally opposes the use of capital punishment

My home state recently made national news with the decision to go forward with the executions of several inmates on death row. As a Catholic, I do not understand the idea of returning death for death, and I see executions as being more about revenge than any kind of justice.



Surely life in prison would suffice, and perhaps the inmate might be rehabilitated at some point and even ask forgiveness from the victim's family. As Catholics, I believe that we are called to more than this—called to be advocates for peace, love and life. Can you comment? (Indiana)

You make the case against the death penalty with cogency and eloquence. I agree with you completely—and more important, Pope Francis does, too. In fact, in August 2018, the pope directed that the wording of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* be changed to reflect the fact that, in the Church's view, the death penalty is now no longer admissible under any circumstances.

Previous to that, the catechism did not exclude use of the death penalty in "very rare, if not practically nonexistent" cases (#2267). That earlier text said this: "Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the

unjust aggressor."

But in the new wording, at Pope Francis' direction, the catechism now universally opposes the use of capital punishment. Explaining the change, the new text states:

"Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption" (#2267).

We are blessed to have a seminarian assigned to our parish for the summer to assist and to learn. He is not yet an ordained priest, yet he wears the Roman collar at Mass and at meetings. This has led to some confusion, with many parishioners addressing him as "Father." Is it appropriate for him to be wearing the collar? (New York)

So the question is: When, in the course of his study, is it permissible for a Catholic seminarian to begin to wear clerical garb, including a Roman collar? And the answer—perhaps unfortunately—is this: There is no universal norm. The practice varies from diocese to diocese and from seminary to seminary. In my own time in the seminary, we didn't wear the collar until our final year of study—the same year we were ordained as deacons. Until then, our "dress-up" clothes consisted of a black suit, white shirt and black tie. Today the practice is different, and seminarians seem to begin wearing the collar at an earlier point—in many cases, as they begin their studies in theology (the final four or five years before ordination to the priesthood).

In some seminaries, the collar is worn even sooner, especially when the seminarian is engaged in a ministerial function, such as teaching religion or visiting a hospital. In the situation you mention, I don't see it as a major problem that some parishioners call the young man "Father." He should be acting like a priest anyway, getting used to the behavior people expect from one called to a religious vocation.

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

My Journey to God

The Greatest Giver

By C.S. Likins

The Giver
is the Gift
of life
of love
of peace
of hope and joy
to all
receive the Gift
and thank Him
follow Him
to life everlasting



(C.S. Likins is a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. Photo: Father Joseph Espaillat, spiritual director of the Archdiocese of New York's youth ministry office, elevates a monstrance during eucharistic adoration on June 25, 2016, as part of the Steubenville New York youth conference at St. John's University in Jamaica, N.Y.) (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, Long Island Catholic)

Rest in peace

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

BATES, Elicia S., 22, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, June 2. Daughter of Leon and Celesta Bates. Sister of Phillip Bates and Christopher Jones. Granddaughter of Leon Bates, Jr. Niece and cousin of several.

BOERGER, John, 92, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, June 3. Father of Sharon Freson, Janice Scheeler, Charlene, Jim and Jerry Boerger. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of 15.

BOWMAN, Patricia A., 77, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, June 8. Mother of Angelina and Elizabeth Bowman. Sister of Kathy McGarvey. Grandfather of six.

CLEVENGER, Richard, 95, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, June 5. Father of Lisa Pabst, Kate, James, Steve and Tom Clevenger. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of 15.

COFFEY, Genevieve W., 94, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, March 20. Mother of Jane, Mary, Elliott, Michael and Timothy Coffey. Sister of John F. Coffey. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 16.

ELLIOTT, Charles W., 93, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, May 29. Father of Frances Ann Parrella, Susan Robertson, Charles, Mark and Tony Elliott. Brother of Ann Schindler and Bill Elliott. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of six.

ENDERS, Edward, 71, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, June 1. Husband of Patty Enders. Father of Cory Enders. Brother of Theresa Sublett.

ENDRES, Leonard G., 87, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, June 7. Husband of Kathryn Endres. Father of Sally Burnell, Suzy Evans, David and Mike Endres. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of five.

FIELDS, Michael D., 64, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, June 3. Husband of Carla Fields. Father of Deanna Taylor and Liz Fields. Son of Charles and Betty Fields. Brother of Shirley Vaughn and Robert Fields.

FIEREK, James H., 80, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, June 6. Father of Susan Hays, Annie, Mary, Katie, Edward and Joe Fierek. Grandfather of 11.

FOLEY, Rita, 96, St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, May 28. Mother of Theresa Ball, Mary Hoover and Denise Shurts. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 21. Great-great-grandmother of two.

Providence Sister Marianne Mader ministered in Indianapolis for 35 years

Providence Sister Marianne Mader (formerly Sister Ann Eugene) died on June 7 at Mother Theodore Hall at the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. She was 73.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Marianne was born on Jan. 15, 1947, in Indianapolis and grew up as a member of St. Philip Neri Parish, and graduated from the former St. Mary Academy. She entered the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods on Aug. 30, 1967, and professed final vows on March 8, 1975.

Sister Marianne earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in library science at Rosary College (now Dominican University) in River Forest, Ill.

During her 53 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Marianne

ministered as an educator, librarian and in other fields in Indianapolis for 35 years. She was a teacher at the former St. Catherine of Siena School from 1971-72 and at St. Philip Neri School from 1972-77. Sister Marianne served as a librarian at Community Hospital from 1978-93 and Holy Angels School from 2002-06. She worked as a medical information assistant at Crossroads Rehabilitation Center 1997-98 and as an instructional assistant at Holy Spirit School from 1998-2002.

Returning to the motherhouse in 2006, Sister Marianne served on its archives staff from 2006-17 and as a consultant to the archives from 2017-19.

She is survived by two sisters, Roseanne Huckleberry of Greenfield and Catherine Odle of Charlottesville, Ind., and two brothers, Eugene and Gerald Mader, both of Greenfield.

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

Providence Sister Edna Scheller served in Catholic schools for 43 years

Providence Sister Edna Scheller died on June 8 at Lourdes Hall at the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. She was 88.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Edna was born on May 28, 1932, in Evansville, Ind. She entered the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods on Jan. 8, 1950, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1957.

Sister Edna earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in education at Indiana University.

During her 70 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Edna ministered as an educator for 43 years in schools in

California, Illinois, Indiana and North Carolina.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at the former St. Catherine of Siena School from 1956-57, the former St. Bridget School from 1957-65, St. Luke the Evangelist School from 1965-68 and St. Thomas Aquinas School from 1968-70. She also ministered at the former Sacred Heart School in Clinton as principal from 1993-2000.

Sister Edna served at the motherhouse as health care administrator from 1988-93 and as a driver and coordinator of transportation from 2001-17.

She is survived by a brother, Thomas Scheller of Evansville.

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



COVID concern

A UNICEF worker helps an internally displaced Afghan girl put on a protective mask at a makeshift camp in Jalalabad in late June during the COVID-19 pandemic. (CNS photo/Parwiz, Reuters)

GUIDI, Shirley M., 90, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, April 27. Mother of John and Robert Guidi. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 17.

HOFFMAN, Steven W., 61, Holy Family, New Albany, June 4. Husband of Terri Hoffman. Father of Cheryl and Nick Hoffman. Brother of Karen Combs, Christy Hoffman-Smith, Sandy St. Louis, Bobby and Perry Hoffman. Grandfather of five.

KELLY, Mary, 80, St. Jude, Indianapolis, May 22. Mother of Dan Stevens, Keith and Mike Kelly. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of five.

KESSANS, Maxine, 83, St. Paul, Tell City, June 2. Wife of Dennis Kessans. Mother of Denise Schultz and Marty Kessans. Sister of Helen Schaefer. Grandmother of three.

KOCH, Rose, 81, St. Nicholas, Ripley County, April 9. Wife of Ken Koch. Mother of Sherry Colvin, Barb Houston, Doug, Jeff and Russ Koch. Sister of Kathy Case, Don and Richard Feldman. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of three.

LEWIS, Patricia, 68, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, June 9. Wife of Bob Lewis. Mother of Kristin Crawford. Sister of Al Roszczyk. Grandmother of one.

LITZINGER, Delores A., 79, St. Anthony of Padua, Morris, May 28. Wife of Emil Litzinger. Mother of Bob and Roger Litzinger. Sister of James, John, Martin and Robert Glaub. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of five.

LOFTUS, Mary M., 92, St. Mary, New Albany, June 2. Mother of Gigi Gilstrap, Mary Ann Pinter, Dawn Quinlin and Danny Loftus. Sister of Betty Hutchinson. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of 18.

MATTINGLY, Barbara Ann, 93, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, March 12. Mother of Dolores Koepfer, Alice, Carol and Edward Mattingly. Grandmother of three.

MCCAULEY, Caroline M. (Lynch), 90, Prince of Peace, Madison, June 6. Wife of Donald McCauley. Mother of Deborah Cross, Lynn Hughes, Donna, Daniel and Darren McCauley. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of seven.

MCKELL, William E., 65, St. Mary, Greensburg, May 30. Brother of Connie Lonneman. Uncle of several.

MERCER, Gerald, 78, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, March 8. Father of Jill and John Mercer. Brother of Carol Sukolics and Chester Mercer. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of four.

MEYER, Darlene (Freeland), 84, St. Mary, Greensburg, May 29. Wife of Leon Meyer. Mother of Christy Bokelman and Suzanne Ritter. Sister of Jeanne Duvelius, Louise Hammerle, Leroy and Walter Freeland. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of six.

MOONEY, III, William J., 86, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, March 23. Husband of Shiela Moynahan. Father of Kathleen Mooney Jeffers, Patricia Mooney Lautenbach, Maura Mooney Lee, Bridget Mooney McIntyre, Eileen Mooney Waithall, Erin Mooney Young, Robert and William Mooney, IV. Brother of Mary Jo Mooney Furgeson Carr, Anne Mooney Degnan and Michael Clune Mooney. Grandfather of 26.

O'BRIEN, Michael D., 68, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, June 13. Husband of Jackie Nytes. Father of Patrick O'Brien. Brother of 12.

ODDI, Anthony P., 86, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, June 13. Husband of Karen Oddi. Father of Katy Dukes, Robin Langston, Cheryl Oddi-Smith, Andrea and Kara Oddi. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of two.

PEONI, Rosemary, 85, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, June 9. Mother of Paul Peoni. Sister of Carmela Kidwell. Grandmother of two.

PEREZ-CASTRO, Jose M., 67, Prince of Peace, Madison, May 31. Husband of Maria Bolivar De Perez. Father of Cesar, Jose and Manuel Perez-Bolivar. Brother of Nahir and Felipe Perez-Castro. Grandfather of five.

RICKE, Rita J., 93, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, May 30. Mother of Kathy Kidd and Jeff Ricke. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of two.

ROBERTS, Suzanne, 90, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, May 22. Mother of Barbara Stroud, Jane and Pete Roberts. Sister of Nancy Maley. Grandmother of four.

SEIPEL, Donald L., 88, St. Joseph, Corydon, May 28. Father of Melissa McPhillips and Mark Seipel. Brother of Paul Seipel. Grandfather of two.

SENEFELD, Frances, 91, St. Michael, Brookville, June 5. Mother of Linda Buchta,

Rhonda Novak, Phyllis Richardson, Jody Webb and John Senefeld. Sister of Jeroma Brown. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 25.

SHEEHAN, Eileen M., 55, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, May 3. Mother of Maureen Sheehan, Terri Strouse and Carol Pogoni. Sister of Michael Sheehan.

SHREWSBURY, Howard F., 82, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, June 1. Husband of Shirley Krum Shrewsbury. Father of Beth McCubbins and Theresa Shrewsbury. Grandfather of two.

SONNTAG, Robert, 85, All Saints Parish, Dearborn County, June 9. Husband of Diana Sonntag. Father of Pamela Brashears, Julie Douglas, Traci Jansen, Jodi Lovell, Christine Upton, Scott McAdams, Robert and Steven Sonntag. Grandfather of 20. Great-grandfather of eight.

STITH, Sarah L., 86, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, June 6. Wife of Raymond Stith, Sr. Mother of Lisa King, Teresa Sims, Raymond, Jr., and Terry Stith. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of nine.

THORNBURG, Trent, 25, Holy Family, Oldenburg, June 2. Son of Mark Thornburg and Susan Bohman. Stepson of Dale Bohman. Brother of Kayla Bork, Joseph Bohman, Devin Childers, Branson and Matthew Thornburg. Grandson of Dick and Patricia Moeller and Willard and Regina Williamson. Step-grandson of Richard and Paula Bohman. Nephew and cousin of several.

TUMILTY, Linda L., St. Mary, Greensburg, June 9. Sister of Betty Hamilton, Margaret Hash, Sharon, John and Thomas Tumilty. Aunt of several.

URBANCIC, Louise, 92, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, June 1. Mother of Lisa Maddingly, Leslie Stonehouse, and Loren Urbancic. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother two.

VOWELS, Dianna, 71, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis, June 9. Wife of Richard Vowels. Mother of Megan Smith, Nathan and Nolan Vowels. Grandmother of three. †

Looking for a spiritual lift? ‘Choose’ this TV series

By Ann Margaret Lewis

During the primary months of the COVID-19 shutdown, many of us suddenly had time to catch up on our favorite shows. I personally binge-watched as many Jane Austin/Dickens-type costume dramas as I could. But as Easter grew closer, I wanted to view something more spiritually edifying.

By chance, my Facebook timeline served up an ad for the first-ever multi-season show on the life of Christ called “The Chosen.” First launched in December of 2019 and independently produced by evangelical filmmaker and director Dallas Jenkins, it is hosted on the VidAngel streaming service and offered free through a downloadable phone application (app) that can be cast onto a smart television.

Initially, I was dubious, as most Christian productions I’ve encountered lacked depth and production value. But after seeing some clips, I decided to give it 10 minutes of my time.

I downloaded the app to watch, and that 10 minutes turned into an hour, which then turned into binge-watching the entire eight episodes non-stop. I was hooked and excited for a second season, which is now gearing up to go back into production.

As of this writing, I find that the series has been viewed 41 million times and climbing. Likely this is due to viewers watching it more than once. Before the end of Easter week, I personally had watched through the series three times to find all the details I’d missed the first time.

So, what makes this series so watchable?

Writing: This series is expertly written with punchy, sometimes even humorous, dialogue that flows easily, and a complex storytelling structure and pacing that keep viewers engaged. Interweaving storylines all lead to a strong season conclusion.

Jenkins also assembled a team of

faith-centered consultants, including a Catholic priest, to give feedback. The content is therefore respectful of most, if not all, Christian faith traditions.

It is not a literal rendering of Scripture, though, but a work of biblical fiction that extrapolates plausible situations from what we know from Scripture. It does not deviate from the Bible, but creates a “universe” in which biblical events occur and change the lives of the people involved.

Characterization: Unlike most Christ-centric films, including the acclaimed Zeffirelli mini-series “Jesus of Nazareth,” each character in “The Chosen” is unique.

These first eight episodes highlight select characters, namely Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, Matthew and Nicodemus.

But other characters, even minor ones—some mentioned in the Bible, some not—stand out in their own way, including Andrew, James the Greater, James the Lesser, Thaddeus, Thomas and John; the Romans Quintus and Gaius; Zebedee and his wife and the denizens of what is called “the Red Quarter” of Capernaum.

Jesus himself is featured in the third episode interacting with local children, where we see his humanity along with flickers of his divinity, not so much in what he says, but in how he reacts. The Blessed Mother is also wonderfully portrayed, especially when we reach the wedding feast at Cana. (I will not spoil it for you).

Acting: The most recognizable actor in the show is Erick Avari (*Stargate*, *Independence Day*, *The Mummy*), who plays Nicodemus. While the name might not be familiar, his face is well-known as a solid Hollywood character actor, and his performance here is outstanding. He literally made me weep for his character multiple times.

Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus, is also a standout. His warmth and gentle manliness combined with subtle hints of

divinity make you want to follow him—as he should. Roumie has also appeared as Jesus in the one-woman touring show of St. Faustina, so he might appear familiar to some. He is also an on-fire Catholic who leads the rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet both on Facebook Live and Instagram for his many virtual followers.

Other outstanding performances are those of Paras Patel as a quirky (possibly on the autism spectrum) Matthew, Shahar Isaac as a passionate, strong-willed Simon Peter, and Elizabeth Tabish as a particularly sensitive Mary Magdalene.

Production value: This show is the number one crowd-funded project of all time at \$10 million. Therefore, the budget for each of the eight episodes is a bit more than \$1 million each. It shows. The costumes, locations, set design and special effects are all top-notch.

Of special note is the “miracle of the fish,” a digital effect that looks spectacular, and the soundtrack which has a modern bluesy feel. (Believe it or not, it works.)

The only production element I’ve heard criticized is the opening credit sequence, which I found compelling, being reminiscent of the credit sequences designed by Hollywood legend Saul Bass (*North by Northwest*, *Vertigo*).

Funding: It’s odd to mention funding in a review, but as I noted before, this was the world’s most successful crowdfunding project, and the first four episodes of its second season have already been funded this same way.

While the series is provided free on its phone app, viewers have the option of “paying it forward” as a gift to others, something that appeals to a Christian ethos. In other words, if you like the



Pictured is a scene from “The Chosen,” the first-ever multi-season show on the life of Christ. (Photo courtesy of VidAngel Studios)

series, they encourage you to contribute to its further production by sharing it with a friend.

By doing this, Jenkins and his crew have made a complete end-run around the Hollywood system, ensuring his production remains free of tinsel-town marketing constraints. Brilliant.

This is a great series to watch if you can. It is available in 50 languages—so far. The first eight episodes were shared on YouTube during Holy Week and Easter and, as of this printing, at least the first episode is still on its YouTube channel.

Meanwhile, “The Chosen” app is available through the Apple Store or Google Play, and is consistently ranked in the top 50 entertainment apps on iOS and Android. You can also watch it online at VidAngel.com or TheChosen.tv.

If you don’t have a computer or smart phone or access to the VidAngel streaming service, you can purchase the DVD through the TheChosen.tv website. It’s well worth the cost, and you’ll be contributing to future episodes by doing so.

Binge away!

(Ann Margaret Lewis is executive assistant in the archdiocesan Office of Communications and the author of several books. E-mail her at alewis@archindy.org.) †

USCCB’s 2020 Natural Family Planning Awareness Week slated for July 19-25

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Natural Family Planning (NFP) Awareness Week is slated for July 19-25 this year and has as its theme: “Live the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love!”

The weeklong observance is a national educational campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that celebrates “God’s design for married love and the gift of life and to raise awareness of natural family planning methods,” said a USCCB news release.

The week annually highlights the July 25 anniversary of St. Paul VI’s 1968 encyclical, “*Humanae Vitae*” (“Of Human Life”), which affirmed Catholic teaching against artificial contraception and provides clear teaching about God’s plan for married love and the transmission of life. The week also includes the July 26 feast of SS. Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Mother.

Natural family planning involves the monitoring by a married couple of the various biological signs indicating a woman’s time of fertility and infertility. It can be used both to avoid pregnancy or to aid in becoming pregnant.

Pope Paul VI in “*Humanae Vitae*” said the only licit means of regulating birth is natural family planning. In the document, he asked scientists to improve natural family planning methods “providing a sufficiently secure basis for a regulation of birth founded on the observance of natural rhythms” (#24). In the 50-plus years since the encyclical, there has been an explosion of research into methods of natural family planning.

“The Church’s teaching on contraception is not just a doctrine that

states what not to do,” said Janet E. Smith, who was a professor of moral theology at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit from 2001 until her retirement in 2019. She held the seminary’s Father Michael J. McGivney chair of life ethics from 2016-2019.

“Many people would benefit from knowing that it is a doctrine that explains how extraordinarily important is the act of having children,” said Smith, who made the comments in an article on natural family planning included in a package of articles, videos, suggested liturgies and prayers, Church teaching, NFP resources, and other features available on the USCCB website at <https://bit.ly/2BFCCQfd>.

The USCCB’s Natural Family Planning Program is part of its Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

“Those who understand the Church’s teaching on sexuality know that to a great extent it is shaped by a concern for the well-being of any children who may result from acts of sexual intercourse,” Smith said. “Children born into families where their parents are sexually self-controlled, where they are faithful, stable, and desirous of children are predictably much better off than those born to single parents, to the unfaithful, to those open to divorce or divorced.”

Church teaching on contraception also is “shaped by a knowledge that those who become parents generally become much better people; they need to develop quite a set of virtues in order to be good parents. Those virtues also help them be good spouses, good co-workers, good citizens,” added Smith. †

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Recovered from coronavirus, retired priest finds joy in community

By Sean Gallagher

As he approached Holy Week in early April, retired Father John Geis started to carry his own cross.

The 84-year-old priest began experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus. He lives in Decatur County which, at the time, was a "hot spot" in the state for infections of the virus.

He was soon tested for the virus in Batesville and learned on April 6, Monday of Holy Week, that he had tested positive. His condition was good enough, though, that he did not have to be hospitalized and was able to remain at home. He lived there with his brother Albert, who had also tested positive and later recovered.

He is the only archdiocesan priest thus far to have tested positive for the virus.

Throughout the solemn days leading up to Easter, Father Geis ran a fever. Breathing deeply was difficult. And he had little energy so accomplishing even the smallest tasks was a challenge.

"It really took the sap out of you," he said.

Father Geis turned a corner, however, on April 12, Easter Sunday. That evening was the first time in about a week that Father Geis no longer had a fever.

"It was wonderful," he recalled in a recent interview with *The Criterion*. "It gave me life. I felt that I was going to recover from this. I guess the Lord wanted me to get back to work."

Work for the past nine years for him has included being a sacramental minister for St. Maurice Parish in Napoleon.

As he suffered from the virus, Franciscan Sister Shirley Gerth, St. Maurice's parish life coordinator, kept in touch with him.

"It was sad news," she said. "Father John and I had been friends for a long time. I was very fearful that he might end up in a hospital on a ventilator. So, I was most grateful that that didn't happen."

Considering his age, previous health challenges he had experienced and that he was living in an area of the state especially hard hit by the virus at the time, the virus posed a real danger to Father Geis' life. But he wasn't worried.

"It didn't bother me all that much," he said. "I guess I thought about [the possibility of dying], but I didn't dwell on it. I just wanted to get better."

Sister Shirley and her parishioners, as well as relatives

of Father Geis, were determined to do all they could to help him. Meals were prepared for him and delivered to his home. He also received more than 125 cards expressing parishioners' prayers and support.

"Maybe that's why I got better," Father Geis said with a laugh. "God got tired of hearing people praying for me."

His own prayer was important to him as he suffered from the virus.

"Going through this brought me closer to God," Father Geis said. "You depend on his grace, help and healing. God is good. He's got things in control whether we think so or not."

He celebrated Mass at home by himself, but the experience helped him recognize the importance of praying with parishioners.

"Celebrating with the community in prayer, is really, for me, the thing that I missed the most," Father Geis said. "I said Mass here at home. And I appreciated that privilege. But it's just not like celebrating it with people."

Prayer remained important for him as he recovered. Even though he suffered with symptoms of the coronavirus for a little more than a week, his recovery time took several weeks.

"It took me a while to get back on my feet again," he said. "I was totally out of breath. I'd try to go out to walk, and I'd be huffing and puffing trying to get my breath back."

He had recovered enough that he could return to St. Maurice and celebrate Mass with the parish on June 14, Trinity Sunday.

"It was just a joy to be with the people and to celebrate God's presence," Father Geis said. "It really stood out for me. What an experience."

"I'm not sure if I can put it into words," said Sister Shirley. "It was so good to see him celebrate the Eucharist. I knew he had such a desire to do that. It was so good to have him back."

Mary Bultman, a member of St. Maurice Parish, shared in the joy of having back the priest who has celebrated the sacraments in the Batesville Deanery faith community.

"Everybody felt so happy to see him and welcome him back," Bultman said. "He's part of our family. We missed him when he wasn't there. For him to recover from COVID at his age and health situation was like a miracle." †



Father John Geis celebrates Mass on July 5 at St. Maurice Church in Napoleon. The 84-year-old retired priest has been a sacramental minister at the Batesville Deanery faith community since 2011. He is the only archdiocesan priest thus far to have tested positive for the coronavirus. He was diagnosed with it in April, but was able to return to Napoleon to celebrate Mass on June 7. (Submitted photo)



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