



**The**

# Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## Our Works of Charity

Mother's adoption decision honors child's life and offers hope, page 12.

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Rachel Levy, left, and Cheyenne Johnson pose in the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on March 6 with an image of St. Katharine Drexel, the saint for whom the 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage route is named. Levy, archdiocesan coordinator of young adult ministry, and Johnson, director of Catholic campus ministry at Butler University in Indianapolis, are among the eight young adults selected nationally to be perpetual pilgrims on the 3,300-mile pilgrimage, which departs Indianapolis on May 18 and arrives in Los Angeles on June 22. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

## ‘What a blessing, what a gift’: Perpetual pilgrim team includes two from archdiocese

By Natalie Hoefer

When Rachel Levy speaks of her love for Christ in the Eucharist, the sentiment is clearly more than words.

“Spending time with the Lord in front the Blessed Sacrament is the highlight of my day,” says the archdiocesan coordinator of

young adult ministry, her eyes coming to life with light and joy.

Her friend Cheyenne Johnson, director of Catholic campus ministry at Butler University in Indianapolis, shares that love.

“I pray a holy hour in adoration every day, and then I stop in [the adoration chapel] a few times throughout the day,”

See **PILGRIMS**, page 8

## Pope is out of danger but to remain in hospital

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis is no longer considered in imminent danger from his lung infection, but he will remain in Rome's Gemelli Hospital for several more days to continue receiving medical treatment, the Vatican said.



Pope Francis

The improvements in the 88-year-old pope's condition recorded in the previous days “have been further consolidated” and were confirmed by the results of blood tests and his positive

response to drug therapy, the Vatican said in its evening medical bulletin on March 10.

Doctors had previously noted “a good response to therapy” on March 8, adding that his gas exchanges—the intake of oxygen and output of carbon dioxide—had improved and that blood tests showed his condition to be stable.

While his doctors' prognosis for the pope was “guarded” for more than three weeks after he was hospitalized on Feb. 14, they lifted that designation on March 10, indicating he was no longer in imminent

danger from the infection that hospitalized him. He was diagnosed with bilateral pneumonia on Feb. 18.

However, due to the severity of the infection and the complexity of his condition, doctors determined that “it will be necessary

to continue, for additional days, medical drug therapy in a hospital setting,” the bulletin said.

The pope followed by video parts of the Roman Curia's Lenten retreat on both March 9 and 10, the bulletin said, and he received the Eucharist before praying in

See **POPE**, page 10

See related story, page 7.

For the most up-to-date information on Pope Francis' health, visit [www.archindy.org/PopeFrancis](http://www.archindy.org/PopeFrancis).

## In its 10th year, E6 Catholic Men's Conference continues to change hearts

By Sean Gallagher

ST. LEON—When Father Jonathan Meyer stepped onto the stage of the auditorium at East Center High School in St. Leon on Feb. 22, 1,500 men were seated before him.

Most had come there on that cold February Saturday morning from across Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, with

See **MEN'S CONFERENCE**, page 9

Some 1,500 men taking part in the 10th annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference on Feb. 22 at East Central High School in St. Leon listen to Father Jonathan Meyer preach during the event's Mass.

(Photo by Sean Gallagher)





# Archbishop Thompson issues decree regarding former church building

**Criterion staff report**

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson has decreed that the former Our Lady of Providence Church building in Brownstown be able to be sold. In the terminology of the Church’s *Code of Canon Law*, this is referred to as “relegation to profane but not sordid use.” Our Lady of Providence Parish was merged with St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour in 2016. This decision was made at the request of the parish of St. Ambrose and after Archbishop Thompson consulted

with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council in February of this year. As noted in the decree, the decision concerning the Our Lady of Providence property was spurred by the fact that the church building is not in good repair; inspection by an outside engineering firm of the building in February found significant deterioration of the roof, foundation and exterior masonry; water infiltration has caused additional damage to the interior masonry, plaster and paint; and the merged parish of St. Ambrose has no use for the building. †

## DECREE

Whereas, on 4 February 2016 by the decree of my predecessor, the Most Reverend Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR, the former parish of the Our Lady of Providence (115 E Commerce St., Brownstown, IN 47220), was merged by extinctive union into the parish of Saint Ambrose (325 S. Chestnut St., Seymour, IN 47274); and, Whereas the peremptory time limit to appeal this decree has been exhausted and the decree upheld; and, Whereas the legal and equitable assets and liabilities of the former parish of Our Lady of Providence became assets and liabilities of the parish of Saint Ambrose by virtue of the extinctive union; and, Whereas the pastor of the parish of Saint Ambrose discussed with the parishioners on the possibility of the reduction to profane but not sordid use of the Church building of Our Lady of Providence over the course of 2023-2025; and, Whereas, on 21 December 2023, the pastor of the parish of Saint Ambrose, after consultation with both his finance and pastoral council, petitioned me to relegate the church building of the former parish of Our Lady of Providence to profane but not sordid use so that the proceeds of the sale of the church building might be used to fund the ministries of the parish of Saint Ambrose; and, Whereas, on 25 February 2025, I consulted with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council on the question of the relegation of the church building of

Our Lady of Providence to profane but not sordid use; and, Whereas, in the consideration of the question of reduction of church building of Our Lady of Providence, I evaluated the following facts concerning the state of the church building of Our Lady of Providence:
 

- The church building is not in good repair.
- Inspection by an outside engineering firm in February of 2025 found significant deterioration of the roof, foundation, and exterior masonry.
- Additional water infiltration has caused additional damage to the interior masonry, plaster and paint.
- Based upon the report of the engineering firm, the estimated cost for repairs for the roof, foundation, exterior masonry, interior masonry, plaster and paint are estimated between \$450,000-\$475,000.
- The parish income for Saint Ambrose in the most recent fiscal year of 2022/2023 was \$1,087,548; the total parish expenses for that same period were \$689,512, while supporting the deficit in income of the parish-supported school in the amount of \$144,000.
- The merged parish of Saint Ambrose has no use for this building.

 Whereas the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council voted unanimously to recommend that the church building of Our Lady of Providence be relegated to profane but not sordid use; and, Whereas I have concluded that the economic hardship of repairing the building and its lack of usefulness to the parish of Saint Ambrose constitutes



Public Schedule of  
Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

March 18–29, 2025

March 18 – 2 p.m.

Installation Mass for Archbishop-Elect Edward J. Weisenburger, Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Detroit, Mich.

March 20 – 9 a.m.

Mass at Plainfield Correctional Facility

March 22 – 4 p.m.

Mass for Knights of Columbus, 4th Degree, Supreme and Indiana Councils at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral followed by dinner at McGowan Hall, both in Indianapolis

March 24 – 1 p.m.

Virtual Cross Catholic Outreach Board meeting

March 25 – 9 a.m.

Mass for students of St. Christopher School, Indianapolis, at St. Christopher Church

March 25 – 1 p.m.

Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

March 26 – 11:30 a.m.

Strategic Pastoral Planning Initiatives meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 27 – 10 a.m.

Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 27 – 3 p.m.

Finance Council meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 29 – 10 a.m.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus

grave cause sufficient in law to support the relegation of the church building to profane but not sordid use; I, the Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L., Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, having in mind my responsibility to best address the spiritual needs of the people of the parish of Saint Ambrose specifically and the needs of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis generally, hereby decree:
 

1. The church building of the former parish of Our Lady of Providence shall be relegated to profane but not sordid use fourteen days after the date of the promulgation of this decree.
2. The parish of Saint Ambrose, in consultation with the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, shall dispose of the church building in a manner that accords with Catholic faith and morals, and with its dignity as a former place of Divine worship.
3. This decree is to be published to the pastor of the parish of Saint Ambrose.
4. The parishioners of the parish of Saint Ambrose are to be given notice of this decree upon its receipt by the pastor

of the parish. Copies of this decree are to be made available for inspection at the office of the parish, and the parishioners shall be given notice as soon as is possible after its receipt by the pastor.
 

5. This decree is to be published in the archdiocesan newspaper, *The Criterion*.
6. This decree is to be posted to the archdiocesan website.

 Given under my hand and the Seal of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis on 4 March 2025, at the Catholic Center.

+ Charles C. Thompson

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.  
Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Christopher J. Walsh

Christopher J. Walsh, Ed.D.  
Chancellor

# Amid aid cuts, bishop urges Catholics to heed ‘very urgent’ CRS collection

(OSV News)—Amid the Trump administration’s sweeping cuts to overseas humanitarian aid, an annual collection used to serve the vulnerable in the U.S. and abroad has taken on “a very urgent significance,” said Bishop Daniel H. Mueggenborg of Reno, Nev., head of the U.S. Catholic bishops’ national collections efforts. The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Collection will be taken up in most of the nation’s Catholic dioceses on March 29-30, with donations also accepted directly at [usccb.givecatholictogether.org](https://usccb.givecatholictogether.org), part of the #iGiveCatholicTogether campaign. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in a statement on March 10 noted the funds support six key

Church-related entities meeting an array of social and spiritual needs:
 

- CRS, the overseas relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., which provides both disaster relief and economic development initiatives among the world’s lower-income nations.
- The USCCB’s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, through which the bishops work to address the pastoral needs of U.S.-based Catholics who span an array of cultural backgrounds.
- The USCCB’s Secretariat of Justice and Peace, which advocates on behalf of the poor while working for peace.
- The USCCB’s Migration and Refugee Services, which

had contracted with the federal government for decades, under a congressionally established program, to resettle refugees vetted by U.S. immigration and security authorities until Jan. 24. The USCCB filed suit against the Trump administration on Feb. 18 for suspending the contract, which the administration later terminated altogether on Feb. 26.
 

- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, or CLINIC, a Maryland-based nonprofit established by the U.S. bishops to provide legal aid to refugees and migrants—including immigrant Catholic clergy and religious, upon whom close to 90% of the nation’s Catholic dioceses rely.
- The Holy Father’s Relief Fund, which enables the pope to quickly assist disaster victims. †



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OPINION



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*
Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*  
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Editorial



Religious sisters join hundreds of people in praying the rosary for Pope Francis' health in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 6. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

Like Pope Francis, let's embrace our crosses during Lenten season

*"I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers for my health from the square; I accompany you from here. May God bless you and the Virgin protect you. Thank you."*  
—Pope Francis in an audio recording played before the recitation of the nightly rosary for him in St. Peter's Square on March 6

The heartfelt words that our Holy Father Pope Francis spoke in a 27-second audio message shared in Spanish with those gathered to pray for him on the night of March 6 were a welcome sign. We believe it did not matter that he had difficulty speaking. Members of his universal flock were no doubt happy and relieved to hear him for the first time since he was hospitalized on Feb. 14 for bronchitis and difficulty breathing. He was soon thereafter diagnosed with double pneumonia, and our pontiff has been battling that and other serious ailments as well, including breathing crises on Feb. 22 and on March 3. As *The Criterion* went to press on March 11, the pope was still in Gemelli Hospital. But his condition had improved enough that he was no longer considered in imminent danger from his lung infection. He will remain in Rome's Gemelli Hospital for several more days to continue receiving medical treatment, the Vatican said. We continue to implore Catholics and people of all faith traditions to pray for our Holy Father's healing in what is still a very tenuous health crisis. Not surprisingly, Pope Francis continues to work and also alternate between rest and prayer while in Gemelli. He also continues to regularly receive the Eucharist, the greatest gift of our faith, by which he is fed and sustained by the body of Christ. Many would agree that his witness and commitment to his vocation as our universal shepherd very much mirrors the example Pope John Paul II set when he was hospitalized in 2005.

In a story published on March 5 in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, retired Polish Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz said that he believes Pope Francis, like his Polish predecessor, continues to serve the Church even from his hospital bed. When St. John Paul II was bedridden,

"voiceless, unable to speak, lacking strength," he was "serving the Church with heart, soul and clear mind," said Cardinal Dziwisz, who served as St. John Paul II's personal secretary from 1966 until the pope's death in 2005. "And I am sure that Pope Francis, for whose healing the whole world is praying, will do the same: he will lead the Church as long as God wills, firmly embracing the cross, without any step backward." Lent is a season whose penitential disciplines include prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Many of us have chosen specific ways to approach this six-week pilgrimage of faith as we seek spiritual renewal. But our Holy Father is reminding us it is an especially appropriate time to embrace our crosses in life—some we may not have chosen—and to follow Christ. We need to be responsive to where our Creator wants to take us on this Lenten journey. Carrying those crosses, God willing, will build us up and help us grow in our lives of faith. As our Holy Father said from the hospital over the weekend, "let us commit ourselves to making it a time of purification and spiritual renewal, a path of growth in faith, hope and charity." If our challenges become overwhelming, may we stay persistent and reflect on the example we're seeing from Pope Francis. Even though he is not speaking in public, Cardinal Dziwisz continued, "[Pope Francis'] voice rises loud and clear over a world beset by clashes and conflicts," praying for peace, encouraging negotiations and even calling the pastor of Holy Family Parish, the only Catholic church in Gaza. "Francis is not only our father, he is the highest moral figure who cares about the fate of all of humanity," the cardinal said. "The whole world needs him. Let us pray that God will grant him the gift of healing and preserve him for us for a long time." Let us continue to offer prayers for our Holy Father. Let us follow his example of trusting completely in God and allow the disciplines of Lent to open our hearts and expand them. May we stand vulnerable in front of our Lord, surrender to him, and be transformed by the grace of God.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Religious Communities of Women in Indiana

In statement, religious sisters in Indiana share concerns about changes to immigration policy

*"It is not just about migrants; it is about all of us, about the present and future of the human family."*  
—Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis, 2019

Our faith teaches us that an orderly, legitimate process for seeking asylum is, in fact, a primary way of welcoming the stranger. Seeking asylum is not a criminal act.

Our faith teaches us that an orderly, legitimate process for seeking asylum is, in fact, a primary way of welcoming the stranger. Seeking asylum is not a criminal act.

As followers of Jesus, we have heard the cry of the poor. Jesus told us to "welcome the stranger" (Mt 25:35); he also told us that "whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me" (Mt 25:40). We can no longer be silent. In our country today, thousands are needlessly losing their jobs; millions could lose health coverage if threatened cuts become reality; millions of children and elderly could end up severely hungry; and many live in fear of deportation. We feel it's imperative to name all of these injustices but we want to focus on one. "Welcome the stranger." Migrants are our sisters and brothers in Christ—created in the image of our loving Creator just as the rest of us. They enrich our society through their presence, diverse cultures, work and vitality, while also contributing essential work and tax revenue that helps sustain Social Security and other services that benefit everyone. And so, we speak out for justice, for a recognition of the dignity of all who have moved here in pursuit of life and freedom. People fleeing violence and persecution deserve the freedom to seek asylum here.

We call for an end to indiscriminate detentions and deportations. We call for an end to the "Remain in Mexico" program. We call for a resumption of asylum hearings, a restoration of the refugee resettlement program and restoration of temporary protected status. We also call for citizenship of all those who are DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients. As members of congregations of Catholic sisters in Indiana, we stand in solidarity with all these, our sisters and brothers in Christ. We call for an end to injustice. We know that many others stand with us for decency and respect for others instead of the cruel injustice that robs many of respect, their families, and even their lives. —Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Evansville —Monastery Immaculate Conception, Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand —Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Huntington —Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, Donaldson —Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods —Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg —Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame

Letter to the Editor

Rich tapestry within the Church reflects its universality, mission to reach all people, reader says

I love learning about different cultures, how they were formed and how they are evolving. The evolution of cultures is a rich tapestry woven from history, geography and human creativity. Each culture has unique traditions, languages, arts and social norms that developed over centuries and continue to evolve. As cultures evolve, they adapt to new influences like globalization, technology and migration. This creates a dynamic blend of old and new, preserving traditions while embracing innovation. Catholicism has a long history of embracing and integrating different

cultures. The Catholic Church is present in nearly every country in the world, and it often incorporates local customs and traditions into its practices. This cultural diversity is celebrated through various rites, languages, music and forms of worship. This rich tapestry of cultural expressions within the Catholic Church reflects its universality and its mission to reach all people, regardless of their background. It's a beautiful example of how faith can be expressed in diverse and meaningful ways. Kirth N. Roach Order of Carmelite Discalced Secular Indianapolis

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in *The Criterion* as part of the newspaper's commitment to "the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God" (*Communio et Progressio*, 116). Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect. The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed. Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld. Send letters to "Letters to the Editor," *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org). †



ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Jesus’ transfiguration foreshadows his everlasting glory

Our Lenten journey has begun. Last week, on Ash Wednesday, we were reminded that we have been formed from the earth and that our mortal bodies will one day return to ashes.

This Sunday, the Second Sunday of Lent, provides us with the other side of the story. Yes, we come from the earth, but we are destined to be transfigured as Jesus was and to live with him in everlasting glory.

Jesus became human so that we might become like God. Our Savior has freed us from the slavery of sin and death. He has shared with us a power that belongs to God alone: to transform our mortal and material bodies into spiritual beings that retain their earthly form even as they take on a new form—one that has been transfigured by God’s grace into something pure, holy and filled with divine life and goodness.

We are given a glimpse of our spiritual destiny in the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent (Lk 9:28b-36):

*Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men*

*were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.* (Lk 9:28-31)

Peter and his colleagues had been sleeping. They were awakened by the dazzling light, and they were astounded to see Jesus transfigured and standing in the company of Moses and Elijah. What the three were discussing was even more amazing than the fact that they were together on this holy mountain and bathed in the glory of God.

Jesus, Moses and Elijah spoke about the “exodus” that Jesus was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. The first Exodus was a material, earthly experience. It happened when Moses led God’s Chosen People, the Israelites, out of slavery in Egypt and brought them to the Land he had promised them.

The new Exodus that Jesus will lead out of Jerusalem is a spiritual journey, but it is no less important. In fact, its consequences are far more profound than the earthly Exodus that it recalls. Jesus is destined to lead all of God’s people (all of humanity) out of the slavery of sin and death. He is the Divine Liberator, the Holy Redeemer,

who saves us from every evil and leads us into our heavenly homeland.

The first reading from the Book of Genesis (15:5-12, 17-18) speaks of the Covenant that God made with Abraham:

*Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so shall your descendants be. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. ... It was on that occasion that the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.”* (Gen 15:5-6, 18)

God’s promise to his holy people, the descendants of Abraham, foreshadows his promise to all humankind. The Father’s promise to send his only Son to redeem us and to lead us into everlasting glory is fulfilled in Jesus. The Transfiguration that St. Luke describes in this Sunday’s Gospel reading is an epiphany, a revelation of God’s glory in the down-to-earth realities of daily life. It’s no wonder that Peter, James and John were overwhelmed by what they saw and heard. As always, they were slow to respond and to make sense of what they were experiencing.

Peter suggests that they erect three tents (holy markers) in recognition of the three holy men—Jesus, Moses and Elijah. But God has a different plan: While Peter was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him” (Lk 9:35). After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The three Apostles fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

Why did they keep silent? Why not shout to the whole world the miracle they had just witnessed? Jesus asked them to keep this miracle a secret until after his passion, death and resurrection. In other words, they remain silent until Jesus is able to accomplish the spiritual exodus that was going to take place in Jerusalem.

During this holy season of Lent, let’s remember that we are not destined for earthly glory. Our true homeland is in heaven, and if we follow in the footsteps of Jesus as faithful missionary disciples, and pilgrims of hope, we will share in his everlasting peace and joy. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## La transfiguración de Jesús presagia su gloria eterna

Nuestro viaje cuaresmal ha comenzado.

La semana pasada, durante el Miércoles de Ceniza, se nos recordó que somos polvo y en polvo volveremos a convertirnos algún día.

Este domingo, el segundo de la Cuaresma, nos ofrece la otra versión de la misma historia. Sí, venimos del polvo, pero estamos destinados a transfigurarnos como Jesús y a vivir con él en la gloria eterna.

Jesús se hizo humano para que pudiéramos llegar a ser como Dios. Nuestro Salvador nos ha liberado de la esclavitud del pecado y de la muerte, y compartió con nosotros un poder que solo le pertenece a Dios: el de transformar nuestros cuerpos mortales y materiales en seres espirituales que conservan su forma terrenal aunque adopten una forma nueva; una forma que ha sido transfigurada por la gracia de Dios en algo puro, santo y lleno de vida y bondad divinas.

El Evangelio del segundo domingo de Cuaresma (Lc 9:28-36) nos ofrece una visión de nuestro destino espiritual:

*Jesús tomó con Él a Pedro, a Juan y a Jacobo, y subió al monte a orar. Mientras oraba, la apariencia de Su rostro se hizo otra, y Su ropa se*

*hizo blanca y resplandeciente. Y de repente dos hombres hablaban con Él, los cuales eran Moisés y Elías, quienes apareciendo en gloria, hablaban de la partida de Jesús que Él estaba a punto de cumplir en Jerusalén* (Lc 9:28-31).

Pablo y sus colegas estaban durmiendo y una luz radiante los despertó. Quedaron estupefactos al ver a Jesús transfigurado y de pie en compañía de Moisés y Elías. Lo que hablaban los tres era aún más asombroso que el hecho de que estuvieran juntos en esa montaña sagrada y bañados en la gloria de Dios:

Jesús, Moisés y Elías hablaban del “éxodo” que Jesús iba a realizar en Jerusalén. El primer Éxodo fue una experiencia material, terrenal que ocurrió cuando Moisés sacó al Pueblo Elegido de Dios, los israelitas, de la esclavitud en Egipto y los llevó a la Tierra que les había prometido.

El nuevo Éxodo que Jesús dirigirá desde Jerusalén es un viaje espiritual, pero no por ello menos importante. De hecho, sus consecuencias son mucho más profundas que el Éxodo terrenal que evoca. Jesús está destinado a sacar a todo el pueblo de Dios (a toda

la humanidad) de la esclavitud del pecado y de la muerte. Es el Divino Libertador, el Santo Redentor, que nos salva de todo mal y nos conduce a nuestra patria celestial.

La primera lectura del Libro del Génesis (15:5-12, 17-18) habla de la Alianza que Dios hizo con Abraham:

*Ahora mira al cielo y cuenta las estrellas, si te es posible contarlas. Y añadió: Así será tu descendencia. Y Abram creyó en el Señor; y Él se lo reconoció por justicia. ... En aquel día el Señor hizo un pacto con Abram, diciendo: “A tu descendencia he dado esta tierra, desde el río de Egipto hasta el río grande, el río Éufrates”* (Gn 15:5-6, 18).

La promesa de Dios a su pueblo santo, los descendientes de Abraham, es presagio de su promesa a toda la humanidad. En Jesús se cumple la promesa del Padre de enviar a su único Hijo para redimirnos y conducirnos a la gloria eterna. La Transfiguración que san Lucas describe en el Evangelio de este domingo es una epifanía, una revelación de la gloria de Dios en la realidad cotidiana. No es de extrañar que Pedro, Santiago y Juan se sintieran sobrecogidos por lo que vieron y oyeron. Como siempre, tardaron en responder y en dar sentido

a lo que estaban viviendo.

Pedro sugiere que levanten tres tiendas (señales sagradas) en reconocimiento de los tres hombres santos: Jesús, Moisés y Elías. Pero Dios tiene otros planes. Mientras Pedro seguía hablando, llegó una nube y proyectó una sombra sobre ellos, y se asustaron al entrar en la nube. Entonces, de la nube salió una voz que decía: “Este es Mi Hijo, Mi Escogido; oigan a Él” (Lc 9:35). Después de que la voz habló, Jesús se encontró solo; los tres apóstoles callaron y no contaron a nadie lo que habían visto.

¿Por qué guardaron silencio? ¿Por qué no gritar al mundo entero el milagro que acababan de presenciar? Jesús les pidió que mantuvieran este milagro en secreto hasta después de su pasión, muerte y resurrección. En otras palabras, permanecen en silencio hasta que Jesús es capaz de llevar a cabo el éxodo espiritual que iba a tener lugar en Jerusalén.

Durante este tiempo santo de Cuaresma, recordemos que no estamos destinados a la gloria terrenal. Nuestra verdadera patria está en el cielo, y si seguimos las huellas de Jesús como fieles discípulos misioneros y peregrinos de esperanza, compartiremos su paz y alegría eternas. †



# Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/events](http://www.archindy.org/events).

## March 19

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

## March 19, April 2, 30

**Virtual Series: Learn About Our Benedictine Vows—Obedience, via Zoom**, 7 p.m., hosted by Sisters of St. Benedict of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Ind. (Evansville Diocese), free, registration required. Information, registration: 812-367-1411, ext. 2830, [vocation@thedome.org](mailto:vocation@thedome.org).

## March 20

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

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Indiana Gov. Mike Braun presenting “Fireside Chat with Gov. Mike Braun,” rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members.

Register by noon on March 18. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## March 21

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Italian Lenten Supper**, 5:30-7:30 p.m., meatless Italian lasagna (pesto or vegetable) with sides, salad, bread, mac-and-cheese, gluten-free option available, adults \$12, seniors \$10, children \$5. Information: 317-283-5508, [pto@sjoa.org](mailto:pto@sjoa.org).

## March 22

St. Monica Parish, St. Augustine Hall (Door 1), 6131 Michigan Road, Indianapolis. **Evangelization Informational Gathering**, 10 a.m.-noon, hosted by archdiocesan Office of Evangelization, equipping parishes with vision on witnessing through faith journeys, free, registration required. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/Monicaevang25](http://tinyurl.com/Monicaevang25), 317-236-1466, [abardo@archindy.org](mailto:abardo@archindy.org).

## March 23

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Filipino Mass**, Divine Mercy 3 p.m., rosary 3:10 p.m., Mass 3:30 p.m.

with homily in English, every fourth Sunday. Information: [mariasolito@yahoo.com](mailto:mariasolito@yahoo.com).

## March 27

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Bede Theater, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Cyprian Davis Lecture**, 7 p.m. CT, Diocese of Baton Rouge vocations director and author Father Josh Johnson presenting “Making Disciples of All Nations,” free. Information: 812-357-6501.

## March 27, April 3, 10

St. Mary Parish, 629 Clay St., North Vernon. **Soup Supper and Lenten Study**, 6-8 p.m., Father Jerry Byrd presenting on Pope Benedict XVI’s apostolic exhortation “The Sacrament of Charity” about the Eucharist, free. Information: 812-346-3604, [parishsecretary@stmarysnv.com](mailto:parishsecretary@stmarysnv.com).

## March 28-30

Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Come and See Retreat**, 4 p.m. Fri.-2 p.m. Sun., for single Catholic women ages 18-42 wanting to explore religious life, free, meals and housing provided. Information,

registration: 361-500-9505, [jluna@swsmw.org](mailto:jluna@swsmw.org), [events.siste4rsofprovidence.org](http://events.siste4rsofprovidence.org).

## April 2

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605.

## April 4

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

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

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

## April 4-6

Cincinnati, Ohio. **Retrouvaille Retreat**, for those in a struggling marriage, location disclosed upon registering. Information, registration: 513-258-8622, [CincinnatiRetrouvaille@gmail.com](mailto:CincinnatiRetrouvaille@gmail.com), [helpourmarriage.org](http://helpourmarriage.org).

## April 5

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

St. Matthew the Apostle Church, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Children’s Rosary**, 9 a.m., children of all ages invited to pray rosary every first Saturday, donuts and fellowship to follow, free. Information: [julie3reyes@gmail.com](mailto:julie3reyes@gmail.com).

## April 5, 6, 26

St. Malachy Parish, 9833 E. County Road 750 N., Brownsburg. **“One in Christ” marriage preparation**, Saturdays 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday 9:45 a.m.-4 p.m., \$99 for online prework session, \$300 for seminar, NFP classes additional fee, scholarships and gift certificates available. Information, registration: 317-600-5629, [Info@OICmarriage.org](mailto:Info@OICmarriage.org), [oicmarriage.org](http://oicmarriage.org).

## April 7

**Virtual Prayer with the Sisters of Providence**, 7-7:45 p.m., for single women ages 18-42, prayer and sharing on topic of shame. Information, registration: [events.sistersofprovidence.org](http://events.sistersofprovidence.org), 361-500-9505, [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org).

## April 7-8

Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **“Listen, Teach, Send” USCCB Regional Formation Event**, 4-9 p.m. April 7, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on April 8, exploring new national framework for ministries with youth and young adults, includes meals, \$30 single day, \$60 both days, register by April 1. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/listenteachsend25](http://tinyurl.com/listenteachsend25). †

## Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).

## March 28

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

## March 28-30

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Being True to the Path**, 6:30 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun., president of Red Bird Foundation Paula D’Arcy presenting, \$275, includes single room, meals. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## March 29

**Mystics and Fellowship virtual program**, 9-10:30 a.m., sponsored by Sisters of Providence, last of four independent sessions, register by March 26, \$25. Information, registration: [events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org).

## April 1

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Lenten Evening of Reflection: It Was Not You Who Chose Me, But I Who Chose You—Coming home to God and realizing our life in God**, 5-9 p.m., Father Joseph Moriarty presenting, \$45, includes Mass, dinner and program. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## April 2

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Lenten Day of Reflection: It Was Not You Who Chose Me, But I Who Chose You—Coming home to God and realizing our life in God**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Father Joseph Moriarty presenting, \$45, includes Mass lunch and program. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## April 4-6

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Living a More Deliberate and Conscious**

## Christian Life: Lenten Weekend Retreat,

6 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun., Father James Farrell and Mary Schaffner presenting, \$225, includes single room, meals. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## April 10

**Virtual guided meditation series via Zoom**, 7-7:45 p.m., every second Thursday of the month through May, offered by Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, free, registration required. Information, registration: [events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org).

## April 11-13

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **The Passion(s) of the Christ**, Benedictine Archabbot Kurt Stasiak presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## April 15, 16, 17

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St.,

Indianapolis. **Holy Week Days of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional \$32 per night, dinner additional \$11 per meal. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## April 16-20

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Holy Week: A Time to Ponder and Rejoice**, Benedictine Father

Simon Herrmann presenting, \$625 single, \$1,000 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## April 17-20

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Easter Triduum Retreat**, 4 p.m. Holy Thursday-10 a.m. Easter Sunday Mass, facilitated by Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, \$241 for single room, \$277 for double room, \$313 for triple room, includes meals on Friday and Saturday plus breakfast Sunday, commuters

\$36 includes lunch and dinner on Friday and Saturday. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

## April 25-27

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Worldwide Marriage Encounter**, 8 p.m. Fri. -4 p.m. Sun., includes three meals Sat., two meals Sun., and Sunday Mass, \$75 application fee to reserve space plus free-will offering to cover cost of retreat. Information, registration: [wwme.org/apply](http://wwme.org/apply), 317-863-5680. †

## College students sought to teach Totus Tuus summer youth program

Totus Tuus is seeking college students to teach its 2025 summer program for youths in first through 12th grade at six archdiocesan parishes from June 7-July 25. The deadline to apply is April 15.

Totus Tuus is a summer Catholic youth program dedicated to sharing the Gospel and promoting the Catholic faith through evangelization, catechesis, Christian witness and eucharistic worship. Its weeklong Parish Summer Catechetical Program assists parents and parishes in evangelizing and catechizing their youths by supplementing the work that parents and parishes are currently doing.

The methodology, structure and content of Totus Tuus are concerned not only with teaching the faith, but also with igniting the hearts of the team members and the young people they encounter. The result has been the formation of young adults who continue to dedicate themselves to the Church’s mission of evangelization, along with many vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Applicants for this paid position must be a college student, a practicing

Catholic, have received the sacrament of confirmation, have a reasonably good knowledge of the Catholic faith (training is provided) and have a desire to work with youths.

They must be willing to learn and experience the faith, work with a team, respect team dynamics, strive for a stronger prayer life, teach children and travel by car to six archdiocesan parishes throughout the summer.

Missionaries are chosen based upon their desire to teach the faith, love of children, energy, enthusiasm and for their individual leadership skills. To run a week of the Totus Tuus Summer Program smoothly, missionaries adhere to a well-defined schedule rooted in a structured prayer life.

Training starts on May 30, and a short break will take place in early July.

For more information about Totus Tuus in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, go to [www.archindy.org/totustuus](http://www.archindy.org/totustuus) or contact Anita Bardo at 317-236-1466 or [abardo@archindy.org](mailto:abardo@archindy.org). To apply, go to [totustuus.church/be-missionary](http://totustuus.church/be-missionary), scroll down and click on the photo for “New Missionary” or “Returning Missionary.” †

## Chamber music concert on April 5 will benefit Gabriel Project in Indianapolis

A classical chamber music concert benefitting the Gabriel Project in Indianapolis will be held in the social hall of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 10655 Haverstick Road, in Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), at 6 p.m. on April 5. Mass with the parish will be at 4:30 p.m.

The concert will feature chamber music performed by the string quartet *Musica Vitae*. A reception with refreshments will follow the performance.

Gabriel Project offers emotional, spiritual, material and financial support to women in an unplanned pregnancy through a helpline and parish-based volunteer support.

Tickets are available in advance, but walk-ins are welcome. The suggested donation for a ticket is \$20.

For more information or to order tickets, go to [goangels.org/benefit-concert](http://goangels.org/benefit-concert) or call 833-937-4968. †



# The Last Supper is topic of two productions during Lenten season

By Ann Margaret Lewis

Lent is a time to reflect on our relationship with Christ and his sacrifice that created a new covenant with us. For those of us who have chosen a penance other than giving up film entertainment, there are two special viewing options available to help focus our attention on Christ rather than secular topics.

The first of these, a film set to preview in theaters on March 14, is *The Last Supper*. Produced by Christian music artist Chris Tomlins and executive produced by Michael Scott, CEO of Pure Flix entertainment, the film is centered around the events of Holy Thursday and the theological repercussions of that night.

While the film is produced by evangelicals, Italian Catholic co-writer and director Mauro Borrelli (*Mindcage*) manages to present an unexpectedly Catholic view of the eucharistic sacrifice through his script and artistic choices. The script, for instance, doesn't back away from the Bread of Life discourse in John 6. While it doesn't include it in its entirety, what it does include

makes clear that Christ's words were not merely symbolic. The film also begins with the feeding of the 5,000 through Jesus's multiplication of the loaves, theologically linked to the Eucharist, and the imagery of that miracle is repeated during the sharing of the Passover meal, with its lamb and the breaking of the bread. It is also evident that bread and cup are a sign of the new covenant Christ has with his Church.

The film has a good production value, and the acting performances are decent as well. There are recognizable faces among the cast, youthful Jaime Ward (of the "Tyrant" TV series) as Jesus, James Faulkner (of the TV series "Davinci's Demons") as Caiaphas, and Robert Knepper (*Prison Break*) as Judas. Knepper's Judas is perhaps a bit overplayed, but I found it forgivable as we see him being oppressed by Satan to betray Jesus. He also was a little older than I'd expect, as most of the Apostles were possibly in their early 20s, with the oldest perhaps being Peter. Peter, whose point of view we follow throughout the story, is played by James Oliver Wheatley (of the Netflix docuseries "The Lost Pirate Kingdom"), and he gives a moving performance, especially with regard to Judas' fate.

My only real complaint about the film is at times the energy seems to wane. I wasn't riveted to the film as one can be with certain productions, like *The Passion of the Christ*. But it is a film worth watching to get another point of view on the events of Holy Thursday.

*The Last Supper* opens nationwide on March 14 and is showing in theaters across central and southern Indiana. For more information, to search for theaters or to purchase tickets, go to [thelastsupper.movie](http://thelastsupper.movie).

This film isn't the only production this Lent tackling the subject of the Last Supper. The popular series "The Chosen" is also focusing on the events of Holy Thursday in their season five release, the title of which is "The Chosen: Last Supper."

Actor Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Christ in that series, said during his presentation on the fourth day of the National Eucharistic Congress in July of 2024 that



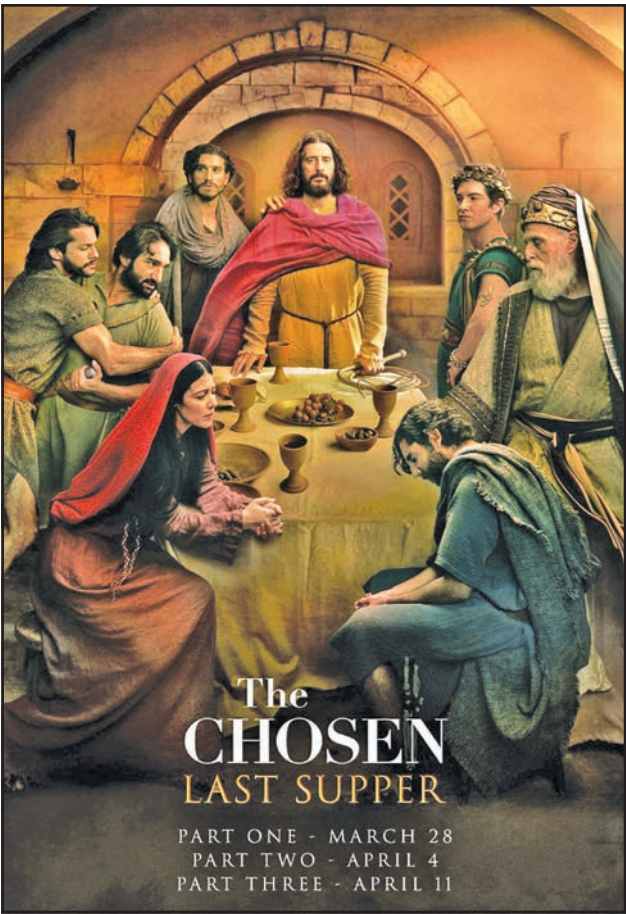
Jaime Ward portrays Jesus in *The Last Supper*, to be released in theaters on March 14. (Photo courtesy of Pinnacle Peak Pictures)

he'd come to the congress after finishing filming the Last Supper scenes, and that he felt tremendous anxiety when acting in them. "I think the reason why it became so stressful to me ... was because as a Catholic, I understand the weight," he said. "I understand the reality of what it is we believe and what that host represents and what that bread and that wine—once the Holy Spirit comes down and changes them—what that actually means to us and who that actually is now that we are about to receive."

He then noted that the Bread of Life discourse of John 6 was skipped over in the series, so he went on to recite John 6 using his characterization of Jesus' voice for congress participants, to make up for what they would miss.

Knowing how much those scenes meant to Roumie, it'll be interesting to compare what the series does with the events of Holy Thursday to what is done in the aforementioned film.

Releasing in theaters across Indianapolis and central Indiana, Episodes 1-2 of "The Chosen: Last Supper" will premiere through Fathom Events on March 28. Episodes 3-5 will follow beginning on April 4, and episodes 6-8 will premiere on April 11. Tickets can be purchased through the show's website [TheChosen.tv](http://TheChosen.tv), local theaters or [fathomentertainment.com](http://fathomentertainment.com). The show should be available for streaming on Amazon Prime or for free in their app in late spring or early summer. †



"The Chosen: Last Supper" premieres in theaters on March 28. (Photo courtesy of 5&2 Studios)

## Papal anniversary: For 12 years, he's said, 'Don't forget to pray for me'

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As Pope Francis prepared to spend the 12th anniversary of his election at Rome's Gemelli Hospital, people at the Vatican and around the world were responding to his most frequent personal request.

"From the beginning of his pontificate, we have heard Pope Francis ask us to not forget to pray for him, and that is what we are doing," said Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, as he led thousands of people praying the rosary for the pope on March 10 in St. Peter's Square.

"It is not only Christians who are doing so, but the faithful of other religions and even many nonbelievers also are joining their hearts around Pope Francis," the

cardinal said. Pope Francis has made requesting prayers a hallmark of his papacy and a standard way to end a letter or speech. When the 76-year-old Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, was elected to succeed Pope Benedict XVI on March 13, 2013, and came out onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, his words stunned the crowd: "Before the bishop blesses his people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he will bless me—the prayer of the people asking a blessing for their bishop. Let us make, in silence, this prayer: your prayer over me," he said, and bowed to receive the blessing. And again, before he said good night, he told the crowd, "Pray for me."

Probably not a day has gone by since then that he hasn't made the request out loud or in writing. Four months after his election, on his flight back from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a journalist asked him why he always asked for people's prayers. "It isn't normal, we are not used to hearing a pope ask so often that people pray for him," the reporter said.

"I have always asked this," the pope responded. "When I was a priest, I asked, but less frequently. I began to ask more often when I was working as a bishop, because I sense that if the Lord does not help in this work of assisting the people of God to go forward, it can't be done."

"I am truly conscious of my many limitations, of many problems, of also being a sinner—as you know!—and I have to ask for this," he said. "It is a habit, but a habit that comes from my heart."

Pope Francis also often thanks people for their prayers.

"I would like to thank you for the prayers, which rise up to the Lord from the hearts of so many faithful from many parts of the world," the pope wrote in his text for the *Angelus* prayer on March 2. "I feel all your affection and closeness, and, at this particular time, I feel as if I am 'carried' and supported by all God's people. Thank you all!"

And while no photos of the pope have been released since he entered the hospital, his labored voice was broadcast in St. Peter's Square on March 6 in an audio message thanking the gathered faithful for their prayers.

Hospitalized since Feb. 14 with

bronchitis and difficulty breathing, Pope Francis was later diagnosed with double pneumonia. His doctors told reporters he has chronic lung conditions: bronchiectasis and asthmatic bronchitis, caused by years of respiratory problems and repeated bouts of bronchitis.

In his autobiography, Pope Francis wrote about the surgery he underwent at the age of 20 to remove the upper lobe of his right lung after suffering a severe respiratory infection.

"It was extremely painful. Extremely," he said.

When writing or talking about the pope's lung surgery, people often mistakenly assume doctors had removed the entire right lung. It even was an issue at the 2013 conclave that elected him.

During the lunch break between the third and fourth ballots of the conclave, he wrote in the autobiography, a group of European cardinals invited him to sit with them. They began asking so many questions on so many topics "that I found myself thinking: Hah, it seems like an exam."

At the end of the meal, he said, a Spanish-speaking cardinal asked him, "Do you have a lung missing?"

After explaining that only the upper lobe had been cut away in 1957, Pope Francis recalled that "the cardinal turned red, uttered a swear word and clenched his teeth: 'These last-minute maneuvers!' he exclaimed."

"It was then that I began to understand" he was being seriously considered as a candidate to succeed Pope Benedict. It happened that evening with the conclave's fifth ballot. †



Pope Francis bows his head in prayer during his election night appearance on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on March 13, 2013. The crowd joined the pope in silent prayer after he asked them to pray that God would bless him. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



# PILGRIMS

continued from page 1

she says with a smile that speaks of the peace she finds there.

The sparkling eyes, the serene smile—it’s easy to see why Levy and Johnson were two of only eight young adults selected from more than 130 national applicants to be perpetual pilgrims during the upcoming 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.

Belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was pivotal to the faith journey of both women.

And love for the Blessed Sacrament now drives them as they prepare for the 3,300-mile journey by foot and van from Indianapolis to Los Angeles from May 18 through June 22.

**‘The Eucharist has been a pivotal part’**

Johnson, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, was raised as a Southern Baptist.

She says it was “a pursuit of truth guided by the Holy Spirit” that drew her to Christ’s words in the Gospel of John: “I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world. ... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in them” (Jn 6:51, 56).

Those words “ultimately led me to the Catholic Church and to the Eucharist,” says Johnson. She was welcomed into the full communion of the Church on April 8, 2018, while a student at Butler University.

“Having that relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist has helped me to grow in virtue in a lot of ways, to think about my actions and to grow closer to Christ,” she reflects. “Because over time, as I continued to receive the Eucharist going to daily Mass, it’s helped me to just grow in deeper intimacy with Jesus.”

Levy was also a college student when she embraced the truth of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist.

“There were a lot of different teachings of the Church that I kind of wrestled with in college,” she recalls of her days at Indiana University in Bloomington. “And I think the last big one was the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I wanted to really, fully believe what I was saying when I said ‘I’m Catholic,’ and this is a pretty core teaching of the Catholic Church.

“So, I devoted a lot of time, as much as I could, to just going to daily Mass and adoration. The Eucharist has been a pivotal part of my reversion.”

Both women were interested in applying to be a perpetual pilgrim for the first-ever National Eucharistic Pilgrimage held prior to the National Eucharistic Congress in July 2024.

“It just seemed like such a cool opportunity to be with Jesus all summer

and to go around encountering different people, inviting them to pray,” says Johnson. “And just really to spend that time growing in devotion to the Eucharist and being part of the revival in this country.”

Levy’s draw was similar.

“I’d say the initial draw was, like, what even small role can I play in other people having a deep encounter with the Lord in a similar way that I’ve been able to have, being able to spend so much time with him in the Blessed Sacrament.”

But then Levy started her current job with the archdiocese and knew “the timing just wasn’t really going to work out,” she says. And by the time Johnson learned about the application process, the 2024 perpetual pilgrims had already been selected.

But the draw to the idea remained in the hearts of Johnson and Levy. So, when they learned of the application process for 2025 perpetual pilgrims, both women applied.

**‘An opportunity that won’t happen again’**

When Johnson learned she was selected to be a perpetual pilgrim for this year’s National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, “I was pretty much in disbelief,” she says. “I was excited, too, like, ‘This is crazy!’

“We’re just in such a special time with the Church, and I, especially as a young person, know it’s an opportunity that won’t happen again.”

Levy recalls feeling excited, too, “and feeling really honored to be able to accompany Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament across the country, to allow other people to have any type of encounter with him—what a blessing, what a gift of an opportunity.”

First comes a period of preparation before the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage from Indianapolis to Los Angeles—on a route named for St. Katharine Drexel—which starts on May 18.

“We held a formation retreat in February for the perpetual pilgrim team,” says Maria Benes, director of pilgrimages for National Eucharistic Congress, Inc. “It included time for prayer, practice in organizing eucharistic processions, and different types of preparation and training, including spiritual, living in community on the road and daily life as a pilgrim.”

The team also meets monthly via Zoom “to gather for prayer and fellowship and to go over different topics, including continued spiritual preparation, fundraising, media, hospitality and other needed training,” Benes explains.

A new facet of preparation called “Adopt a Pilgrim” was instituted this year.

“A 2024 perpetual pilgrim mentors a 2025 perpetual pilgrim and helps accompany them on their journey before, during and after the pilgrimage,” says Benes. “It’s been great to see last year’s pilgrims walk with the new pilgrims, since there is only a small group of people



Perpetual pilgrims of the 2024 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage kneel before the Blessed Sacrament in St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on July 16, 2024. Two of the eight young adults chosen as perpetual pilgrims for the May 18-June 22, 2025, National Eucharistic Pilgrimage are from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

in the country who truly know what this experience is like.”

For physical preparation, says Johnson, the mentors recommend going on walks with a focus “not necessarily on the distance but just the amount of time being on your feet for several hours, like for processions and talking to people before and afterward and at different events.”

But Johnson and Levy agree the mentors place far more emphasis on preparing spiritually.

“So, I’m trying to stay rooted in my relationship with the Lord, keeping up with my prayer life, going to daily Mass and adoration, and maybe not getting too distracted by all the different things,” says Levy.

“And I’ve been trying to cultivate a disposition of being in the presence of the Lord, whether I’m in front of the Blessed Sacrament or in front of the person before me, recognizing that the Lord dwells within each of us, because we’ll be encountering a lot of people.”

**‘Jesus is inviting us all on pilgrimage’**

Just two months out from the start of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, the young women are filled with anticipation and hope.

“I’m excited to be able to go out to people who are a little more on the margins, who maybe don’t have that same type of access to the Lord in the way that I do, like in the sacraments,” says Levy.

That excitement to go to those on the margins includes a prison visit during the pilgrimage.

“I’m really excited to encounter men and women who, in the reality of being in a prison, are pretty isolated from the world, and being able to play a small role in Jesus being able to literally come right

into where they are,” she says.

Levy notes one of her “biggest desires and biggest prayers for all the people that we’ll encounter is that they will have even a small conversion, a deeper conversion, in their belief of the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.”

When Johnson is asked what she most looks forward to in the experience, her response is enthusiastic: “Oh, so many things! It’s everything. Traveling with Jesus, being with my teammates—they’re such beautiful people.

“I’m excited for the van, too, to have adoration while we’re driving places and to just be able to accompany Jesus along the way.”

She likens the journey to “what the Apostles did, traveling with Jesus. To have that experience of traveling over 3,000 miles with him is incredible.”

While the eight perpetual pilgrims will accompany Christ in a unique way during this year’s National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, Johnson notes they are not the only ones called to participate.

“Jesus is inviting us all on pilgrimage this summer,” she says. “Maybe it’s taking part in one of the events of the national pilgrimage, but also within your own hearts and within your own local church.

“Just spending time with him and bringing others into relationship with him is really the goal of what the pilgrimage is about.”

(For more information on the May 18-June 22 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, the route, stops along the route and to donate to the pilgrimage costs, go to [eucharisticpilgrimage.org](http://eucharisticpilgrimage.org). Information about the Mass and other events initiating the pilgrimage in Indianapolis will be announced in the future.) †

## Pilgrims set to share faith on eucharistic pilgrimage from Indianapolis to L.A.

(OSV News)—Eight “perpetual pilgrims” are planning to journey from Indianapolis to Los Angeles from May 18 to June 22 in the second National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. They hail from several states and include both college students and young professionals.

The young adults plan to follow the St. Katharine Drexel Route through 10 states and 21 dioceses, accompanying the Eucharist. Along the way, they will stop at parishes and other sacred and secular places for Mass, eucharistic processions, eucharistic adoration, prayer and charitable works.

The pilgrims include Arthur “Ace” Acuña, a Las Vegas native who is pursuing a degree in chemical and biological engineering at Princeton



Jason Shanks

University in New Jersey; Stephen Fuhrmann, who grew up in Texas and is studying agricultural business at Texas A&M University; Johnathan Silvino Hernandez-Jose, who helps operate his family’s construction company in Fort Wayne, Ind.; Cheyenne Johnson, a Florida native who serves as the director of Catholic campus ministry at Butler University in Indianapolis; Rachel Levy, who grew up in Indiana and works for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in young adult and college campus ministry; Charlie McCullough, a mechanical engineer in Austin, Texas; Leslie Reyes-Hernandez, an Illinois native and public high school math teacher in Phoenix; and Frances Webber, who was raised in Virginia and is a college senior in Minnesota. (See a related article about Johnson and Levy, two pilgrims from the archdiocese, beginning on page 1.)

McCullough was a perpetual pilgrim on last year’s St. Juan Diego Route through the southern U.S. and will help

lead this summer’s pilgrimage.

Jason Shanks, president of National Eucharistic Congress Inc., which organizes the pilgrimage, said there were more than 130 applicants to be perpetual pilgrims this year.

“We selected the final eight for their deep love of our eucharistic Lord and regular prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, their willingness to embrace sacrifice and adaptability for this mission, and their commitment to community life, demonstrated responsibly in past commitments, and enthusiastic passion for evangelization,” he said.

The first National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in 2024 included 30 perpetual pilgrims who traveled four routes that launched from the nation’s North, South, East and West on Pentecost weekend on May 18-19 and converged in Indianapolis ahead of the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21. The pilgrimage and congress were highlights of the three-year National

Eucharistic Revival, an initiative of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that began in 2022.

This year’s pilgrimage follows a shorter time frame, beginning on Pentecost and ending on the feast of Corpus Christi, and a single route. The route is named for St. Katharine Drexel, (1858-1955), an American socialite who founded a religious order and used her inheritance to educate Native American and Black children.

“Our hope is that the perpetual pilgrims walk away from this journey with a renewed heart of the Eucharist and Jesus’ desire for intimacy and vulnerability with each person,” Shanks said. “Our focus this year is on eucharistic hope and healing in honor of Pope Francis’ Jubilee Year of Hope.”

The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is accepting prayer requests—submitted online at [eucharisticpilgrimage.org](http://eucharisticpilgrimage.org)—for the eight pilgrims to take with them on their journey. †



# MEN’S CONFERENCE

continued from page 1

more making their way from as far away as Alabama, Michigan and Missouri.

They were there for the 10th annual E6 Catholic Men’s Conference sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County.

The “E6” in the conference title refers to the sixth chapter of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle calls believers to take up “the armor of God” in the spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

When the first conference was held in 2016 in the same auditorium, the majority of its seats were empty, with 500 men in attendance. But the number of participants quickly grew. And during its 10 years, some 10,000 men have taken part in the annual gathering that features noted Catholic speakers, fellowship, Mass, eucharistic adoration, the rosary and the availability of the sacrament of penance.

Father Meyer, who has served in All Saints Parish since 2014, explained to his listeners how the conference got its start more than 10 years earlier when two parishioners asked him about the possibility of holding such an event.

The conference came to be, Father Meyer said, simply “because two men said ‘yes’ to God. And because of that, 10,000 men have been faithfully catechized, witnessed authentic worship, participated in fraternity [and] gone to confession. We are unbelievably blessed, unbelievably blessed.”

## ‘God works through our struggles’

Andrew Middendorf is open in confessing that his desire to do something good in helping to get the E6 conference started began with his own brokenness.

“My personal struggle since high school has been with sexual sin, like a lot of guys,” said Middendorf, who is 42, a husband and father of seven.

As a youth and young adult, he was drawn to pornography. He came to know its negative effects in his life through the years and became ultimately convinced that God could heal him through his Catholic faith.

After attending an inspiring Catholic men’s conference in Indianapolis in 2012, Middendorf helped get a Catholic men’s group started at All Saints Parish. It was a couple of years later that he and his friend Joe Yunger approached Father Meyer about the possibility of having a Catholic men’s conference in southeastern Indiana.

The support Middendorf received from other Catholic men in his battle with pornography and to become a good husband and father was something he wanted to share with other men.

“God works through our struggles, our wounds and our sins,” he said. “I just felt that the Holy Spirit was calling me to take this sin that I was battling and do some good with it. And, here we are, 10 years later.”

When Father Meyer first heard Middendorf and Yunger’s suggestion, he thought that a small conference could be held at one of All Saints’ four campuses.

But from the beginning, the two men had a different idea. They dreamed big, knowing that there was an auditorium nearby whose seating capacity far exceeded any facility of their parish.

Although Middendorf felt that God was calling him to have a daring vision for the conference, anxiety still plagued him.

“I experienced a lot of fear,” he said. “I had a voice inside of me that said, ‘You can’t do that. That’s too big for you.’ ”

Middendorf overcame those fears through the

support of his wife Olivia.

“She was my number one fan,” he recalled. “She was the catalyst that lit the fire so I could do this. She felt that God was calling me to do this.”

Middendorf paused and continued, “I feel like my wife has a very intimate connection with our Lord. When she tells me things like that, I take [them] very seriously.”

## ‘You recognize that it’s something bigger than you’

The E6 conference grew quickly during its first five years. By 2020, the conference which had first drawn 500 men in 2016 now filled the 1,500-seat auditorium.

“You almost couldn’t believe what you were seeing,” Middendorf recalled.

It was further personal confirmation of just how much God can do through him not in spite of his brokenness, but because and through it.

“This was God working through sin, through a broken man,” said Middendorf. “You’re struggling with something. You think you’re broken and worthless, that God can’t do anything through you. But it was the complete opposite. He wants to work through that so he can heal you.”

And as the years went on, Middendorf and Yunger saw how God was healing many other men through the E6 conference, learning of conversions that had taken place in the lives of many men who attended.

“You recognize that it’s something bigger than you, your men’s group or your parish,” said Yunger, 46, a husband and father of seven. “To have the opportunity to do this really is a blessing. It gives you such a great feeling to see men take that step upward. To be part of that is humbling and beautiful. It’s a great joy and makes every second of the work that we do worth it.”

Through the years, the conference has hosted many great speakers like Scott Hahn, Marians of the Immaculate Father Donald Calloway and Chris Stefanik, who spoke this year. But both of the organizers are convinced that the prayer and the sacraments that happen at the event are at the heart of the changes that take place in men who attend.

“There’s something about hearing 1,500 men recite the rosary at the same time,” Yunger said. “You just close your eyes and listen to that. You have almost 500 men go to confession in a day. That’s powerful. That’s awesome.”

“There’s something powerful about hearing the men singing at Mass,” added Middendorf. “It’s the same thing with the rosary. Celebrating the sacraments with that many men is the most powerful of the experiences at the conferences.”

## ‘You never want to take things for granted’

The E6 conference sold out for the first time in 2020, filling the auditorium at East Central on Feb. 22 that year.

Three weeks later, such a gathering became impossible as the shutdown of society due to the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

The future of the conference was thus clouded in doubt.

Thankfully, Middendorf, Yunger and their team at All Saints had the better part of a year to make plans for the next conference, which took place on Feb. 27, 2021.

The auditorium at East Central was still unavailable due to the pandemic. But, after working with local health officials, conference organizers were able to welcome 300 attendees for the event at St. Joseph Church in St. Leon.

“There was a lot of fear that we were going to lose our momentum and may never get it back,” Middendorf said. “But we never really had a discussion of not continuing it.”

During the pandemic, many in the Church, including All Saints Parish, shifted to livestreaming worship and other events online.

Yunger came to realize during that challenging time just how valuable gathering in-person with other people is, especially in the life of the Church.

“It made you think that you never want to take things for granted,” said Yunger of the pandemic. “The changes we had to make were difficult. But, at the end of the day, you can look back on that and really appreciate seeing people one-on-one in person.

“You can have the greatest talk on Catholicism ever



Andrew Middendorf, left, and Joe Yunger pose on Feb. 22 at East Central High School in St. Leon during the 10th annual E6 Catholic Men’s Conference sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. Middendorf and Yunger have helped organize the conference since its beginning. (Submitted photo)

made on YouTube. But it’s very different to view it on YouTube than to see it in person and being able to talk to other people. That’s where it gets to your heart. That’s where a fire is kindled.”

## ‘A movement that is changing lives’

After sharing with the 1,500 men who attended this year’s conference how it came about through the openness of two men, Father Meyer challenged his listeners.

“God is calling you to do something,” he said. “And God isn’t calling you always to do something small. We often say these things to make ourselves feel better, right? ‘God isn’t asking me to do anything great. God’s just asking me to do something small.’

“Well, no, actually God is calling a lot of you to do something really, really big. But we live in fear and we don’t want to think that that’s actually the case. I just want to say to all of you that this 10th conference exists because men said ‘yes.’ And men have continued to say ‘yes’ and invited each other and been a part of a movement that is changing lives.”

As planning is already underway at All Saints for the 11th annual E6 conference next year, Middendorf and Yunger are stepping away from being the event’s main organizers.

Both desire to spend more time with their families, especially in the weeks in January and February leading up to each year’s conference.

“There have been times when I was doing too much,” Middendorf said. “We should have reached out and gotten more men to fill those roles.

“So, we have to do this. We have to pass on the torch.”

Thankfully, there are many men at All Saints to fill the void.

“We have a great core group of guys with very specific roles that do make it easier,” Yunger said. “But anything you do at this big of a scale requires a lot of time and effort. And, as a father, that can be very difficult.”

In the end, both are convinced that the conference will be stronger by it being led by new people. It won’t depend just on the initial inspiration of its founders.

“There’s nothing special about me and Andrew,” Yunger said. “We just happened to be at a parish where a priest allowed us to do this and the Holy Spirit made it bigger and better each year.”

Yunger is also convinced that men in parishes across central and southern Indiana can also do daring things for Christ and the Church like he, Middendorf and others at All Saints have done.

“Anyone can do this,” he said. “This can happen anywhere. You just have to be able to trust the Holy Spirit and be willing to put the work in.”

(For more information on the E6 Catholic Men’s Conference, visit [www.e6catholicmensconference.com](http://www.e6catholicmensconference.com).) †



Jason Gordon, left, and Josh Hannoy laugh during a presentation during the conference. Gordon is a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. Hannoy is a member of St. Clare of Assisi Parish in Ellisville, Mo. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)







# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Allow Holy Spirit’s gifts to guide you closer to Christ during Lent

By Tom Hoopes

(Scnd of two parts)

In last week’s article, we explored five ways that Catholics can cooperate more fully with the grace that began to flow into their lives at their baptism. This grace enables believers to be joined here and now into the very life of God through the theological virtues of faith, hope and love and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Lent is a special time in the life of the Church for the faithful to open themselves more fully to this grace so that they can be more fully joined to God throughout the year. In those five ways, we first reflected on how to live more fully those virtues of faith, hope and love during Lent and the first two of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This week, we will explore how we can make the last five of these gifts a more conscious part of our spiritual lives in these weeks of Lent leading up to Easter.

### Knowledge: Attend Mass to imbibe Christ’s knowledge

The purpose of life is to know, love and serve God. To know him means to know things about him, but it also means to “have knowledge” of him in the Biblical sense: to unite with the body of Christ. That means that the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist in the Mass are a summing up of one of our whole life’s tasks. There are two remarkable passages in the Bible recounting mystical visions of sharing in Christ’s knowledge. In one, the prophet Ezekiel is given a scroll to eat; in another, St. John the Evangelist is given the same. We have this gift not in a vision but in reality through Scripture and Communion at each Mass. Lord Jesus, give us the gift of receiving you deeply at each Mass, through our ears and on our tongues.

### Fortitude: Give something up so that your heart grows in Christ’s fortitude

Giving something up is a Lenten tradition for a reason. I was deeply convicted by a friend’s Facebook post three years ago that asked: “What is it that you won’t give up, even for God?” We all have something in our life—eating, drinking, shopping, entertainment, social media—that we rely on for comfort and meaning, something we are afraid to live without. Think of all the things lovers give up to make their



Auxiliary Bishop Timothy E. Freyer of the Diocese of Orange, Calif., baptizes Jacob Lopez on April 16, 2022, during the Easter Vigil at Holy Family Church in Orange. Lent is a time for Catholics to prepare for the renewal of their baptismal promises at Easter. (CNS photo/ Ian Tran, Diocese of Orange)

beloved first in their lives: their own preferences, their personal time and the money they would have spent on themselves. Think of all the things parents give up because their children become first in their lives: their days and nights, their travel plans and their future plans. They give them up gladly for the person their heart loves most. Jesus, love gives us the fortitude to give things up for those we love. Give us the fortitude to give up that thing that most keeps us from you.

### Counsel: Live Ash Wednesday, Fridays and Good Friday to walk in Christ’s counsel

Think of counsel as the Holy Spirit’s GPS system. It allows you to judge where to go and how to act almost by intuition. This doesn’t happen magically. It happens by building the habit of following God’s will, which is expressed in his Church. The precepts of the Church are here to help give us that habit: Fast with Jesus as the Church asks on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, abstain from meat on Fridays in union with his sacrifice, and more. To see how powerful the Church’s life is, think of the deep nostalgia Catholics feel every year not just at Christmas, but also at Lent. Maybe we remember wearing ashes to school as a kid. Maybe we remember fish sticks, rice and ketchup on Fridays. We remember the strangeness of the empty tabernacle in church on Good Friday and the mystery of the candles at the Easter Vigil. That nostalgia is the Church’s life moving into my soul, telling me I belong to Jesus and that I can rest in him through the life of the Church. Lord Jesus, you gave us your Church as a way to train us to walk in your

path. Give us the grace to walk in fidelity to your Church and to you. **Piety and Fear of the Lord: Pray the rosary to join Christ in his fear of God and piety**

If we are going to share in the life of the Trinity through Christ, the two final gifts of the Holy Spirit are indispensable. Jesus prays, “Father, glorify your name!” to show us fear of God, awestruck respect for his majesty (Jn 12:28). He also prays “Abba, Father!” calling God “papa” or “daddy” to show us piety, the sweet consolation of closeness with God. The person who best exemplifies life in Christ is Our Lady, who carried Christ in her womb. In the joyful mysteries of the rosary, she makes Christ the center of her life and brings him to others. In the final glorious mysteries, she is given the awe-inspiring gifts of being welcomed at Christ’s side in heaven as a queen. In between are the mysteries of light and the sorrowful mysteries. The Lenten song that for me best demonstrates fear of the Lord and piety is “At the cross her station keeping” (an English translation of the centuries-old Latin hymn, “*Stabat Mater*”). The song shares the awe and gratitude at Mary’s great act of majesty and closeness that Christ made on the cross. Lord Jesus, let me kneel with your mother in awe at your majesty and fold my hands with her in appreciation at your closeness.

### Recommit to your baptism on Easter, ready to become one with Jesus

Spoiler alert: At the end of Lent, you will be renewing your baptismal promises at Mass on Easter. It turns out that renewing your baptismal graces is what Lent was about all along. “All Christ’s riches ‘are for every individual and are everybody’s property,’ ” says the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#519, quoting St. John Paul II’s encyclical “The Redeemer of Man”). The more we give to Lent, the more it will conform us to Christ, and that is truly the greatest happiness available on Earth or heaven. To live Lent better, you don’t have to do anything extraordinary. You just have to live Lent’s practices with this end in mind. Lord Jesus, every year I renew my baptismal promises at Easter. This year, I want to be more prepared for that moment than ever before. Kindly give me the graces in Lent that will unite us at Easter.

(Tom Hoopes, author of *The Rosary of Saint John Paul II and The Fatima Family Handbook*, is writer in residence at Benedictine College in Kansas and hosts “*The Extraordinary Story*” podcast on Ex Corde.) †



A woman prays the rosary during eucharistic adoration following the opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life on Jan. 19, 2023, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. Praying the rosary during Lent is a way to reflect on the love for Jesus seen in Mary’s life. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)



Joyful Witness/Kimberly Pohovey

This Lent and beyond, never take Christ’s sacrifice for granted

Another year, another Lent. Another season of successfully or not so successfully giving something up as a sacrifice. But what if there’s another way of truly focusing on the meaning of sacrifice?



Once something in our life becomes routine, I believe it’s human nature for us to take it for granted.

Sometimes I take my family, the people I love most in this world, for granted. At times, I also take my health, job, financial security and yes, even my faith, for granted. I don’t do so out of any sense of malice, it’s just that so many aspects

of my life become routine, which in turn leads me to complacency.

At Mass the week before Ash Wednesday, my pastor encouraged us to take home a postcard with the parish’s Lenten opportunities. I also picked up a Lenten prayer companion.

As I perused the Lenten offerings at my parish, I started to wonder how I can be more present during this

season. Instead of giving something up for Lent, I plan to make sure I don’t take my faith for granted. And I certainly don’t want to take Jesus’ unbelievable sacrifice for granted either.

I plan to be more prayerful. I hope to attend some of the Lenten events at my parish and participate in a retreat at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. Of course, I will fast and donate during Lent, but the single most important thing I think I can do is to have a deeper realization and appreciation that Lent leads to Christ’s death on the cross.

As the priest elevates the host during the consecration, I have started saying to myself, “Thank you, Jesus, for *your* sacrifice and *my* salvation.” These sound like simple words but saying them to myself at the moment of consecration helps me to be more intentional in my understanding of what Jesus endured for me—and you.

We hear the story of the Passion of our Lord every year. But how much thought do we put into how Jesus suffered for us?

Being both God and man, he knew what was about to transpire and feared the cup of suffering he was about

to withstand enough to ask our Father to spare him, if it be God’s will. Though innocent of sin himself, he walked willingly to his death to save all of humanity from our sins. He endured scorn, brutal torture and finally, execution on the cross.

I remember when *The Passion of the Christ* movie was released years ago. My small Christian community at church gathered to view it together. The intense and extremely graphic passion scenes depicted in the movie left me completely overwhelmed. I wept watching Jesus being tortured, maybe for the first time truly understanding the depth of the agony he experienced—for me, for us.

So, I will keep all the traditional Lenten observances centered around prayer, fasting and almsgiving. But this year, I will focus more intentionally on my gratitude for Jesus’s ultimate sacrifice and never again take it for granted.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.) †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Mother’s adoption decision honors child’s life and offers hope

Pope John Paul II established March 25 as the International Day of the Unborn Child to recognize the value of unborn life and stand against abortion. This date coincides with the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, commemorating the moment Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary’s womb.



At Catholic Charities, we provide support and hope to those facing unplanned pregnancies. Our services include confidential counseling, residential programs, parenting support and adoption assistance. We believe that every life is sacred and that every child deserves a loving, stable family. Our experienced adoption professionals guide birth mothers through each step of the process—from their first questions to post-placement support.

Jenna’s story: A mother’s love, a life-changing choice

When Jenna discovered she was pregnant with her third child, she immediately began thinking about his future. Like any mother, she wanted her son to have every opportunity in life—to grow, to thrive, to become the best version of himself.

But Jenna’s circumstances were difficult. She was in jail, facing a prison sentence of five to seven years. Because she already had two children, she feared they might forget her—or even resent her. She couldn’t change the past, but she could make a different choice for her unborn child.

Seeking guidance, Jenna reached out to Catholic Charities to explore adoption. A birth mother counselor visited her in jail, providing information and answering her questions. Jenna had a clear vision for the kind of family she wanted for her baby: a stable, two-parent home with both a mother and a father. Although some of her relatives offered to raise her son, she didn’t feel they could provide the life she dreamed for him.

Open adoption was also important to Jenna. She longed to remain connected to her son as he grew and hoped to find a family willing to bring him to visit her in prison. While many families are open to ongoing contact in adoption, the level of access Jenna requested was uncommon.

Open adoption was also important to Jenna. She longed to remain connected to her son as he grew and hoped to find a family willing to bring him to visit her in prison.

A family ready to open their hearts

The Goodard family first learned about adoption through an informational meeting at Catholic Charities. Both successful professionals, they had one child and were eager to expand their family. After completing the necessary education and preparation, they were matched with Jenna.

Because of Jenna’s incarceration, their first meeting took place by video conference. From the very beginning, the Goodard’s had no hesitation—they were fully committed. They built a relationship with Jenna before the baby was even born, reassuring her that her son would be deeply loved and cared for.

Honoring Jenna’s wishes, the Goodard’s navigated the complex process of securing prison visits so she could remain a part of her son’s life.

A choice made with love

Today, Jenna keeps in touch with Catholic Charities through occasional letters. She is grateful for the opportunity to see her son grow and flourish, knowing she made the best possible choice for both of them.

Through adoption, she gave her child a future filled with love and stability—one beyond what she had ever imagined.

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

Called to Holiness/Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

Reviving monasticism: A vocation that desperately needs our prayers

Praying for vocations usually means praying for more priests. That’s a good and necessary effort, of course, because without priests, there is no Eucharist.



But there’s another vocation that may be even more endangered. And what’s been happening in the Church—and in our culture—during the past few decades should prompt us to ask what should be a dismaying question: Is monasticism disappearing from the Catholic Church?

Sure, most things run their course and few things last forever. But there have always been people who wanted to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ to its fullest degree, and monasticism has been the beating heart of the Church from the patristic age. St. Anthony of Egypt, considered the father of monasticism, left for the Egyptian desert around A.D. 270. He was not, however, the first to renounce the world to seek God in solitude.

Anthony first learned how to live as a monk from others who had gone before him. That wisdom has been passed down through the centuries through the lives of saints like Benedict, Romuald and Bruno in the West and Isaac and Seraphim in the East. These holy men—and the many who followed them—embraced the call to Christian solitude wholeheartedly. Along the way, they enriched monastic tradition and adapted it to answer the challenges of their own times. We may wonder why no one seems to be doing that today.

But in the Ozark mountains of northwest Arkansas,

they are—and have been for nearly 50 years. Initially fueled by a wildly successful music career, John Michael Talbot didn’t just embrace Catholicism; he pursued monasticism. Little Portion Monastery and Hermitage is a testament to Talbot’s personal calling, but the life of the community there is also a powerful witness to the enduring value of monasticism in the Church. A best-kept secret in the American Catholic Church, what Little Portion offers is worth sharing.

I recently spent the better part of a week there with the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, staying in one of the hermitages and participating in the rhythms of their life. Because lauds, vespers and daily Mass are already part of my routine, I didn’t expect to experience many differences when it came to prayer. But there was something qualitatively different about praying the liturgy with people whose lives are centered around it.

The bell rang 15 minutes and then five beforehand. Silence reigned most of the day, with talk limited to only what was necessary for work. In a space without screens, actions spoke louder than words. Every smile or kindness became more visible. Meals began with a selection of the community’s constitution or Celano’s “Life of St. Francis” read aloud.

Food was tasty and nutritious, much of it prepared from what is grown in the garden, and regular fasting is built in. Nothing is wasted. When I returned to my simple hermitage, where there was no cell or wireless signal, both prayer and work came easily. Simply put, the life being cultivated there provides space to breathe; it

provides a framework that facilitates divine encounter and spiritual growth.

Monasticism first emerged as a lay movement focused on cultivating a deep and radical love for both God and neighbor. Offering a concrete path to those who aspired to perfection in following Christ, early monastics lived lives marked by penance and asceticism. They retreated from society for a purpose: to battle against temptation and sin and devote themselves entirely to God.

Has God stopped calling people into solitude? No. But we have created a culture in which it is nearly impossible for people to hear that calling or answer it. Today, most of us struggle equally with community and solitude. Our radical individualism, deeply disordered attachments and insatiable appetite for attention make it harder to consider a monastic vocation.

But for those who hear God calling them away from the world, for those who aspire to the way of love, recognizing that it is the way of the Cross, [littleportion.org](#) is worth exploring.

The future of monasticism in the Catholic Church is doubtful, even dire. That is a tragedy because the culture we live in is destructive to the human search for God, the interior quest that has been safeguarded by monasteries throughout history.

As we struggle with complexity and division, the Church needs monastics more, not less. And the world? Even more so.

(Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.) †



Second Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 16, 2025

- Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18
- Philippians 3:17-4:1
- Luke 9:28b-36

The Book of Genesis is the source of the first reading at Mass this weekend. It is a story about Abraham, whom the Jews regard as the father of their people. Abraham is seen as the spiritual father of all who know and honor the one God. Hence he is a special figure in the religious traditions of Christians and Muslims.

Scholars believe that Abraham was an actual person, not the figment of imagination or a figure constructed in some literary effort.

Several points are important in this passage. First, and this is critical, God communicates with Abraham. God is in Abraham’s world, but also above and beyond Abraham’s world. God is no human’s peer. Therefore, people do not relate to God as if he were an equal. Nevertheless, God is present and interacts with them.

God has command over nature and the living beings in it. God can order Abraham to capture animals and to sacrifice them. By Hebrew tradition, the animals that Abraham captured were sacred because they were intended for sacrifice to praise God.

Abraham protected them from being taken away by predators. It is not as if animals that hunted for prey were inherently evil, although Jewish practice later would proscribe eating the flesh of any predatory animal.

Rather, they simply were victims of their own instincts and impulses. God is merciful and protects the good.

Abraham is vulnerable. He cannot understand many things. The sun sets. He is terrified. God promises him and his offspring life in a place of their own. He promises them security.

The second reading is from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. A major Greek city at the time of Paul, Philippi’s name honored the father of Alexander the Great. Its Christian community was probably small and had many temptations to stray from the faith.

Paul wrote to the Christians in

Philippi to give them direction and encouragement. He expanded their knowledge of Jesus and challenged them to be loyal and fervent disciples.

In this reading, Paul says that humans are imperfect, even more so because of their willful sinning. Human bodies are “lowly” because they are subject to death, the Apostle declares (Phil 3:21). Christ elevates and restores humanity. In Jesus, humans will never die if they earnestly follow the Lord with the help of his grace.

St. Luke’s Gospel provides the last reading. It is Luke’s story of the Lord’s transfiguration, which is also described in Mark and Matthew.

The story is powerful. As is so often the case in New Testament accounts, Apostles are with Jesus at a very important moment. In this case, Peter, James and John accompany him. The Apostles knew Jesus. They interacted with him. They certainly saw his human characteristics.

Because of the transfiguration, they saw Christ’s divinity that he revealed to them. On their own, being only human, they were unable to see it.

Strong symbols from Hebrew tradition conveyed the reality of this divine identity. God spoke from a cloud. Gleaming light surrounded Jesus. Beside Jesus were the prophets Moses and Elijah, with whom God also had communicated.

Jesus perfected the tradition of God’s relating to and protecting people.

### Reflection

The Church this weekend offers us several important lessons intended to strengthen us in our Lenten resolve and ultimately in our Christian commitment.

First, we are not almighty or all-knowing. We are humans. Second, in our human limitation we are shortsighted, even blind at times. Third, we will physically die. Fourth, God loves us with the love shown Abraham and the prophets. He loves us in Jesus, his Son. Jesus is our hope, our only access to true and eternal life.

Using Lent better to relate to Jesus, and to commit to Jesus, is worth every effort. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, March 17

St. Patrick, bishop  
Daniel 9:4b-10  
Psalm 79:8-9, 11, 13  
Luke 6:36-38

### Tuesday, March 18

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and doctor of the Church  
Isaiah 1:10, 16-20  
Psalm 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23  
Matthew 23:1-12

### Wednesday, March 19

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

### Thursday, March 20

Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Psalm 1:1-4, 6  
Luke 16:19-31

### Friday, March 21

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a  
Psalm 105:16-21  
Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

### Saturday, March 22

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20  
Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12  
Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

### Sunday, March 23

Third Sunday of Lent  
Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15  
Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11  
1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12  
Luke 13:1-9

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

## Catholic morality teaches that there are degrees of seriousness in sin

At a recent Mass, the priest talked about “mortal sin,” about which I’d previously heard. But then he mentioned



“venial sins,” “temporal sins” and “sins of omission.” I’m not familiar with these, especially the last one. How can a person commit a sin without doing anything?

Every sin represents a turning away from God, which is never a good thing. But as we know from life experience and common sense, not all sins are equally terrible, and the dynamic of how we come to fall into sin can vary depending on the circumstances.

Mortal and venial sin are two categories along the same scale of how serious a sin is. The more serious kind of sin is mortal sin which, as the name implies, essentially “kills” our relationship with God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it this way: “Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God’s law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him” (#1855).

As Catholics, we believe that those who die in a state of unrepented mortal sin

are destined for hell. Although it is also important to keep in mind that we can never know fully as an outside observer what happens within another’s soul, we can always hope that even the worst sinners may have sought God’s mercy in their final moments.

In order for a sin to be considered a mortal sin in a given instance, three conditions must be met. First, the sin must be grave matter, meaning that it is seriously wrong in an objective sense. (As an illustration, stealing someone’s entire life savings is grave matter; stealing a paper clip is not.)

Secondly, the person committing the sin must also know and understand that the action is seriously wrong. Finally, in order for a sin to be mortal, a person must commit an act they know to be seriously wrong entirely of their own free will. (See #1857 in the catechism.)

A venial sin is a less serious sin that “does not break the covenant with God” and which does “not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity and consequently eternal happiness” (#1863).

Minor faults and sins that do not involve grave matter are for the most part always considered venial sins. And some sins that might ordinarily be considered mortal sins might actually be venial in some concrete circumstances, if the one sinning either was not aware of the gravity of the sinful action or was committing the sin because they felt some sort of pressure to do so.

Venial sins do not imperil our souls in the same way that a mortal sin would. But it’s still important to strive with the help of grace to avoid committing even venial sins. Among other reasons, “deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin” (#1863).

The term “sin of omission” does not describe the seriousness of a sin, but rather how the sin came to be committed. The opposite of a sin of omission is a sin of “commission,” meaning a sin that we deliberately went out of our way to commit. In contrast, we commit sins of omission when we neglect to do some good that we ought to have done.

Granted, none of us ever do as much good as we theoretically might, but a sin of omission generally involves a real failure to fulfill some clear-cut responsibility or duty. For example, actively forging documents for financial gain would be a sin of commission, whereas failing to report known fraud could be a sin of omission.

“Temporal sin” is not a term I have come across before, but my thought is that this was likely a reference to what we call “temporal punishment due to sin,” which is one way of describing doing penance for our sins, either in this life or in purgatory.

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

## My Journey to God

# He’s My Son, Too

(A tribute to St. Joseph)

By John Shaughnessy

I promise, God, to stand by Mary  
I promise to always love your son  
I promise through the joys and struggles  
To always see that your will be done.

I’ve never asked for any glory  
I always want to be true to you  
I just ask as you write his story  
Remember, Jesus is my son, too.

My love for my Mary grows stronger  
I’m awed by her magnificent “yes”  
She kindly tells me I’ve done the same  
I’m just trying to give you my best.

We begin the journey together  
We know you’ll be with us all the way  
Still, a father wants more for his son  
Than to sleep in a manger of hay.

The angel comes again to warn me  
To escape from the death and the strife  
It stirs a feeling deep within me  
I’ll do everything to save his life.

I’ve never asked for any glory  
I always want to be true to you  
I just ask as you write his story  
Remember, I need and count on you.

I watch my wife and son together  
I cherish their closeness and their love  
I want to stay this way forever  
But then he turns his gaze to above.

I’m not sure why you ever chose me  
It’s not for the work my hands have done  
Still, I take my own measure of pride  
In helping shape this carpenter’s son.

And when it’s time to come home to you  
Let me feel the comfort of his arms  
My last prayer is you always keep him  
From all suffering, from any harm.

I’ve never asked for any glory  
I always want to be true to you  
I just ask as you write his story  
Remember, I put my trust in you.

I’m sure you will do what’s best for him  
It is what we fathers try to do  
I don’t know the plan you have for him  
Still he will do what you ask him to.

Thank you for making me a father  
It’s a gift beyond any compare  
To know and love a child so deeply  
Is the everlasting bond we share.

Please keep him in your care forever  
Let his heart and his soul remain true  
Let his life serve all your dear children  
I believe that’s what our son will do.

I’ve never asked for any glory  
I always want to be true to you  
I just ask as you write his story  
Always remember, he’s my son, too.

(John Shaughnessy is a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis and is assistant editor of The Criterion. March 19 is the feast of St. Joseph) †



# 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.

**ARNOLD, Tom**, 79, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 25. Husband of Charolette Arnold. Father of Brad, Greg and Todd Arnold. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of eight.

**BLANKENSHIP, George T.**, 91, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Feb. 24. Husbana of Mary Jane Blankenship. Father of Ronald Blankenship. Brother of Ann Dockins, Rita Harmon, Peggy Purtle and Ben Blankenship. Grandfather of one.

**BUNN, Elizabeth J.**, 55, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 23. Wife of Anthony Bunn. Mother of Masey Carlton, Savanna Haag and Collin Bunn. Sister of Linda DeWeese, Beverly Matthews, Sharon Pence, Rita Stevens, Michael and Robert Graves. Grandmother of five.

**DUELL, James L.**, 89, St. Michael, Brookville, March 4. Father of Joy Baxter and Jill Shiflett. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of eight.

**FISCHER, James B.**, 93, St. Meinrad, St. Meinrad, Feb. 13. Husband of Cora Fischer. Father of Sheila, Rick and Scott Fischer. Brother of Edwin Fischer. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of eight.

**GILL, Kristie**, 76, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Feb. 21. Mother of Brandon, Bryon and Kevin Gill. Grandmother of eight.

**GOBLE, Dorothy**, 92, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 27. Mother of Brenda Clayton, Kathy Smith, Daniel and Patrick Goble. Sister of JoAnn Waninger and Bill Wissel. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of three.

**GOGEL, Pauline C.**, 93, St. Boniface, Fulda, Feb. 20. Mother of Marilyn Hagedorn, Joann Klem, Bernadette Linne, Bernice Spurr, Linda, Alfred, Dan, Dean, Don, Francis, Gerald, Larry, Michael and Paul Gogel. Sister of Anna Mae Peters, Agnes Witte, Clarence, Norman and Robert Waninger. Grandmother of 37. Great-grandmother of 68.

**HAYES, Kevin**, 62, St. Michael, Brookville, Feb. 26. Son of Barbara Hayes. Brother of Margaret Jones, Maureen Smith, Bridget and Sean Hayes. Uncle of several.

# Ash Wednesday at Saint Meinrad



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in northern Indiana places ashes on the forehead of a worshipper during an Ash Wednesday Mass in the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. Also placing ashes on worshippers beside Bishop Rhodes is transitional Deacon Michael Reyes, a Benedictine monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

**HOSTETTER, Gregory A.**, 63, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Feb. 18. Husband of Lisa Hostetter. Brother of Cindy Harper, Anthony and Steve Hostetter. Uncle and great-uncle of several.

**JONES, Robert E.**, 77, Prince of Peace, Madison, March 4. Husband of Janet Jones. Father of Mark Jones.

Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of 11.

**MCCASHLAND, Carol**, 74, St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty, Feb. 14. Wife of Kenneth McCashland. Mother of Sarah Lynch, Erin Phenis, Colin Reynolds and Levi McCashland. Grandmother of eight.

**MOUREY, Melissa A.**, 56,

St. Mary, Greensburg, March 1. Wife of Frank Mourey, Mother of Jessica Adkins and Anthony Mourey. Daughter of Kenny and Alvina Kress. Sister of Michael Kress. Grandmother of five.

**TRESSLER, Michael**, 89, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Feb. 24. Husband of Patricia Tressler. Father of Penny

Bonwell, Cynthia Jones, Sharon Vehslage and Thomas Tressler. Brother of Joan Lohrey and Bruce Tressler. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of 16.

**WEAVER, Kenneth**, 52, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Feb. 20. Husband of Rhonda Weaver. Son of Tom and Linda Weaver. †

# Cardinal: Dignity lies at heart of Church’s stance on gender

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The infinite and inalienable dignity inherent in every human being has practical consequences which include protecting everyone’s right



Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández

to life from conception to a natural end and opposing the “technocratic” ideology of gender, said the head of the Vatican’s doctrinal office. “We don’t want to be cruel and say that we don’t understand people’s conditioning and the deep suffering that exists in some cases of ‘dysphoria’ that manifests itself even from childhood,” said Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Those experiencing profound dysphoria, which is a state of intense emotional discomfort or distress, are in

“exceptional situations [which] must be evaluated with great care,” he said in a talk given during a conference in mid-February organized by Germany’s Cologne University of Catholic Theology.

What the Church opposes is “the ideology that usually accompanies so many sex-change decisions,” which the cardinal said is an ideology that claims “omnipotence” and refuses to recognize the reality of one’s body as a gift, he said in his talk, which was published on the dicastery’s website in Italian and German.

The cardinal took part by video link in the conference, which was dedicated to Catholic teachings on human dignity. He presented a paper offering “some clarifications” regarding the meaning of the “infinite dignity” and the “ontological dignity” of the person as presented in “*Dignitas Infinita*” (“Infinite Dignity”), a document released in April 2024 by the dicastery and approved by Pope Francis.

The document had provoked some questions about the nature or source of infinite dignity and how it could be said to apply to finite beings, while others had criticized the document’s condemnation of gender theory and sex-change procedures.

The cardinal sought to address those points by clarifying the Catholic Church’s defense of the “ontological dignity” of the human person, which is a dignity that cannot be given or taken away and is immutable no matter the person’s state, capacity or circumstances.

It is not to be confused with moral, social or existential dignity, which can be imperfect, lost or harmed, he said. For example, a human being does not lose his or her ontological dignity even when living an “undignified” life in a moral or social sense, such as in a state of sin or in extreme poverty.

Certain conditions are “not dignified,” in that they do not correspond to the nature of the human person who is loved by God and called to love others, the cardinal said.

The “ontological reality” of a dignity, inherent in human nature and given by God, that “is not diminished or affected” by any circumstance, he said, is the basis for upholding and protecting the dignity of all human beings even if they are unconscious, unborn, infirm, on death row or experience physical or developmental disabilities.

This understanding of dignity is contrary to “the

interpretation of a large part of current society and throughout history,” he said, which prefers to ignore, remove or invent human rights at whim or as decided by the powerful.

While “Infinite Dignity” denounced discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and situations in which people are “imprisoned, tortured and even deprived of the good of life solely because of their sexual orientation,” it also condemned “gender theory” as “extremely dangerous since it cancels differences in its claim to make everyone equal.” It warned that sex-change interventions risk “threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception.”

In his talk on Feb. 17, the cardinal said the document invites the faithful to recognize the consequences of believing—as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches—that “the human body shares in the dignity of ‘the image of God’ ” (#364). In that view, “sex change is not merely an external change or comparable to normal cosmetic surgery or surgery to cure a disease,” he said. “It is about the demand for a change of identity, of wanting to be another person.”

The document, he said, “does not exclude that there are cases outside the norm, such as severe dysphorias that can lead to an unbearable existence or even suicide,” which demand evaluation “with great care.”

“What we are saying is that the ideology that usually accompanies so many sex-change decisions includes the denial of the reality given as a gift, with the idea that bodily-sexual identity can be the object of radical change, always subject to one’s desires and claims of freedom,” he said.

Regarding the question of “infinite dignity” for finite beings and its source, the cardinal said human beings have been called to be God’s children through Jesus. “This possibility was truly opened through the incarnation and redemption of Christ.”

During a meeting with people with disabilities in Germany in 1980, St. John Paul II said, “With Jesus Christ, God has shown us in an unsurpassed way how he loves each human being and thereby bestows upon him infinite dignity.”

This is how the late pope’s statement about infinite dignity, and the document’s title, should be understood, Cardinal Fernández said, “namely, that God’s infinite love confers infinite dignity on every human being.” †

## Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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## REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

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**2** Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis  
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410

**317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548**  
**[victimassistance@archindy.org](mailto:victimassistance@archindy.org)**



# BURIAL

continued from page 3

methods for disposition of human bodies, including alkaline hydrolysis, fail to satisfy the Church’s requirements for demonstrating proper respect for the human person.

In the document, the bishops reiterated the Church’s longstanding position that traditional burial is “the most appropriate way of manifesting reverence for the body of the deceased,” as it “clearly expresses our faith and hope in the resurrection of the body.” The bishops added that the Church permits cremation “unless it is chosen for reasons contrary to the Catholic faith.”

Neither alkaline hydrolysis nor human composting, which involves breaking down a body into nutrient-rich soil, meet the standards that the Church requires for dignified treatment of human remains or for demonstrating anticipation of the resurrection, the bishops wrote.

“Accompanying the body itself to its place of rest reaffirms in the hearts and minds of believers the faith of the Church that it is this body that will rise,” the USCCB statement reads. “Like alkaline hydrolysis, human composting is not sufficiently respectful of the human body. In fact, the body is completely disintegrated. There is nothing distinguishably left of the body to be placed in

a casket or an urn and laid to rest in a sacred place where Christian faithful can visit for prayer and remembrance.”

Only the Catholic Church has offered opposition to the legislation at the Indiana Statehouse. In a recent ICC podcast, Mingus reflected on serving as a lone voice on certain matters that bring no moral objections from society at large, and why it is still important for the Church to speak in these situations.

“The difficult argument—yet it’s one we’re making, and it’s an argument that I think the Church has a responsibility to make—is that how we treat human bodies is a matter of public concern,” Mingus said. “Our argument is grounded in a desire to see the common good realized in society, and that how we treat human bodies—how we treat humans at any stage—is an element of the common good.”

Mingus said the ICC will continue to express its concerns with House Bill 1044 as it makes its way through the Senate.

“If nothing else, I hope that our advocacy helps to



‘Alkaline hydrolysis fails to meet the Catholic faith’s criterion that due respect be shown to the bodily remains of the deceased in a way that gives visible witness to our faith and hope in the resurrection of the body.’

—ICC executive director Alexander Mingus

elevate our understanding of how we should respect the human body after death.”

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

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

## In message, pope thanks Italian movement for supporting ‘culture of life’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Defending the life of the unborn should be a sign of being in solidarity “with all the discarded of the world,” Pope Francis said in a message sent from his hospital room to an Italian pro-life group.

Italy’s Movement for Life, “in harmony with the whole Church,” places at the center of its concern “the dignity of the person, and it privileges those who are weakest,” the pope said in a message signed on March 5 from the Gemelli

Hospital, where he has been hospitalized since Feb. 14.

Thousands of people from Italy gathered at the Vatican on March 8 to celebrate the movement’s 50th anniversary and participate in events for the Jubilee of the World of Volunteering. Members of the movement staff 350 assistance centers across the country, run a 24-hour hotline, staff homes for pregnant women in difficulty and for new mothers and their babies and have helped

establish 64 “baby hatches” at public hospitals where mothers in difficulty can leave their newborns.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, celebrated Mass for the group in St. Peter’s Basilica and read the pope’s message.

“Along with concrete solidarity, lived in the style of closeness and proximity to mothers in difficulty because of a difficult or unexpected pregnancy, you promote the culture of life in a broad sense,” the

pope’s message said. “And you seek to do so with frankness, love and tenacity, keeping truth closely united with charity toward all.”

Building a “culture of life,” the pope said, includes helping women who feel pressured into aborting their children.

“Continue to count on women [and] their capacity for acceptance, generosity and courage,” the pope said. “Women must be able to count on the support of the entire civil and ecclesial community.” †

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### Employment

### Assistant Director of Communications

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking an Assistant Director of Communications for its central office. The assistant director reports to the director of communications and will be responsible for implementing the communication strategy for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, aligning with the mission of evangelizing catechesis and the new Archdiocesan pastoral plan. This role oversees internal and external communications as well as the execution of marketing initiatives. The ideal candidate will also develop and manage content creation across all platforms, ensuring adherence to brand standards. Additionally, this position leads media relations, supports crisis communication efforts, and is prepared to step in for the Director of Communication when needed.

Qualifications include: active practicing Catholic in full communion with the Church; minimum of bachelor’s degree, master’s degree preferred in communications, public relations, mass media, marketing, journalism or related field; 8 or more years practical work experience; comfortable with various forms of electronic communications; demonstrated experience with community relations and issues management; knowledge and awareness of issues of importance in the Catholic Church; exceptional oral, written and interpersonal communication skills; knowledge of maintaining brand standards across an organization. For a complete list of requirements, go to: [tinyurl.com/archindyasstdircomm25](http://tinyurl.com/archindyasstdircomm25).

To apply, please email a resume, cover letter, and list of references to Andrea Wunnenberg, Director of Human Resources, at [awunnenberg@archindy.org](mailto:awunnenberg@archindy.org). Applications will be accepted until March 27th with an anticipated start in April/May of 2025.

### Employment

### Director of Development Scecina Memorial High School

Scecina Memorial High School is seeking a Director of Development who will work closely with the President and other members of the Development Team to cultivate relationships with alumni and friends to raise financial support for school priorities. This individual supervises personnel and ensures that effective and efficient processes are implemented to raise support through direct mail, Giving Day, special events, online giving, and corporate sponsorships. We are seeking a professional for this role who is committed to the values of Catholic school education, experienced in philanthropic development, and embodies strong professionalism, integrity, project management, and personnel management skills.

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Ms. Magy Garcia  
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# United in the Eucharist

## Be the Answer to Someone’s Prayer

Have you ever found yourself in a position where you didn’t know how you were going to keep a roof over your head or put food on the table for your family? For many individuals and families across central and southern Indiana, this is their everyday reality. With nowhere else to turn, they seek safety, stability, and hope. **Holy Family Shelter** in Indianapolis, **Becky’s Place** in Bedford, and **Bethany House** in Terre Haute provide more than a place to sleep—they offer a path to healing and a chance to rebuild.

Through food programs across the Archdiocese, we ensure that families don’t have to go to bed hungry. Every day, countless individuals turn to us for a meal, a safe place to stay, and a chance to rebuild their lives—but the need continues to grow.

Without this support, the reality for many is cold nights, empty stomachs, and the fear of what tomorrow will bring. It’s not something we want to imagine—but for too many, it is life. God calls us to care for the poor and to give from the blessings He has entrusted to us.

During this sacred season of Lent, a time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, let us respond to that call. When you give to the United Catholic Appeal, 100% of your gift goes directly to ministry—helping those in crisis find shelter, nourishment, and hope.

No gift is too small to change a life today.



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