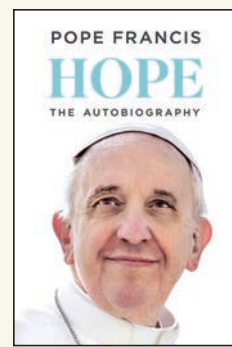




The

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Papal memories

Book reveals a shepherd's heart, full of love, page 7.

CriterionOnline.com

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While pursuing his dream in sports, a teacher becomes a champion to children

By John Shaughnessy

The dreams we pursue can take us to places we never imagined.

At the same time, our dreams don't always come true—or in the way we imagined.

Then there is this reality:

The dreams we follow can have an impact on others, opening their imaginations to what is possible in their lives.

All these realities have come together in the life of 23-year-old Brayden Lowery, a 2020 graduate of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.

After graduating from the University of Indianapolis in the spring of 2024, Lowery signed up to become the fourth- and fifth-grade teacher at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis for this school year.

He also decided to pursue a master's degree in sports management at his alma mater, which allowed him to use his final year of college eligibility in wrestling—the sport in which he became a state champion at Roncalli in his senior year.

See **TEACHER**, page 8

Brayden Lowery holds the first-place trophy after winning the 141-pound weight class in the NCAA Division II Super Regional IV wrestling tournament at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Mo., on March 1.

(Submitted photo)



Pope Francis knew he 'might not make it,' physician says

ROME (CNS)—For Pope Francis' medical team at Rome's Gemelli Hospital, Feb. 28 was the worst day.

"For the first time, I saw tears in the eyes of some of the people around him,"



Pope Francis

Dr. Sergio Alfieri, the coordinator of his medical team, told the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

"We were all aware that the situation had deteriorated further and there was a risk that he might not make it," Alfieri said in the

interview published on March 25, two days after the pope was released from the hospital and returned to the Vatican.

The Vatican medical bulletin from Feb. 28 said: "The Holy Father, this afternoon, after a morning spent alternating between respiratory physiotherapy and prayer in the chapel, experienced an isolated episode of bronchospasm. This caused an episode of vomiting, which led to him inhaling some and a sudden worsening of his respiratory condition."

The doctors aspirated his airways and put him on noninvasive mechanical ventilation, a machine that delivers air with added oxygen through a tightly fitted face mask and using positive pressure to assist breathing.

Alfieri and Vatican officials have said several times that Pope Francis was never intubated and that he always remained "alert and aware."

The doctor told *Corriere*, "We had to make a choice between stopping and letting him go or pressing on and trying all the drugs and therapies we could, running the very high risk of damaging other organs. And in the end, we took that path."

Asked who made the final decision, Alfieri said, "The Holy Father always decides."

But he added that Pope Francis

See **POPE**, page 9

Are you a youth or young adult hoping to make the most of the second half of Lent? Here are six quick tips

By John Shaughnessy

In the hope of helping youths and young adults make the most of the second half of this Lenten season, the two archdiocesan leaders for these groups were asked to share their ideas.

As you will see, their suggestions are also valuable for people of all ages.

Here are three ideas from Meagan Morrissey, director of young adult and college campus ministry for the archdiocese:

—"Increase daily prayer time by five minutes."



Meagan Morrissey

—"Schedule a time for confession between now and Easter."

—"Give up buying a coffee or eating out, putting that money in the collection basket [or online to your parish]."

Here are three ideas from Rachel Gilman, director of youth ministry for the archdiocese. While seconding Morrissey's suggestions, especially about making time for the sacrament of



Rachel Gilman

penance, Gilman also offered:

—"Attend Stations of the Cross at your

parish. This would be great for families or if teens can drive themselves and pick up some friends."

—"If their parish has adoration weekly or daily, stop by for 10-15 minutes on the way to or from school, or in the evening, depending on when they offer it. Or if they go to a Catholic school and adoration is offered there, go."

—"Volunteer at a local agency on a weekend—for example, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. This would

also be good for families to do together." †

LENT 2025



Women are pictured in a file photo praying at the Stone of Unction, or Stone of Anointing, representing where the body of Jesus was prepared for burial after the crucifixion in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Old City of Jerusalem. (OSV News photo/Debbie Hill)

Holy Land collection is a sign of solidarity, faith, hope, cardinal says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While anchored in the hope that comes from Jesus’ resurrection, Catholics should not forget the “tears, despair and destruction everywhere” they have seen in images from the Middle East, a top Vatican official said.

Terrorism and a massive military response to it are threatening the lives of Christians in the Holy Land who ensure that the places associated with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are not simply museums, but witness to a living faith in him, said Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches.

In a letter released by the Vatican on March 17, the cardinal pleaded with bishops around the world to take up the annual collection for the Holy Land on Good Friday, which is on April 18 this year. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is among those who take up this collection each year.


St. Paul VI formalized the annual collection in 1974 to promote and maintain “a strong bond between the

faithful across the world and the Holy Places,” the Vatican explained. The collection “is the main source of material support for Christian life in the Holy Land and a tool for the universal Church to express solidarity with the ecclesial communities of the Middle East.”

Funds are used for the upkeep of shrines like the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. But they also are used to support the parishes, schools and social service projects of the local Catholic communities in those cities and throughout the region, as well as to fund training for priests, religious and university students.

“The territories that the sacred Scriptures mention in the narrative of salvation history, which benefit in different forms from the collection, are: Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Turkey, Iran and Iraq,” the dicastery said.

“As I write to you, our hearts are lifted



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

March 29–April 8, 2025

March 29 – 10 a.m.
Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus

March 30 – 9 a.m.
Mass with Vietnamese Community at St. Joseph Church, Indianapolis

March 30 – 5 p.m.
Priesthood Promises at Blessed Sacrament Chapel of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

April 1 – 11 a.m.
Mass and lunch for Archdiocese Employee Lenten Day of Reflection at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis

April 2 – 4:30 p.m.
Mass and dinner for Cristo Rey Network Annual Meeting, Columbus, Ohio

April 3 – 2 p.m.
Installation Mass for Archbishop-elect Robert G. Casey at Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter in Chains, Cincinnati, Ohio

April 6 – 2 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Paul Catholic Center and St. John the Apostle parishes, Bloomington; St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Bedford; and St. Jude the Apostle Parish, Spencer, at St. Charles Borromeo Church

April 7 – 4:30 p.m.
Mass for U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Regional Ministry Formation Day at Marian University, Indianapolis

April 8 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

April 8 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Jude and Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary parishes, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

by the ceasefire in effect. We know that it is fragile and that, by its very nature, it will not be enough on its own to solve the problems and extinguish the hatred in that area. But at least our eyes no longer see explosions, perpetuating the anguish of the irreparable,” Cardinal Gugerotti wrote.

His letter was released the day before Israel, citing an impasse in negotiations with Hamas militias, launched aerial attacks on Gaza, reportedly killing hundreds of people and effectively ending the ceasefire that began in January. (As *The Criterion* went to press this week, the attacks continue.)

“We have witnessed tears, despair and destruction everywhere,” Cardinal Gugerotti wrote. “Now our hope is that the defeat inflicted by death will not be its eternal victory. And our hope is renewed in seeing the Risen One, Jesus Christ our Lord, who in that very land revealed the wounds of his passion, alive.”

A report released by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, which was released with the cardinal’s letter, noted that since the Hamas attack on Israel in

October 2023, income from pilgrims and from local donations “have been reduced to a minimum,” leading to decisions to scale back, suspend or cancel many projects, particularly tourist infrastructure, “in order to try to give priority to those issues which directly touch persons in need.”

And for the projects that are going ahead, the Franciscans said, “we have preferred the employment of a workforce coming from the West Bank in order to offer work for Christians living in a territory which does not benefit from social welfare or from social security, and who in these last years, owing to the situation of conflict and various lockdowns, would have remained totally deprived of economic resources.”

In addition to providing humanitarian aid and supporting education efforts in Gaza, funds from the collection have been used to support the only Latin-rite Catholic parish in Gaza, 135 parishioners in need and about 600 displaced people who have taken shelter in the parish compound, the report said. †


As Mother’s Day nears, we are seeking your stories about your mom’s influence—or your approach as a mom

In anticipation of Mother’s Day, *The Criterion* is inviting you, our readers, to share your thoughts, tributes and stories about motherhood from two perspectives—the gift of having your mom and the gift of being a mom.

First, share your thoughts, tributes and stories about how your mother has shaped your approach to faith, life and love. While serious and sentimental tributes are definitely welcomed, so are touches of humor, as most of us have experienced our mom’s influence in, let’s say, *interesting* ways.

Second, if you are a mother, share your thoughts and stories about how you tried to shape—or are trying to shape—your children’s faith and lives. Again, touches of humor regarding your approach to being a mom are also welcomed.

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



Pope’s prayer intentions for April

- **For the use of the new technologies**—Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person, and will help us face the crises of our times.

See Pope Francis’ monthly intentions at archindy.org/popesintentions.



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Hundreds join rally against migrant mass deportation, asylum bans

EL PASO, Texas (OSV News)—Mass deportations and asylum bans—part of the Trump administration’s rapid changes to U.S. immigration policy—destroy communities and human dignity, while constituting a “war on the poor,” said Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas.

The bishop—who chairs the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration—shared his thoughts during a March 24 prayer vigil at Sacred Heart Church in El Paso, which capped a rally and march that began in the city’s downtown San Jacinto Plaza.

“*Aquí Estamos: March and Vigil to Stand with Migrants*” drew hundreds of participants, including immigration advocates, Catholic and interfaith clergy, religious and lay faithful.

The gathering, in which English and Spanish were spoken throughout, was attended by Catholic prelates from the U.S., Canada and Mexico, including Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio; Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, N.M.; Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces, N.M.; Bishop John E. Stowe of Lexington, Ky.; and retired Bishop Noël Simard of Valleyfield, Quebec.

Also on hand was Cardinal Fabio Baggio of Bassano del Grappa, Italy, the undersecretary of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Speaking in Spanish, Cardinal Baggio invited attendees at the vigil to pray for “all the victims of the different migratory routes” in the world, from Africa and Asia to Europe and the U.S.

“Thousands and thousands of brothers and sisters who, simply looking for a better future or refuge, lost their way,” he said in lament.

According to the United Nations’ International Organization for Migration, 2024 was the deadliest year on record for migrants, with at least 8,938 perishing on migration routes.

The El Paso rally, march and vigil—organized by Bishop Seitz in partnership

with Hope Border Institute, an El Paso-based immigrant advocacy nonprofit—took place on the feast of St. Óscar Romero, the martyred archbishop of San Salvador known for his fierce defense of human rights and the marginalized in El Salvador.

The denial of asylum and the threat of mass deportations represent “a fundamental attack on the human community” and on “Jesus’ vision of a fully reconciled humanity,” Bishop Seitz said. “Mass deportations are another tool to keep people afraid, to keep a people divided, to extinguish the charity and love that keep a people alive.”

Catholic social teaching on immigration holds that people have the right to migrate to sustain their lives, while nations have the right to regulate their borders and control immigration, although they must do so with both justice and mercy.

But speakers at the rally pointed to recent U.S. immigration policy changes as exceeding those moral parameters, and instead eroding human rights and fostering division.

Ruben Garcia, founder and executive director of Annunciation House—an El Paso shelter that has hosted more than 500,000 people fleeing more than 40 countries for nearly five decades—pointed to recent letters sent by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to organizations receiving shelter grant money. The notices require “a detailed and descriptive list of specific services,” and compel executive officers from the groups to sign sworn statements they have no knowledge or suspicions of staff violating smuggling laws.

Children are not spared in the administration’s crackdown on immigration, said attorney Melissa M. Lopez, executive director of the Diocese of El Paso’s *Estrella del Paso* (formerly Migrant and Refugee Services), which provides free immigration legal services.

Lopez advised the crowd her office had received notice on March 21 the federal

government had terminated its contract with the Acacia Center for Justice, which provides legal services to unaccompanied migrant minors through a national network of providers, including Lopez’s team.

“The federal government has decided that children should go to court by themselves, that children should be forced to understand asylum law and apply for asylum on their own, and that they don’t deserve ... having somebody stand alongside them,” she said. Lopez added that she lost 18 staff at her agency—which served “almost 30,000 children last year”—due to the contract termination.

Dylan Corbett, executive director of Hope Border Institute, described the current immigration climate as “difficult” and a “dark moment.” He told rally attendees that “everything that is beautiful about this community” on the border “is under attack right now.”

At the rally, Bishop Anthony C. Celino, an auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of El Paso, invited those present to affirm the six principles of the *Compromiso El Paso 2025* (“El Paso Commitment 2025”). Attendees could digitally sign the *Compromiso El Paso* through a Google Doc link accessed by cards with a



Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces, N.M.; Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio; Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas; and Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, N.M., lead a march against mass deportations by the U.S. government in El Paso on March 24. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

QR code and Romero’s image, provided by Hope Border Institute.

The principles include human dignity; family; community safety built on collaboration and trust between residents and law enforcement; prosperity; fairness through “humane ... responsible immigration policies”; and “celebration of our heritage,” said Bishop Celino.

Following the rally, participants—some holding signs stating “Jesus was an immigrant” and “Migration is a human right”—walked the half mile from the plaza to the vigil at Sacred Heart Church.

“Community is an exchange of gifts, where we gift our lives to one another for the benefit of one another,” Bishop Seitz said at the vigil. “We grow together and we bear one another’s burdens.

“We belong to one another, brothers and sisters,” he added. “We belong to each other.” †

Lab results indicate natural, not miraculous, causes for change to host at southern Indiana parish

Criterion staff report

A biochemical analysis of a host from St. Anthony Church in Morris that was displaying red discoloration in February revealed the presence of a common bacteria found on all humans. No presence of human blood was discovered.

A March 24 statement from the archdiocese said the host had fallen out of a Mass kit used at the parish, and when it was discovered, red spots were present.

Following a policy established by the

Holy See, the host was submitted for professional, biochemical analysis at a local laboratory. The results indicate the presence of fungus and three different species of bacteria, all of which are commonly found on human hands.

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, there have been well-documented miracles and apparitions. Those approved by the Church for acceptance by the faithful have undergone a thorough and careful review process, the archdiocese noted. †

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Editorial



Pope Francis, whose arms are bandaged, waves to a crowd of well-wishers at Rome's Gemelli Hospital before returning to the Vatican on March 23, after 38 days of treatment at the hospital. (CNS photo/ Pablo Esparza)

‘Anchored in God’s love,’ pope returns to the Vatican, still needing our prayers

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and the photographs released showing Pope Francis greeting a crowd of well-wishers from a balcony at Rome’s Gemelli Hospital on March 23 were a welcome sign for those who have been praying for the Holy Father since he was hospitalized on Feb. 14.

It didn’t matter that parts of his body appeared to be swollen—as would be expected for an 88-year-old man who was treated for breathing difficulties, double pneumonia and infections during his 38-day hospital stay.

With a very weak voice, the pope thanked the crowd gathered outside the hospital, waved his hands and gave a thumbs up, as reported by Catholic News Service. (To view a video of the pope’s greeting, go to cutt.ly/PopeGreeting.)

Shortly after greeting the well-wishers, Pope Francis was discharged from the hospital and returned to his residence at the Vatican—but not before being driven to the center of Rome to the Basilica of St. Mary Major, where he has prayed before and after every foreign trip and after his two previous hospitalizations for abdominal surgery. Prayer—his and the countless others offered by people around the world—was and continues to be an integral piece of the pope’s ongoing recovery.

The Holy Father did not go into the church but left a bouquet of flowers to be placed on the altar under the Marian icon “*Salus Populi Romani*” or “Health of the Roman People.” Television footage of the pope, seated in the front seat of a white Fiat, showed he was using oxygen through a nasal tube.

Although doctors confirmed Pope Francis was completely healed of double pneumonia, they also said he may still have other lingering bacterial and viral infections.

As a result, Dr. Sergio Alfieri, who is leading the medical team treating the pope, said during a news conference at the hospital on March 22 that the Holy Father will continue “with a prescription to partially continue drug therapy and of a convalescence-and-rest period of at least two months.”

Alfieri also noted, “Immediately, he will not be able to again take up work activities with meeting groups of people or important obligations that he will probably be able to carry out

once he has finished the prescribed convalescence and expected clinical improvements are recorded.”

Dr. Luigi Carbone, the pope’s personal physician, said at the Vatican, “He needs oxygen, like all patients who are discharged with pneumonia, which we hope he can shortly remove in daily use.”

The pope’s voice lost strength during his hospital stay, but doctors said that is common for elderly people with pneumonia. “It will take time for the voice to return to what it was before,” Alfieri explained. “Already compared to 10 days ago, we have recorded, let’s say, important improvements.”

Regarding the pope’s participation in Easter celebrations, Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, said, “Based on the improvements during this convalescence period, the appropriate decisions will be made.”

On March 23, the Vatican released a text that Pope Francis had prepared for the midday *Angelus* prayer, where he highlighted the Gospel reading for that day’s Mass telling the parable of the fig tree from Luke 13:1-9. He also reflected on his lengthy hospital stay.

“The patient gardener is the Lord, who thoughtfully works the soil of our lives and waits confidently for our return to him,” the pope wrote.

“In this long period of hospitalization, I have experienced the Lord’s patience, which I also see reflected in the tireless solicitude of the doctors and health care workers, as well as in the attention and hopes of the family members of the sick,” who also are in the Gemelli, he wrote.

“This trusting patience, anchored in God’s love that does not fail, is indeed necessary in our lives, especially in facing the most difficult and painful situations,” Pope Francis continued.

As we proceed on our Lenten journey toward Holy Week and Easter, let us continue to offer prayers for the Holy Father’s healing during his ongoing recuperation at the Vatican.

Let us pray that as he carries his cross, he may regain his strength and voice as our universal shepherd, be transformed by the grace of God in his mission to lead our Church, and continue to be “anchored in God’s love that does not fail.”

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Effie Caldarola

Irishmen remind us ‘every sinner has a future, and every saint has a past’

On a windy hill in the north of Ireland, I visited a grave claiming to be St. Patrick’s. A couple of other sites vie for that honor, but this hill is a deeply moving place.



During St. Patrick’s season, my thoughts turn to two other Irishmen on the road to sainthood.

There’s Blessed John Sullivan, born in 1861, a handsome man, the scion of a prominent family. Someone once called him “the best dressed man in Dublin.”

Then there’s Venerable Matt Talbot, born in 1856, the child of an impoverished alcoholic, whose own chronic alcoholism brought him to his knees and now to the portal of sainthood.

I imagine these two Irishmen, contemporaries, passing each other unaware on the mean streets of Dublin sometime in the early 20th century. They remind me of that old adage, “Every sinner has a future, and every saint has a past.”

Sullivan’s mother was Catholic; his father, destined to become the Lord Mayor of Dublin, was Protestant. In that era’s tradition, girls were raised in the mother’s faith, boys in their father’s.

Sullivan studied at Protestant schools, then Trinity College in Dublin. He studied law in London. Later, he acknowledged his Protestant upbringing with inspiring his early spirituality, and an Anglican bishop attended his beatification ceremony.

In 1896, Sullivan became a Catholic. He always credited his mother’s prayers with his conversion, just as St. Augustine credited St. Monica. (Take heart, moms!)

Sullivan became a Jesuit and spent years teaching at Clongowes Wood College in Kildare, Ireland, where his stylish wardrobe was replaced by a worn black cassock. He earned a reputation as a healer and went about the countryside on his bike visiting the sick.

Until his dying day, he carried his

mother’s crucifix with him, and it is with him at Gardiner Street Parish in Dublin where he now lies in repose.

Matt Talbot had a much different life trajectory. We have only a grainy portrait of Talbot. After attending school very briefly, he went to work to help support his family. As a 12-year-old, he returned bottles for a Dublin liquor merchant and discovered the dregs at the bottom of those bottles.

Becoming a teenage alcoholic, Talbot often relied on friends to supplement his meager wages with money for his growing habit. In his late 20s, he had an epiphany and took “the pledge,” an Irish promise of abstinence. But in those days before Alcoholics Anonymous, it was a lonely struggle. Talbot increasingly turned to his faith and a life of penance, prayer, Mass and mysticism. A committed union man and building laborer, he joined the Secular Franciscan Order.

Talbot would have died in obscurity, but when he was found dead of a heart attack on his way to Mass in 1925, chains encircled his body under his clothing, at that time the mark of an ascetic and deeply penitent man.

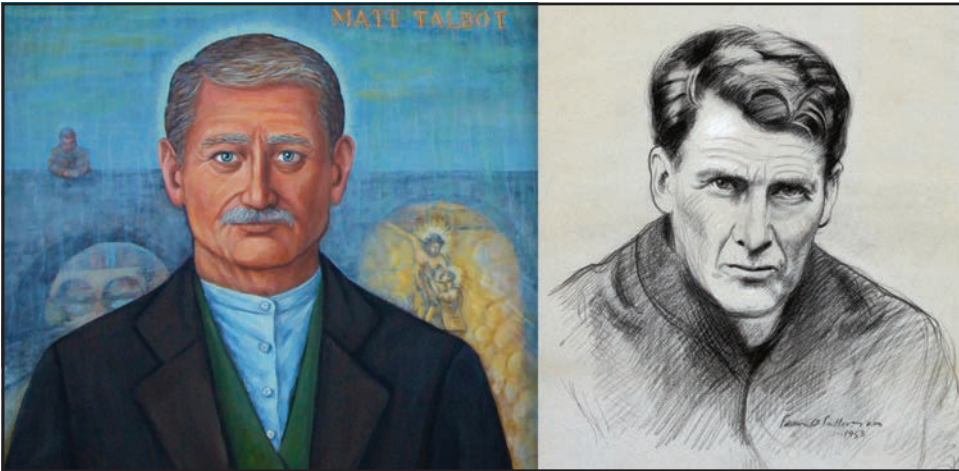
One story I find particularly touching: As an active alcoholic, in his desperation for a drink, Talbot once stole the fiddle of a blind man who used music to beg for alms. After embracing sobriety, he searched futilely for the blind man to repay him. Maybe his deep regret makes those chains easier to understand.

People flock to the Gardiner Street Jesuit parish, where you can see Sullivan’s tomb on the parish website’s webcam. Alcoholics all over the world beg Talbot for prayers.

“Venerable” means Talbot’s cause for sainthood has been accepted and awaits a miracle to move to the next level, “Blessed.” Blessed John Sullivan’s cause awaits a second miracle before canonization.

St. Patrick, pray for them, and for us.

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



This is a combination image of Venerable Matt Talbot, born in 1856, and Blessed John Sullivan, 1861, both from Ireland. (OSV News illustration/Gina Christian/Irish Jesuit Communications)

Letters Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

As our merciful father, God forgives us, welcomes us home

The Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Lk 15: 1-3,11-32) tells the story of the Prodigal Son. This is a parable that is rich in meaning. When we hear it, we often recognize ourselves—sometimes as the younger brother who squandered his inheritance in dissolute living, other times as the resentful older brother, and occasionally as the loving father whose love and forgiveness toward both of his sons is a powerful image of God’s abundant mercy.

The Prodigal Son illustrates that no sin is so great that it cannot be forgiven. Can this really be true? Certainly there are grave mortal sins and unspeakable crimes that are committed by people who have lost all sense of humanity. Sins against children, including sexual abuse, abortion and the emotional trauma inflicted by poverty, war and injustice are especially difficult to forgive.

And yet, our Lord forgave his enemies. He was merciful toward those who committed the most grievous sin, nailing God’s Son to a cross and condemning him to a hideous, humiliating death. If Jesus can forgive his murderers, surely we can muster the courage to do the same for those who commit serious acts of

violence and inhumanity against us. In his autobiography *Hope*, Pope Francis writes: *The Gospel is addressed to everyone, and it doesn’t condemn people, classes, conditions, categories, but rather idolatries, such as the idolatry of wealth that produces injustice, of insensitivity to the cry of those who suffer. ... The holy faithful people of God are (sinners). (The Church) is not a supposed gathering of the pure. The Lord blesses everyone, and his Church must not, cannot do otherwise.*

At the beginning of his papacy, the Holy Father was asked by a journalist to describe who he is. Without hesitation, he replied, “I am a sinner.” It was not simply a pious statement. Nor was it intended to make him sound humble. It was an honest admission of who he is, and who we all are, as children of Adam and Eve whose lives have been distorted by the reality of sin and evil in our world and in ourselves.

The Church is for everyone, Pope Francis writes, “especially for poor sinners, beginning with me.” To illustrate this statement, he quotes a prayer offered by Pope John Paul I: “Lord,

take me as I am, with my defects, with my shortcomings, but make me become what you want me to be.”

This is the point of the parable of the Prodigal Son: No matter who we are or what we have done, if we repent and return to him, our loving Father will forgive us and allow us to become the people he wants us to be.

The merciful father in Jesus’ parable doesn’t condone the actions or attitudes of either son. Without question, he wants both of them to change and to become better men, but he does not condemn them. He opens his arms to embrace them and to share with them everything he owns.

“My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours” (Lk 15:31), the father says to his bitter older son. “But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found” (Lk 15:32). This is God’s way—to rescue us when we have gone astray and to celebrate and rejoice when we return home.

The second reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent (2 Cor 5:17-21) emphasizes that we are all called to be reconciled to God through Christ. As

St. Paul tells the Corinthians (and us): *Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* (2 Cor 5:17-19)

God does not count our trespasses or hold them against us. No matter who we are, or what we have done, we are urged, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God. Even more amazingly, we are invited to become ambassadors for Christ, to represent him and be his witnesses to the world.

As we continue our Lenten journey, let us pray: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your child” (Lk 15:18-19). Every time we say this prayer with genuine humility, we will be amazed by God’s response: “Let us celebrate with a feast, because this child of mine was dead, and has come to life again; was lost, and has been found!” (Lk 15:23-24) †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Como nuestro padre misericordioso que es, Dios nos perdona y nos acoge en casa

La lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de la Cuaresma (Lc 15:1-3,11-32), narra la historia del Hijo Pródigo. Se trata de una parábola rica en significado que a menudo nos recuerda a nosotros mismos cuando la oímos: unas veces como el hermano menor que malgastó su herencia en una vida disoluta, otras como el hermano mayor resentido, y ocasionalmente como el padre amoroso cuyo amor y perdón hacia sus dos hijos es una poderosa imagen de la abundante misericordia de Dios.

El Hijo Pródigo ilustra que ningún pecado es tan grande que no pueda ser perdonado. ¿En verdad es esto cierto? Por supuesto que hay pecados mortales graves y crímenes incalificables cometidos por personas que han perdido todo sentido de la humanidad. Los pecados contra los niños, incluidos los abusos sexuales, el aborto y los traumas emocionales infligidos por la pobreza, la guerra y la injusticia, son especialmente difíciles de perdonar.

Y, sin embargo, nuestro Señor perdonó a sus enemigos. Fue misericordioso con los que cometieron el pecado más grave al clavar a Su único Hijo en una cruz y condenarlo a una muerte horrible y humillante. Si Jesús puede perdonar a sus asesinos, seguramente nosotros podemos

armarnos de valor para hacer lo mismo con quienes cometen graves actos de violencia e inhumanidad contra nosotros.

En su autobiografía *Esperanza*, el papa Francisco escribe:

El Evangelio se dirige a todos y no condena a personas, clases, condiciones o categorías, sino idolatrías, como la del dinero, que produce injusticia y falta de sensibilidad ante el clamor de los que sufren. ... El santo pueblo fiel de Dios son (pecadores). (La Iglesia) no es una supuesta reunión de almas puras. El Señor bendice a todos, y su Iglesia no debe, no puede hacer otra cosa.

Al comienzo de su pontificado, un periodista pidió al Santo Padre que describiera quién es. Sin dudarlo, respondió: “Soy un pecador.” No se trataba simplemente de una declaración piadosa ni tampoco pretendía parecer humilde. Fue una admisión honesta de quién es él, y quiénes somos todos, como hijos de Adán y Eva cuyas vidas han sido distorsionadas por la realidad del pecado y el mal en nuestro mundo y en nosotros mismos.

La Iglesia es para todos, escribe el papa Francisco, “especialmente para los pobres pecadores, empezando por mí.” Para ilustrar esta afirmación, cita una oración del papa Juan Pablo I: “Señor,

tómame como soy, con mis defectos, con mis carencias, pero haz que me convierta en lo que tú quieres que sea.”

Este es el sentido de la parábola del Hijo Pródigo: No importa quiénes seamos o lo que hayamos hecho, si nos arrepentimos y volvemos a Él, nuestro amoroso Padre nos perdonará y nos permitirá convertirnos en las personas que Él quiere que seamos.

El padre misericordioso de la parábola de Jesús no aprueba las acciones ni las actitudes de ninguno de sus hijos. Sin duda, quiere que ambos cambien y se conviertan en mejores hombres, pero no los condena. Abre los brazos para acogerlos y compartir con ellos todo lo que posee.

“Hijo mío, tú siempre has estado conmigo, y todo lo mío es tuyo” (Lc 15:31), le dice el padre a su hijo mayor que es presa de la amargura. “Pero era necesario hacer fiesta y regocijarnos, porque este, tu hermano, estaba muerto y ha vuelto a la vida; estaba perdido y ha sido hallado” (Lc 15:32). Este es el camino de Dios: rescatarnos cuando nos hemos extraviado y celebrar y alegrarnos cuando volvemos a casa.

La segunda lectura del cuarto domingo de Cuaresma (2 Cor 5:17-21) subraya que todos estamos llamados a reconciliarnos con Dios por medio de Cristo. Como dice san Pablo a los corintios (y a nosotros):

De modo que si alguno está en Cristo, nueva criatura es; las cosas viejas pasaron, ahora han sido hechas nuevas. Y todo esto procede de Dios, quien nos reconcilió con Él mismo por medio de Cristo, y nos dio el ministerio de la reconciliación; es decir, que Dios estaba en Cristo reconciliando al mundo con Él mismo, no tomando en cuenta a los hombres sus transgresiones, y nos ha encomendado a nosotros la palabra de la reconciliación. (2 Cor 5:17-19).

Dios no cuenta nuestras ofensas ni nos las echa en cara. Independientemente de quiénes seamos o de lo que hayamos hecho, se nos insta, en nombre de Cristo, a reconciliarnos con Dios. Y lo que es aún más sorprendente, se nos invita a convertirnos en embajadores de Cristo, a representarle y a ser sus testigos ante el mundo.

Mientras proseguimos con nuestro camino cuaresmal, oremos: “Padre, he pecado contra el cielo y ante ti; ya no soy digno de ser llamado hijo tuyo” (Lc 15:18-19). Cada vez que recemos esta oración con auténtica humildad, nos sorprenderá la respuesta de Dios: “Traigan el becerro engordado, mátenlo, y comamos y regocijémonos; porque este hijo mío estaba muerto y ha vuelto a la vida; estaba perdido y ha sido hallado!” (Lc 15:23-24) †

Events Calendar

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

April 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.

Virtual Series: Learn About Our Benedictine Vows—Obedience, via Zoom, 7 p.m., second of three sessions (April 30), 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.

April 3, 10
St. Mary Parish, 629 Clay St., North Vernon. **Soup Supper and Lenten Study**, 6-8 p.m., second and third of three sessions on Pope Benedict XVI’s apostolic exhortation “The Sacrament of Charity” about the Eucharist, presented by Father Jerry Byrd presenting, free. Information: 812-346-3604, parishsecretary@stmarysnv.com.

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.

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

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

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., Mount St. Francis. **Sun, Moon and Ascending: An Evening with a Vatican Astronomer**, 5:30 p.m. check in, 6-10 p.m. astronomy presentation, Vatican astronomer Christopher M. Graney presenting, includes dinner and telescope viewing, \$35 adult, \$20 ages 10-17, not recommended for children 9 and younger. Information,

registration: 812-923-8817, mountsaintfrancis.org/sunmoonandascending.

April 4-5
Planned Parenthood, 8590 Georgetown Rd., Indianapolis. **40 Days for Life Overnight Prayer Vigil**, 6 p.m. Fri.-6 a.m. Sat., sponsored by Indiana Knights of Columbus, all invited to join for any length of time. Information: life@indianakofc.org.

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, 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.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 10655 Haverstick Road, Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese). **Gabriel Project Benefit Concert**, 6 p.m. classical music concert by Musica Viata followed by reception, \$20 suggested donation, proceeds benefit Gabriel Project of Indianapolis, all welcome to worship at Mass at 4:30 p.m. before concert. Information, registration: goangels.org/benefit-concert.

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, 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, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

April 7-8
Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **“Listen, Teach, Send” USCCB Regional Formation Event**, 4-9 p.m. Mon., 8 a.m.-5 p.m., 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.

April 8
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Taizé Prayer at the Woods**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence, virtual option available. Information: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952.

April 8-May 13
Franciscan Hospice House, 8414 Franciscan Lane, Indianapolis. **Men’s Bereavement Group**, six consecutive Tuesdays 10:30 a.m.-noon, free, registration required. Information, registration: 317-528-2636.

April 8, 16, 22, 29
St. Monica Parish, 6131 N. Michigan Road,

Indianapolis. **“Know Your Fertility” Class in Spanish**, 7-9 p.m., series of four sessions, \$75. Information, registration: ccorona@archindy.org, 317-800-9306.

April 13
Marian University, Norman Center Room 222, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **People of Peace OFS Monthly Meeting**, 12:30-3 p.m., explore Franciscan spirituality with lay Franciscans, free. Information: 317-432-0909, jodymdalton@aol.com.

April 14
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Leave the Light On**, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation, no appointment needed. Information: 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

April 16
Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, catholiccemeteries.cc.

April 17
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898, catholiccemeteries.cc. †

Retreats and Programs

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

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 .
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Archdiocesan schola cantorum Vox Sacra will offer Tenebrae service at St. Joan of Arc on April 13

Vox Sacra, the archdiocese’s *schola cantorum*, will offer a *Tenebrae* service at St. Joan of Arc Church, 4217 Central Ave., in Indianapolis, at 7 p.m. on April 13.

Tenebrae—which is Latin for “darkness”—is a liturgical service of sung Scripture readings and Psalms regarding Christ’s passion and death. Held during Holy Week, the service is lit only by candles, which are gradually extinguished until the sanctuary is dark. A loud noise at the service’s conclusion symbolizes Christ’s death. *Tenebrae* is designed to serve as a powerful, reflective experience for the faithful ahead of the Easter Triduum.

The service on April 13 will include psalm singing, prayer and choral

offerings by 16th- and 17th-century Catholic composers Carlo Gesualdo, Marc’ Antonio Ingegneri and Francisco Lopez-Capillas.

Vox Sacra, the archdiocese’s *schola cantorum*—Latin for “school of singers”—is a select group of volunteer vocalists from throughout parishes in central and southern Indiana who have the ability to sing more involved, complicated sacred music. Vox Sacra, which means “sacred voice” in Latin, is led by Andrew Motyka, director of Archdiocesan and Cathedral Music.

The service is free, and all are welcome. For more information, contact Motyka at 317-236-1513 or amotyka@archindy.org. †

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, 317-545-7681, 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.

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. †

Wedding Anniversaries

BILL AND DENISE (KENNEDY) KIDWELL, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 5.

The couple was married in Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Church in Indianapolis on April 5, 1975.

They have three children: Mary, Kevin and T.C. Kidwell.

The couple also has seven grandchildren.



DONALD AND CHRISTINE (BENJAMIN) MAY, members of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 5.

The couple was married in Holy Spirit Church in Indianapolis on April 5, 1975.

They have three children: Benjamin, Daniel and Michael May.

The couple also has three grandchildren.



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

Pope’s autobiography reveals a shepherd’s heart, full of hope

Reviewed by Daniel Conway

Hope: The Autobiography of Pope Francis is not about the life of Jorge Mario Bergoglio (Pope Francis). It’s about his heart—what he loves, what he detests, what he is afraid of and, above all, what he hopes for.

In *Hope*, Pope Francis describes his passion for people like his grandparents and his father who made the dangerous journey from their homeland in Italy to the new world of Latin America. Their story resonates with the heartbreaking stories of millions of migrants in every region of the world, who have been forced to leave their homes in search of freedom, safety and economic prosperity. Pope Francis is the child of immigrants, and he is appalled by the indifference and animosity shown toward migrant families.

The Holy Father is also an eyewitness to the horrors of war and the cruelty caused by political regimes that oppress their people. *Hope* chronicles the experiences of World War I, as told to the young Jorge Bergoglio by his paternal grandfather. It then proceeds to recount the experiences of Jews and many other émigrés who fled the Nazi madness and resettled in Latin America. It also acknowledges the pro-Nazi activities of right-wing extremists in post-war Argentina.

“War is madness,” the pope says repeatedly. Nothing good ever comes

from war, and the costs are always prohibitive. The sight of elderly women, grandmothers, wandering through the rubble of cities devastated by bombs, brings Pope Francis to tears.

As a young Jesuit, he had asked to be sent to Nagasaki, Japan, as a missionary to minister to victims of the atomic bomb dropped on the city. The fact that he had recently had a portion of his lung removed prevented him from traveling there, but his desire to help people affected by the vicious cycle of preparing for, and engaging in, modern warfare has never left him.

Climate change has infuriated him since as a young priest he witnessed the devastation caused by the corporate greed and government impotence that have exploited natural resources, uprooted families and destroyed local cultures. He insists that the poor suffer most from the neglect and abuse of the planet Earth, our common home.

Pope Francis has a warm and generous heart. He loves children and he loves to dialogue with (and learn from) young people who are passionate, challenging and full of life. He detests all forms of rigidity. He abhors reactionary politics—in society and in the Church—calling attention to our Lord’s rejection of hypocrisy in all its forms.

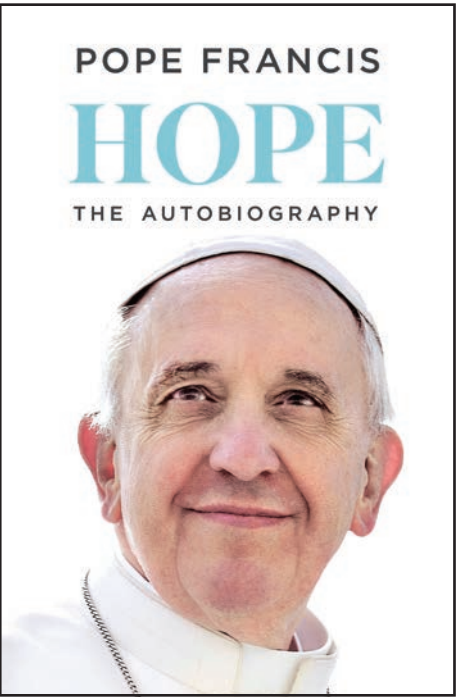
Smiles and laughter engage the pope’s passion. He counsels us not to be “sourpusses,” but to be lighthearted and able to laugh at ourselves. The smiles of

children give him special joy.

Pope Francis does not take himself too seriously. He rejects efforts to make him into “a great man.” He is a sinner, he tells us, like everyone else. God’s grace makes it possible for him—and all of us—to move beyond our sinfulness and to change our lives. But the pope does take seriously his ministry as pastor of the universal Church. In this role, he reaches out to everyone—all nations and peoples, all religions and cultures, poor and rich alike. Everyone.

Synodality—which involves dialogue, attentive listening and mutual respect—is the way Pope Francis wants the Church to exercise leadership. He is a man of the Church. He is not interested in changing dogma, but he also has no interest in forcing Church teachings on anyone. We are all pilgrims on a journey, the pope says, and our choice is either to walk together side-by-side and help each other, or to stand alone full of sadness and despair.

As the title of his most personal book suggests, the pope is a man of hope. Of the three theological virtues (faith, hope and charity), Pope Francis believes that hope is the most elusive, but also the most important to our ability to move forward and build a better world. “Hope does not disappoint,” he reminds us (Rom 5:5). And hope leads inevitably to its sister virtues of faith and love.



The heart of Pope Francis is revealed in all its richness in *Hope*. With laughter and joy, with sadness and righteous anger, and above all with a hope that does not disappoint, the grandson and son of Italian immigrants shares his tender and expansive heart with us.

It’s a story that deserves to be told.

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

At installation Mass, Detroit’s new archbishop encourages love of Jesus

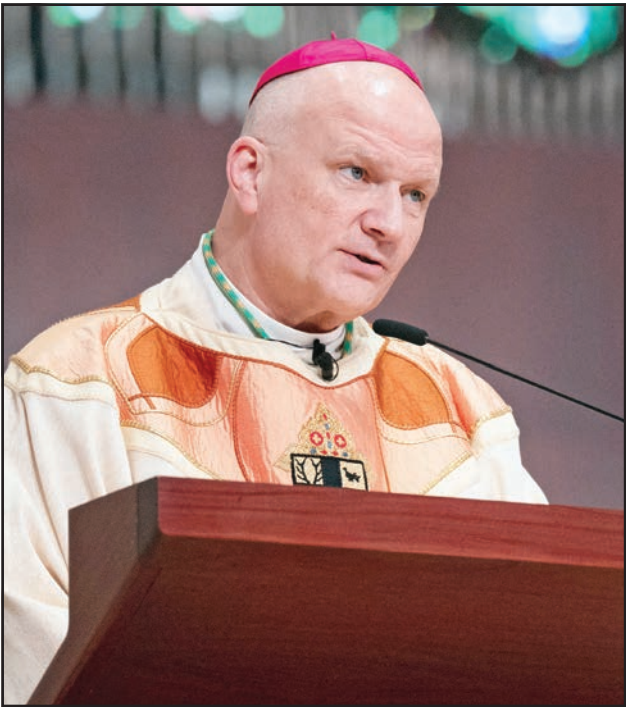
DETROIT (OSV News)—Catholics in southeast Michigan welcomed their new chief shepherd with exuberance and applause as Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger took his seat upon the *cathedra* on March 18, thereby becoming the sixth archbishop and 10th ordinary of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

In a moment filled with historic symbolism, Archbishop Weisenburger received his crosier from now-retired Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, whom he succeeds, at the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The Mass of installation, which was attended by hundreds of clergy, religious and lay faithful—and watched on a livestream by thousands more across metro Detroit—began with a solemn procession and an ancient tradition as Archbishop Weisenburger knocked three times on the cathedral’s doors.

“May the doors of the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament be open wide, for I come as a servant in the name of the Lord to dispense God’s love and mercy,” Archbishop Weisenburger said as he knocked with a gavel, according to the ancient rite.

From inside, representatives from each of the Archdiocese of Detroit’s four pastoral regions opened the doors to their new shepherd, symbolic of the local Church’s welcome and embrace of his arrival as Christ’s ambassador.



Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger delivers his first homily during his installation Mass at the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit on March 18. On Feb. 11, Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, 76, from the pastoral governance of the archdiocese and appointed then-Bishop Weisenburger, previously head of the Diocese of Tucson, Ariz., as his successor. (OSV News photo/Tim Fuller, for the Detroit Catholic)

Father J.J. Mech, rector of the cathedral, then greeted Archbishop Weisenburger with a crucifix, which the archbishop venerated before blessing those around him with holy water.

The grand liturgical procession into the cathedral—which lasted about 15 minutes—was led by members of the Knights of Columbus, Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver, Knights and Ladies of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Knights and Dames of the Order of Malta, about 30 deacons, 160 priests and nearly 30 bishops from across the United States, including Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

As the procession reached the sanctuary, Archbishop Vigneron took his seat upon the *cathedra* for one final time to welcome the approximately 900 guests before Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, spoke to begin the rite of installation.

As has become his custom each time he visits Detroit, Cardinal Pierre, who is French, made a point to enunciate the French accent in Archbishop Vigneron’s name—drawing laughter—before drawing the congregation’s attention to his lifetime of service as a Detroit priest and bishop.

“Thank you, Archbishop, for your many faithful years as a bishop, and especially for your tremendous service in this Archdiocese of Detroit. I think we all thank you,” Cardinal Pierre said, drawing thunderous, sustained applause.

Turning to his soon-to-be-installed successor, Cardinal Pierre expressed his gratitude on behalf of Pope Francis for his acceptance of the care of Detroit’s faithful.

“Your yes to God has taken you on yet another journey,” Cardinal Pierre told the former bishop of Tucson, Ariz., and Salina, Kan., who originally hails from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. “I’m grateful to you and to the Holy Father, and I am happy for the people of the Archdiocese of Detroit that they will have another good shepherd to lead them and walk with them through this journey of hope.”

Cardinal Pierre said it is a blessing that Archbishop Weisenburger’s ministry begins during the 2025 Jubilee of Hope proclaimed by Pope Francis for the entire Church.

“I am sure that you will find in the people of this local Church pilgrims of hope, and I know they will find in you a special kind of wisdom in seeking out new pathways for the spread of the Gospel in this particular age,” he remarked.

Cardinal Pierre noted that a usual custom during episcopal installations—the reading and showing of the official papal bull, or decree—could not be done, explaining that Pope Francis’ recent illness had prevented him from being able to sign it yet.

Drawing laughter, Cardinal Pierre assured Archbishop Weisenburger, “Don’t worry, you will be the real archbishop.” He explained that the bull would soon arrive in Detroit, and that he, as apostolic nuncio and acting on behalf of the pope, had signed a canonical decree from the Holy Father, which he then read for the congregation.

Cardinal Pierre and Archbishop Vigneron escorted Archbishop Weisenburger to his *cathedra*, Archbishop Vigneron handed him the crosier, or shepherd’s staff, and Archbishop Weisenburger took his seat for the first time as Detroit’s new archbishop to a lengthy ovation from the congregation.

In a symbolic tradition, Archbishop Weisenburger was then greeted by various representatives of the Archdiocese of Detroit, who each greeted the new archbishop one by one.

Among those greeting him included priests, deacons, religious, multicultural leaders, students and educators, lay leaders, ecumenical and interfaith representatives, Christian service representatives, and those from different regions of the local Church—including those from St. Ignatius Parish in the Cayman Islands, which is a mission “*sui iuris*” under the care of the archbishop of Detroit.

From there, Archbishop Weisenburger took over as the principal celebrant of the Mass, which included readings from Revelation, Hebrews and the Gospel of John, each referencing Jesus as the Lamb of God—appropriate because of the archbishop’s motto, “*Ecce Agnus Dei*,” or “Behold the Lamb of God.”

In his homily, Archbishop Weisenburger thanked and acknowledged Pope Francis, whom he said is a “prophetic and profoundly loving witness to Jesus Christ and his Gospel, which inspires me daily,” as well as Cardinal Pierre, members of his family in attendance, clergy, religious, lay ministers, auxiliary bishops and finally Archbishop Vigneron, who has led the Archdiocese of Detroit “with humility, immense wisdom and a full commitment of his life for 16 years.”

Archbishop Weisenburger went on to reflect upon Jesus’ words to Peter in the Gospel, in which the Lord asks the Apostle, “Do you love me?” and then commands him to “feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17).

“Every time I took this text to prayer, I found Jesus looking at me, lovingly, gently, but intensely, asking me, ‘Do you love me?’ ” Archbishop Weisenburger said. “Brothers and sisters, I might propose that it’s the only question in the end that really matters.”

The archbishop noted that “there is no true love of Jesus without a willingness to put that love into practice,” encouraging his hearers to join him “in this journey of discipleship together,” growing in ever deeper love with Jesus and responding in both word and action.

“May the best of answers well up from within us with a powerful affirmative, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you, and I will feed your sheep,’ ” he said.

The readings of the Mass and the prayers of the faithful reflected the variety of cultures present in Detroit’s Church, being read in English, Spanish, Polish and Tagalog—some of the many languages spoken in southeast Michigan.

Archbishop Weisenburger becomes the latest in a long line of bishops to have shepherded Detroit’s faithful, including retired Cardinal Adam J. Maida, Detroit’s archbishop from 1990 to 2009, who turned 95 years old on the day of the installation Mass. †

TEACHER

continued from page 1

It has all shaped up as an amazing balancing act for him—as a full-time teacher, a grad student and a college athlete who is also preparing for his wedding in May to his college girlfriend, Emma Jenkins.

It’s all part of a journey that led to a momentous two days for Lowery on March 14-15. Even with all the juggling of his roles, Lowery qualified as the third seed in the 141-pound weight class for the 2025 NCAA Division II National Wrestling Championships in Indianapolis on those two days.

As he prepared on March 14 for his dream of becoming a college champion, Lowery smiled at the video that his Holy Angels students had made for him—wishing him good luck and telling him they loved him.

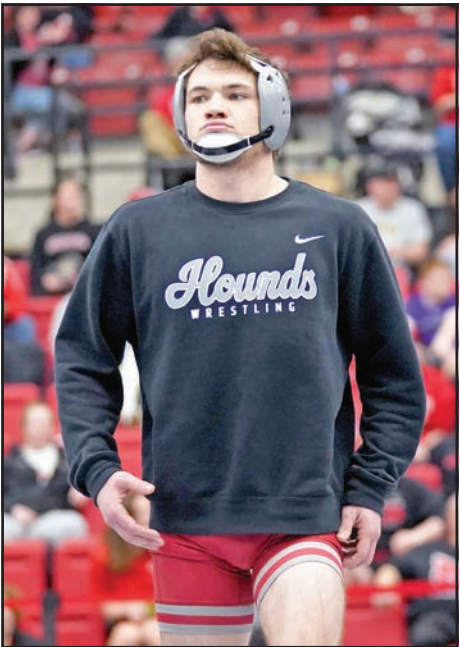
The video shows how far the relationship between Lowery and his students has come in just several months. So, the growth of that relationship seems the natural place to start this story. After all, the best dreams are the ones that connect people.

‘There are two things you can control’

When Holy Angels principal Matthew Krulik reached out to Lowery about teaching at the school, Krulik anticipated the difference that Lowery could make to the students. That belief stemmed from the relationship the two men already had.

“I’ve known Brayden and his family for the better part of 15 years now. I used to coach him when he was in elementary school,” Krulik notes. “When it comes down to character, Brayden has an incredibly high sense of moral integrity. And he’s disciplined. He’s not afraid to critique himself and display a growth mindset, which he does every single day. And there’s also the compassion that he brings.”

Lowery has also brought high expectations for his students—expectations he shared with them early in the school year when some of them struggled with having behavior issues and



A teacher at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis and a wrestler for the University of Indianapolis where he is a graduate student, Brayden Lowery warms up before a match this season. (Submitted photo)

keeping their focus on their schoolwork.

“The big thing that I was trying to convey to them is that there are two things you can control—attitude and effort,” Lowery recalls. “If you have the right attitude, you’re going to be more successful than the person who doesn’t have the right attitude. And if you put forth the effort, you’re going to be more successful.”

He smiles and adds, “I may have actually learned that from Mr. Krulik back in the day.”

His smile fades as he adds, “There’s a lot of different factors we can’t control for them, and that they can’t control. So, if there’s anything they can control, there’s those two things.”

His students have bought into his belief in them.

“He’s a good person, a strong person, a kind-hearted person,” says 10-year-old Aamber Chikati, a fifth-grade student. “He helps us when we don’t understand something. He tries to make us good in life—to have a good attitude and to say kind things even when we are mad.”

Fellow fifth-grader Kingston Morrow adds, “He’s always nice, and he’s funny. He talks to us about attitude and effort. Sometimes I get stuck on things, and he helps me. He tells me to always give effort and not give up. And it’s cool how he’s a wrestler.”

Lowery has also had another impact on his students—in the way they view wrestling now, in comparison to the humorous stereotypes they previously had from watching professional wrestling.

In pursuit of a dream

At the beginning of the school year, images of wrestlers jumping off cages and throwing chairs at opponents filled the thoughts of the students about wrestling.

“They were all asking me crazy questions about wrestling. ‘Have you ever drop-kicked anyone? Have you ever punched anybody?’ ” Lowery recalls. “I said, ‘No! That’s not what it is!’ I put together a power point presentation on what wrestling is.”

Krulik also let the students watch a couple of Lowery’s matches on TV.

“Whenever I came back, they were asking me a lot of questions,” Lowery says. “These kids have always been positive. I think they watched one match I lost. They said, ‘Oh, you’re fine. You wrestled great.’ These kids genuinely have a good heart. That’s what I love about them.”

The students’ excitement for their teacher’s wrestling grew even more when he won the Super Regional IV championship at 141 pounds. That accomplishment helped set him up as the third seed in his dream of becoming a national champion at the tournament in Indianapolis on March 14-15.



Brayden Lowery helps guide fifth-grade student Aamber Chikati through an art project on March 17, two days after the teacher at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis competed in the 2025 NCAA Division II National Wrestling Championships in Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Yet, dreams don’t always turn out the way people want them.

Lowery lost a tough first match in the national tournament, rebounded with a win in the second, and lost another close one in his third match.

“I had previously beaten both the kids I lost to,” Lowery says. “After my second loss, I ran to the back and cried for about two to three minutes.”

His career as a college wrestler had ended in heartbreak, but what he did next shows his heart. He rushed back into the arena at the Indiana State Fairgrounds, knowing that his University of Indianapolis teammate, Jackson Hoover, was wrestling in a pivotal match at the 149-pound level.

“I was cheering him on,” Lowery recalls about Hoover’s win. “After Jackson hugged the coaches, I ran out there and hugged him. I told him, ‘I’m proud of you, man.’ He had placed. I started tearing up. He started tearing up. Our entire team was all around us. It was bittersweet. I knew I had put the work in, but at the end of the day, it just wasn’t my day.”

Krulik, who watched Lowery compete in the matches, shares this thought about the teacher’s path to the national championships.

“Many times in our society, people are focused on the end result and not the process that has gotten you there. Over the course of this year, I have witnessed that process firsthand. I’ve seen a young man wake up at 5 a.m. every day and work out, come to school at 6:30—an hour before he’s supposed to be here—teach a full day, go to practice and then go to grad school. This young man has taken on all these roles and responsibilities. And he’s excelled at each and every one of them. That is truly a testament to his character.”

‘He’s showing the kids what is possible’

On Monday morning, March 17, Lowery entered his classroom, which features a welcome mat that has this saying, “GOOD VIBES ONLY.”

He crossed the room and headed toward his desk, passing a sign titled,

“God’s Promises,” a list that includes these vows: “God is always faithful.” “God will help you.” “God will keep you safe.” “God will love you forever.”

The sign and the welcome mat reflect the attitude that Lowery brings to his life and his faith.

“It’s knowing that no matter what, God has my back,” he says. “Anytime that I have any doubts, whether it be about wrestling or anything, I keep repeating, ‘God has my back.’ No matter what decision I make, God has my back. No matter if I win or lose in wrestling, God has my back.

“Every single day here, I try to put faith into everything we do—in reading, in math. And these kids will try to bring God into our lessons, which I think is great.”

On this morning, when Lowery shares the news with his students of how he did during the national tournament, there is sadness, but the mood changes as he focuses the children on working on an art project about the planets. Questions are asked. Touches of laughter fill the room. Teacher and students exchange ideas and smiles.

Krulik knows the difference Lowery makes.

“Attitude and effort—he has that ingrained in his students’ psyche. But the impact he has is so much greater,” the principal says. “He’s showing the kids what is possible. He is also providing a positive male role model for our scholars. Someone they can look at and say, ‘Not only does this person care about me, he is doing the right thing, and he is helping me become a better scholar.’

“He is living through his faith and incorporating these religious lessons daily with our kids.”

In the future, Lowery hopes to become a coach and an athletic administrator in the archdiocese. For now, his focus is on creating a mindset for his students to learn, grow and believe.

“I tell them I want them to get 1% better each day,” he says. “If you get 1% better each day, then we can just keep improving. We’re trying to extend them.”

The best dreams are always the ones that connect people. †

Marian to host basketball game between Gibault and Resource Treatment Center

By Sean Gallagher

In tournament time in high school basketball in Indiana, it’s not unusual for games to draw thousands of spectators. That’s a big part of what “Hoosier Hysteria” is all about.

But not for the teenage boys who fill the roster of the team for Gibault Children’s Services in Terre Haute, a ministry founded by the Knights of Columbus in 1921. For more than a century, Gibault has helped children suffering from mental illness, developmental disabilities and difficult family situations.

At 7 p.m. on April 11, though, the team will get a chance to play on a big stage in the basketball arena at

Marian University’s Physical Education Center, 3200 Cold Spring Road in Indianapolis. Gibault will go up against a team that night from Resource Treatment Center in Indianapolis.

Tickets for the game are \$10. Proceeds from the game will support both Gibault and Resource Treatment Center.

Giving the event more of a big game feel will be Marian’s cheerleading squad and DJ B-Swift, the in-house emcee at Indiana Pacers basketball games.

A slam dunk contest at halftime will feature current Indiana Mr. Football Mark Zackary, a senior at Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis who has committed to play football next fall at the University of Notre Dame.

While Keenan Haucke of the Knights of Columbus Council 12387 in Carmel, Ind., which is sponsoring the game, sees the game as a good way of raising funds for Gibault, he is looking forward more to the experience it will give to the members of its basketball team who have often experienced many hardships in their young lives.

“If the kids go out on that floor and there are 2,000 people cheering them on, it will be the best night of their lives,” he said.

(To purchase tickets for the basketball game between Gibault Children Services and Resource Treatment Center at 7 p.m. on April 11 at Marian University, go to cutt.ly/GibaultGame.) †

Pope Francis returns to Vatican after long hospitalization

ROME (CNS)—Immediately before leaving Rome’s Gemelli Hospital after more than five weeks of treatment for breathing difficulties, double pneumonia and infections, Pope Francis greeted about 1,000 people who gathered outside the hospital on March 23.

With a very weak voice, Pope Francis thanked the crowd, waving his hands and giving a thumbs up. He also pointed to a woman carrying a yellow-wrapped bouquet of flowers and told the crowd, “She’s good.”

An aide had pushed Pope Francis in his wheelchair onto the balcony overlooking the square outside the hospital. An estimated 1,000 people had gathered at the hospital, including Rome’s Mayor Roberto Gualtieri. Hundreds of people also gathered in front of video screens in St. Peter’s Square to see the pope for the first time since he was hospitalized on Feb. 14.

The pope left the hospital almost immediately after his appearance on the balcony.

The motorcycle police leading the pope’s motorcade turned onto the street leading to the Vatican entrance closest to his residence and then turned around. Rather than go directly home, Pope Francis was driven through the center of Rome to the Basilica of St. Mary Major where he has prayed before and after every foreign trip and after his two previous hospitalizations for abdominal surgery.

Pope Francis did not go into the church but left a bouquet of flowers to be placed on the altar under the Marian icon “*Salus Populi Romani*” or “Health of the Roman People.”

Just before the 88-year-old pope had come out on the hospital balcony, the Vatican released a text he had prepared for the midday *Angelus* prayer.

The pope’s message focused on the day’s Gospel reading of the parable of the fig tree from Luke 13:1-9, in which a gardener asks a landowner to allow him to spare a fig tree that had not borne fruit for three years; the gardener asks to be given a year to fertilize and care for the tree in the hope that it would bear fruit in the future.



Carmela Mancuso joins hundreds of people in praying the rosary for Pope Francis’ health in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on March 14. Just before leaving the hospital on March 23, Pope Francis pointed to Mancuso in the crowd at Rome’s Gemelli Hospital, carrying a bouquet of yellow flowers. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)



Visitors and pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican gather in front of a video screen to see Pope Francis greet well-wishers at Rome’s Gemelli Hospital before returning to the Vatican on March 23, after 38 days of treatment at the hospital. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

“The patient gardener is the Lord, who thoughtfully works the soil of our lives and waits confidently for our return to him,” the pope wrote

“In this long period of hospitalization, I have experienced the Lord’s patience, which I also see reflected in the tireless solicitude of the doctors and health care workers, as well as in the attention and hopes of the family members of the sick,” who also are in the Gemelli, he wrote.

“This trusting patience, anchored in God’s love that does not fail, is indeed necessary in our lives, especially in facing the most difficult and painful situations,” Pope Francis wrote.

But, like the other messages he released from the hospital on Sundays, the pope also urged prayers for peace and commented on current events.

“I was saddened by the resumption of heavy Israeli shelling on the Gaza Strip, with so many dead and wounded,” he said. Israel, citing an impasse in negotiations with Hamas militias, began launching aerial attacks

on Gaza on March 18, ending a ceasefire that had begun in January.

“I call for an immediate silencing of the weapons and the courage to resume dialogue, for all hostages to be released and for a final ceasefire to be reached,” the pope wrote. The humanitarian situation in Gaza “is once again very serious and requires urgent commitment from the conflicting parties and the international community.”

Dr. Sergio Alfieri, head of the medical team treating the pope, had told reporters on March 22 that in his rooms at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the pope will continue using oxygen as needed through a nasal tube, will be taking medication to fight a lingering mycosis, a fungal infection, and will be continuing his physical therapy and respiratory therapy.

The doctors have prescribed two months of rest and recuperation and have urged the pope not to meet with large groups during that time. They also said his voice will require time to recover.

Dr. Luigi Carbone, the assistant director of the Vatican health service and a member of the medical team treating the pope at Gemelli Hospital, said that other than an oxygen tank, no special equipment would be needed in the pope’s room. He added, though, that the Vatican health service has a doctor and other personnel on duty 24 hours a day.

Even after the pope’s return to the Vatican was announced, the rosary for him and for all the sick was continuing in St. Peter’s Square each evening.

The crowd that gathered to pray on March 22 loudly applauded when Archbishop Giordano Piccinotti, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, began the recitation telling them, “The Holy Father is returning home. We give thanks to God and to the Virgin Mary for this great news.” †

POPE

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had “delegated all kinds of health care decisions to Massimiliano Strappetti, his personal health care assistant who knows perfectly well the pontiff’s wishes.”

Strappetti, a nurse who worked in intensive care at Gemelli, joined the Vatican health service in 2002 and has become Pope Francis’ primary health care provider, working in consultation with the pope’s physicians.

Strappetti advised, “Try everything, don’t give up,” Alfieri said. “That’s what we all thought too. And nobody gave up.”

Corriere also asked Alfieri if Pope Francis was aware of the danger he was in.

“Yes,” he responded, “because he was always alert. Even when his condition worsened, he was fully conscious. That night was terrible; he knew, as we did, that he might not make it through the night. We saw the man in pain. However, from the first day he asked us to tell him the truth and wanted us to be honest about his condition.”

After 38 days in the hospital, Pope Francis returned to the Vatican, but Alfieri and the other members of his medical team have said he will need two months to recuperate.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, spoke to reporters on March 24 outside a meeting near the Vatican. He said he had not visited the pope yet because he wanted to allow him to rest.

The Secretariat of State and all Vatican offices keep working as normal, he said.

“I think that, for the moment only, the most important issues will be submitted to the pope, issues that require a decision on his part, also so as not to tire him too much,” Cardinal Parolin said. “Then as he recovers, we will return to the normal rhythm.”

Greeting people gathered outside the Gemelli Hospital before leaving on March 23, Pope Francis was obviously weak, and his voice was barely audible.

While his doctors have urged him to avoid meetings with large groups, Cardinal Parolin said he hoped the pope would be able to at least briefly greet Britain’s King Charles III, who is scheduled to make a state visit to the Vatican on April 8.

The pope’s first days back home had a rhythm of rest, work, prayer and therapy, both respiratory and physical therapy, the Vatican press office said. A nurse was present 24 hours a day, and the pope was alternating between using high-flow oxygen, oxygen mixed with ambient air and not using the nasal cannula at all.

Pope Francis concelebrated Mass on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, in the small chapel near his room on the second floor of the residence, the press office added. It did not say who the other concelebrants were. †



‘We had to make a choice between stopping and letting him go or pressing on and trying all the drugs and therapies we could, running the very high risk of damaging other organs. And in the end, we took that path.’

—Dr. Sergio Alfieri, the coordinator of the medical team for Pope Francis

King of Kings is enjoyable, offers fine Easter viewing for kids

By Ann Margaret Lewis

Just in time for Easter, Angel Studios is set to release *King of Kings*, an animated retelling of the life of Christ through the eyes of Charles Dickens and his youngest son.

The film is based on the play *To Begin With* by Jeffrey Hatcher, which was, in turn, based on the book *The Life of Our Lord* that Dickens wrote for and read to his children every year, but refused to publish in his or his children’s lifetimes.

As a framing element, Dickens narrates the story to his youngest son Walter, and we see the story through the boy’s imagination, wherein he inserts himself into the events of Christ’s life.

An all-star cast lends their vocal talents to the production with Sir Kenneth Branagh as Charles Dickens, Pierce Brosnan as Pontius Pilate, Mark Hamill as King Herod, Oscar Isaac as Jesus, Sir Ben Kingsley as Caiaphas, Forest Whitaker as Peter and Uma Thurman as Dickens’ wife Catherine.

The film’s animation is as colorful and polished as any DreamWorks or Disney production, and it is intentionally aimed at a younger audience. It is directed and co-written by Seong-ho “Jay” Jang, one of the most respected filmmakers in Korea, who teamed up with veteran Disney feature film screenwriter Rob Edwards to construct the story from Hatcher’s original play.

The film is enjoyable. There’s a slapstick opening featuring Walter and his goofy cat that was a bit much for me, but it was meant to grab a child’s attention, so I find that forgivable. The Crucifixion later in the film is presented in a way that is also appropriate for a children’s audience.

King of Kings is, on the whole, a good family watch for Holy Week and Easter.

The film opens nationwide on April 11, though showings are available on April 10, in theaters across central and southern Indiana. For more information, locations and to purchase tickets, go to angel.com/movies/king-of-kings. †



King of Kings premieres in theaters on April 11. (Photo courtesy of Angel Studios)

Pope’s return from hospital coincides with Vatican conference on aging

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Even though its focus was mainly scientific, a Vatican-sponsored conference on aging and longevity could not ignore the ongoing



Pope Francis

convalescence of 88-year-old Pope Francis.

The pope returned to the Vatican on March 23 after more than five weeks in Rome’s Gemelli Hospital, but his doctors have prescribed two months of a drastically reduced

schedule to allow him to recuperate. For Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life and co-sponsor of the “Vatican Longevity Summit,” questions about Pope

Francis’ ability to fulfill his ministry far from the public eye is one of the key points of the conference.

The “gigantic contradiction” in Western societies, he told reporters on March 24, is that people see a higher average life span as a sign of progress while also either ignoring the elderly or considering them a burden unless they are clearly making something, doing something or saying something.

“Pope Francis has shown us that old age is fragile, and that fragility must not be denied,” the archbishop said. “In my opinion, the pope has offered us an extraordinary magisterium in these days, not with his words, but with this body,” teaching people “that we are all fragile and we must care for one another.”

Dr. Giulio Maira, a neurosurgeon and researcher focused on degenerative

diseases, including Alzheimer’s, was asked to comment on Pope Francis’ condition.

While he insisted he never followed the pope as a physician, but only as a Catholic, it was clear the pope had been close to death with his breathing crises and his infections.

“Obviously, he is weak physically,” the doctor said, and he should obey his doctors’ orders to rest, continue his therapy and avoid meeting large groups of people so that he does not get another infection.

“However,” he told reporters, “I want to point out something that really struck me yesterday: the sensitivity and lucidity of the pope,” specifically when Pope Francis barely audibly thanked some 1,000 people gathered outside the hospital and then pointed to “the woman with the yellow flowers,” Carmela Mancuso, who

is in her late 70s.

“With a thousand people under his window, he thanked a person who brought flowers. The number of people there did not matter, what mattered was a gesture of care,” he said. “In other words, his sensitivity, his intelligence, his ability to analyze is still intact.”

Asked what advice he would give the pope, the doctor replied: “First, he must follow his doctors’ orders precisely,” perhaps holding meetings online when he is feeling better rather than meeting people in person because his health is “certainly very fragile.”

“The second point is that the pope has an illness in his body, not his mind, so he must continue to use his mind,” the doctor said. He should find something interesting and challenging to read “to keep his brain active.” †

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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Blessed Mother is the ‘perfect companion for Lent’ for Catholics

By Robert Fastiggi

(OSV News)—The season of Lent directs us to recall our own baptism and prepare for the celebration of the paschal mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. It is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that helps us grow closer to Jesus.

In celebrating Lent and in every season of the liturgical year, it is good to recall the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, that the “Church honors with special love the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” #103.)

“In her,” the council fathers continued, “the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be” (#103).

Mary is the perfect companion for Lent, and Lent is a perfect time to deepen our love, knowledge and veneration of the Mother of God. Lent is also a season of conversion, and here, too, we receive great help from Mary who, as the Mother of Mercy, points us to her divine Son, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to reconcile sinners to himself (Lk 5:31-32).

In his general audience on Ash Wednesday in 2014, Pope Francis highlighted the special protection and help of the Blessed Virgin for the journey of Lent: “On this journey, we want to invoke with special trust the protection and help of the Virgin Mary: May she, who was the first to believe in Christ, accompany us in our days of intense prayer and penance, so that we might come to celebrate, purified and renewed in spirit, the great paschal mystery of her Son.”

These words of Pope Francis help us to appreciate one reason why Mary is the perfect companion for Lent: She is the model of the perfect disciple because she entrusted herself completely to God.

At the Annunciation, Mary tells the angel: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). In 1974, St. Paul VI taught that Mary is “worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ’s disciples” (*Marialis Cultus*,” #35).

In his *Angelus* address for the second Sunday of Lent in 2006, Pope Benedict XVI highlighted Mary as the model of believers who listen attentively to God:

“The Virgin Mary herself, among all human creatures the closest to God, still had to walk day after day in a pilgrimage of faith, constantly guarding and meditating on in her heart the word that God addressed to her through holy Scripture and through the events of the life of her Son, in whom she recognized and welcomed the Lord’s mysterious voice. And so, this is the gift and duty for each one of us during the season of Lent: to listen to



Michelangelo’s Pietà is seen in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. Mary, especially in her suffering at the foot of the cross, is the “perfect companion for Lent” for Catholics. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Christ, like Mary. To listen to him in his word, contained in sacred Scripture. To listen to him in the events of our lives, seeking to decipher in them the messages of providence.”

At the wedding feast of Cana, Mary told the servers: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). In a similar way, Mary directs us all to be faithful to Christ, her divine Son. If we wish to draw closer to Christ during Lent, there is no better way than by entrusting ourselves to Mary, our spiritual mother.

As our spiritual mother, Mary not only leads us to Christ, but she also protects and guides us from sin. Lent is a perfect time to renew our devotion to Mary as our spiritual mother who cares for us in the midst of challenges and difficulties.

One of the oldest known prayers to Mary is known as the “*Sub Tuum Praesidium*” (“Under Thy Protection”), which goes back to the third or fourth century. One translation of it reads: “We fly to Thy protection, O Holy Mother of God; do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin. Amen.”

Because Lent is a time to turn away from sin, it is also an ideal time to recognize the gift that our Lord himself gave us, giving us his own mother as our mother while he was dying on the cross (Jn 19:25-27). Pope St. John Paul II recognized that Jesus gave Mary as mother not only to the beloved disciple, but also to all of the faithful.

Mary’s spiritual motherhood is the basis for what Pope John Paul described as the “Marian dimension” of the life of each of the disciples of Christ. He reflected on this in his 1987 encyclical letter “*Redemptoris Mater*” (“The Mother of the Redeemer”): “The Marian dimension of the life of a disciple of Christ is expressed in a special way precisely through this filial entrusting to the Mother of Christ, which began with the testament of the Redeemer on Golgotha. Entrusting himself to Mary in a filial manner, the Christian, like the Apostle John, ‘welcomes’ the Mother of Christ ‘into his own home’ and brings her into everything that makes up his inner life” (#45).

Lent is a time to deepen our

prayer life, and Mary provides the best example of prayer in her canticle, known as the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55). This canticle expresses the attitudes of praise, gratitude and humility that are at the heart of all authentic prayer to God. St. Paul VI speaks of Mary as “the virgin in prayer” who “praises the Lord unceasingly and intercedes for the salvation of the world” (*Marialis Cultus*,” #18). As our spiritual mother, Mary not only teaches us how to pray, but she prays for us “now and at the hour of our death.”

In the Gospel of St. Luke, Simeon told Mary that her heart would be pierced so that “the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed” (Lk 2:35). This prophecy was fulfilled during Christ’s passion when Mary stood beneath the cross witnessing her Son’s crucifixion (Jn 19:25-27). The bishops at Vatican II taught that Mary “faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with his sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth” (*Lumen Gentium*,” #58).

Lent, along with the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on Sept. 15, is also a special time for venerating Mary as our sorrowful mother. This is done in the Stations of the Cross, which often includes the singing of parts of the medieval hymn the “*Stabat Mater*,” whose most memorable translated verses are:

“At the cross her station keeping/Stood the mournful Mother weeping/Close to Jesus to the last.

“Through her heart, his sorrow sharing/All his bitter anguish bearing/Now at length the sword had pass’d.

“Oh, how sad and sore distress’d/Was that mother highly blest/Of the sole-begotten One!”

Because Lent points to Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows assumes particular importance. But even under the cross, Mary remains a teacher and a model. She shows how all of the faithful, like her, can unite their sufferings to the passion of Christ for the redemption of the world.

Mary’s “unique contribution to the Gospel of suffering” (described by St. John Paul II in “*Salvifici Doloris*”) shows us that suffering is not meaningless. Lent is a special time to remember the sorrows of Mary and to join ourselves to her in offering her divine Son “in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world” (Chaplet of Divine Mercy).

There is no better companion for the journey of Lent than Mary. As she leads us closer to Jesus, she will serve—as we pray in the “*Salve Regina*”—“our life, our sweetness, and our hope.”

(Robert Fastiggi, Ph.D., is a professor of systematic theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. He is former president of the Mariological Society of America.) †



A statue of Our Lady of Sorrows is seen at St. Joseph Monastery in Whitesville, Ky. Catholics can draw closer to Christ in his passion, death and resurrection during Lent by staying close to Mary, especially in her title of Our Lady of Sorrows. (CNS photo/Elizabeth Wong Barnstead, Western Kentucky Catholic)

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

The drama of self-giving love brings families into closer relationship with God

As I watched my 11-year-old son Colin be quite the ham in a humorous role in a recent production of *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* at his school, old memories washed over me.



When I was about his age, I played a royal child in a production of *The King and I*, with my sister, a high school senior at the time. She played Anna Leonowens, the female lead in the play. More than 40 years later, I can still remember all the words of the songs of that Rodgers and Hammerstein musical.

My mom made many sacrifices for me to be in that production. At the time, I was a paperboy for my hometown’s afternoon newspaper. Mom took over the route each day when I was at play practice.

My wife Cindy also had many great experiences in school theater productions when she was growing up.

And, like my mom, she made many sacrifices to help Colin and his fellow students have a good experience in their play while volunteering as an assistant director. She worked for weeks on making 1,001 behind-the-scenes arrangements for props and costumes, helping

out at many practices and organizing support from other parents.

So, in that moment of seeing Colin on stage doing such a good job with all the other student actors, I was filled with gratitude. I gave tearful thanks for the lifetime of memories that the love of musical theater planted in my heart by my mom long ago has given me. I now have the chance to pass on that gift to Colin and his brothers, who all have had their turn on stage in school plays.

In the days since, I’ve also come to realize that, in moments like this, God gives us an awe-inspiring glimpse of his infinite love for us.

On this side of eternity, it’s impossible to get our heads totally around the reality that our heavenly Father knows and loves each one of us from the beginning to the end of our lives in the eternal now beyond history in which he exists.

But since he has created us in his image and likeness, we are given the chance to understand part of this mystery with the help of his ever-present grace.

This isn’t just an academic exercise, an attempt at doing mental gymnastics. When we take time to ponder how God knows and loves us, he makes such moments an

occasion for drawing us into an ever-closer relationship with him.

Living in eternity, God expresses in one moment his love for us in all the moments of our life. I had something of an experience of that as I watched Colin on stage. Memories of my mom’s sacrificial love for me from some 40 years ago were joined with my knowledge in the present of the self-giving love of Cindy and so many other parents helping make *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* possible for all the students who took part in it.

Their sacrificial love, like God’s sacrificial love for us, will fill their hearts with beautiful memories that will hopefully not just last a lifetime, but will lead them closer to a relationship with God in the eternity of heaven.

That was made possible for all of us in the self-sacrificing love for us that Christ manifested to us in the drama of his suffering and death on Calvary.

As we draw closer to Holy Week, allow Christ to draw you closer to him. He will open the eyes of your heart to how he has shown you his self-giving love throughout the drama of your own lives and is inviting you to share it with others, especially your family. †

It Is Good/Elizabeth Scalia

Penance and purgatory: Fasting through Mom’s unique Lenten meals

It’s OK, we can say it (you know it, and I know it): Compared to our Orthodox brethren and our Muslim friends, the Catholic idea of required fasting is—let me be diplomatic here—not terribly impressive.



The Orthodox start fasting before Lent even begins, adapting a restrictive, very nearly vegan diet throughout the holy season. During Ramadan, followers of Islam fast from everything, even water, from sunrise to sunset, although they do feast once the sun goes down. A Muslim friend of mine never tires of breaking her fast with dates stuffed with blue cheese, which she says provides “an instant hit of sugar, salt, protein and fat” after a sometimes wearying day.

On the other hand, we Catholics (ages 18-59) are only required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, although it is recommended to continue the Good Friday fast through the Triduum, if one can. Catholics 14 and older are also required to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and on all Fridays in Lent.

Catholic fasting permits one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full one, but to observe Catholics on social media during these two days can be a bit embarrassing.

Despite Jesus’ clear instructions: “When you fast anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be observed” (Mt 6:17-18), Catholics carry on publicly about keening hunger, seek advice on drinking water to feel full, and wonder all day about whether one may chew gum, suck on a mint or “make the smaller meals last a long time” by dragging them out.

As a child who knew nothing of age exemptions, I recall not being too terribly put out by the meal restrictions. That was largely thanks to my mother, who neither sewed nor baked, and was a truly terrible cook, to boot. Ash Wednesday brought a supper of pancakes—and gosh, we loved pancakes—but for the fast we would forgo butter and maple syrup for a can of corn mixed into the batter.

My brothers insisted that a multitude of sins were forgiven with every bite. On Fridays in Lent (and throughout the year, before the Second Vatican Council) we

would free countless poor souls in purgatory with tuna-on-usually-burnt-toast (made goopy via a can of cream of mushroom soup) or by consuming potatoes with cheese and sauerkraut, or—if Mom was feeling jolly—cheese and pickle sandwiches with mustard.

In retrospect, all these meals were as awful as they sound, but—whether intentionally or not—they delivered a message that our fasting and our abstinences were meant to be taken seriously and not subverted through technicalities. (One can eat a very fine meal of shrimp or lobster while still observing “abstinence” after all, or eat something so hearty for a full-sized lunch that it stands one through the terrible hours until the smaller meal.)

In Mom’s kitchen, one was never tempted thusly, and I’ve come to believe that was probably a good thing. As I grew older, I learned to appreciate her harrowing Lenten efforts, both for their simple creativity and their profoundly penitential value. She tried; we offered it up. You can’t ask more out of a meal in Lent, can you? And in my adulthood, I’ve missed some of those weird dinners. I’ve felt an occasional yen to make the dry, crunchy corn pancakes of my youth—an offer which always leaves my husband speechless and unable to hide an expression of polite horror. Ditto the creamed tuna, which I must admit was ghastly.

But we’ve all learned to love the beans-and-macaroni. Yes, as Mom made it, it’s simply macaroni and a can of white kidney beans, but it goes down easy on a cold Lenten evening.

During Lent until Good Friday, we are required only to observe the Friday abstinence from meat. I’ll save my thoughts on how poorly we’ve taught Friday abstinences for another column, which you may find useful to read as a kind of Lenten penance.

Do I sound cranky? I just realized that I might sound peevish. Well, I’m 66 years old and I’m fasting, so there. Maybe there is some sense to those age restrictions, after all. But I did wash my face, Jesus! I’m trying!

(Elizabeth Scalia is editor at large for OSV. Follow her on X @the anchoress.) †

Ash Wednesday brought a supper of pancakes—and gosh, we loved pancakes—but for the fast we would forgo butter and maple syrup for a can of corn mixed into the batter.

Corrections Ministries/Deacon John Cord

Ex-inmates encouraged to “take Jesus home” with them after their release

After a recent Sunday Mass, a woman asked if she could talk to me. She told me that she had been in the state prison five times during a period of years.



She explained that she was a drug addict. She told me that she has been clean for more than 14 years.

When I asked her how she did it, she told me that during her last prison sentence, a Narcotics Anonymous (NA) counselor told her that she needed to take Jesus home with her when she was released. She was also told that she needed to find an NA chapter and

a good mental health counselor as soon as she got released.

This woman went on to explain that during every previous time she was incarcerated, she was very dedicated to the religious services that were offered inside. She told me that she convinced herself that she was a good Christian woman and that she would continue to be a good and faithful Christian upon her release. She was clean and sober and was very confident that she could resist drugs when she returned home.

However, four times in a row, when release day came, she walked out the door and left Jesus behind. She was not aware that her devastating addiction would follow her home, but it did. Each time, within a day or two she found her old friend, heroin. She told me that each time, it seemed harder to resist.

But on her fifth release, an NA counselor connected her with a compassionate NA counselor in her hometown. This caring lady picked her up from the prison gate and made sure she was safe and secure. She asked the counselor if she could go directly to a Catholic church to pray. The two of them went and prayed together. As she prayed, she felt the same presence of Jesus that she had felt on the inside. She knew that she had a chance.

Fourteen years later, she still feels the presence of Jesus with her. She now counsels other addicted women, especially those being released from prison.

What we know is that after an addict is away from their drug for a period of time, they begin to feel like they are no longer an addict. I have heard many people on the inside tell me, “I used to be an addict, but I have been clean since I have been in prison.” Sadly, statistics show that an addicted incarcerated person will

go back to their drugs within a very short time of being released.

Can you imagine if every person who was incarcerated had access to a drug counselor or a mental health counselor, especially one who cared? Even better, what if that counselor was a Christian who believed that their clients could truly benefit from a relationship with Jesus?

As you may know, our ministry is working toward starting a re-entry program. One of the most important aspects of it will be to connect each person to a good Christian counselor before they are released. That counselor will then connect the person to another person on the outside who will care and guide them.

During the coming months, I will write more on this program, giving you more insight into what we are working toward.

(Deacon John Cord is the coordinator of Corrections Ministry for the archdiocese. For more information on supporting the office’s re-entry ministry, contact Deacon Cord at 317-432-6604 or by e-mail at jcord@archindy.org.) †

Fourth Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 30, 2025

- Joshua 5:9a, 10-12
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

This weekend, the Church observes *Laetare* Sunday. The name is derived from the first word in the Latin original of the entrance antiphon for this weekend’s Mass. *Laetare* is Latin for “rejoice.” The Church rejoices that salvation, finalized in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, is near.

Priests may wear rose, not pink, vestments. Pink blends red and white. Rose mixes red and gold, reminding us of the first rays of the sun as they creep across the horizon after a dark night. Daybreak recalls that, after a dark night of anxiety or separation from God by sin, Christ, the light of the world, is coming. Easter will commemorate this coming.

The Book of Joshua, the source of the first reading, looks back to the time when God’s people finished the long, hard trip across the Sinai Peninsula, then, as it is now, bleak in sterility and danger.

Along the way, they were unfaithful to God, but he still rescued them from starvation, sending manna from the sky. What was manna, scientifically speaking? No one knows. But it was real. The people could not have created it. It was God’s gift. With it, the people survived.

St. Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians furnishes the second reading. In the reading, Paul urgently appeals to the Christians of Corinth to be reconciled with God in Christ. Imagine Paul’s frustration as he saw the Corinthians toying with their old pagan ways. Urgency literally flowed in his words.

They revealed his belief that nothing else matters but life in union with God. Thus, he implored each Christian in Corinth to return to God to be a “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

For its final reading on this weekend, the Church gives us, the reassuring parable of the prodigal son from St. Luke’s Gospel.

Much of the parable is self-evident, even to us in the 21st century. Quite clear is the unqualified, constant love of the

wayward son’s father, who is a symbol of God.

The parable best is understood by considering the ancient context. The prodigal son was not the older son, the heir to the father. The prodigal son had no right to an inheritance, whether he was good or bad. But he had no right to abandon his father. This especially would have disgusted Jews at the time of Jesus, who prized loyalty to parents.

Most of all, vital to the message, the prodigal son rejected the privilege of being part of the people of God. He repudiated the primary obligation of this status, to bear witness to God. He consorted with prostitutes, scorning the sanctity of marriage, so precious to Jews, and risked defiling the pure stock of God’s people by begetting children who would be reared as pagans by pagan, unbelieving mothers.

His sins brought him no reward. He had to serve not humans, not just animals, but pigs—filthy, ugly predators, the lowest of the low in Jewish eyes.

Nevertheless, the father forgave him all his sins and lavishly gave him an undeserved inheritance.

Reflection

The Church is joyful. Salvation—to be with God in and through Jesus—is near!

Wisely, the Church realizes that all its members, to some degree, at some time, have been like the prodigal son, wandering away as the Corinthian Christians wandered.

This weekend, however, does not focus on denunciation and divine revenge. Instead, the Church reassures us in the reading from Joshua, with its reference to manna, and in the Gospel, with its thrilling story of the forgiving father. Although we may sin, God never abandons the promise to protect us.

He loves us. He is forever merciful, regardless of how far we stray, however sinful that we are—if we repent.

In Jesus, the sacrificial victim of Calvary, God awaits us with the Eucharist, the manna for our starving souls, for which there is no substitute.

Observe Lent. Turn to God. †

Daily Readings

Monday, March 31
Isaiah 65:17-21
Psalms 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b
John 4:43-54

Tuesday, April 1
Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12
Psalms 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9
John 5:1-16

Wednesday, April 2
St. Francis of Paola, hermit
Isaiah 49:8-15
Psalms 145:8-9, 13c-14, 17-18
John 5:17-30

Thursday, April 3
Exodus 32:7-14
Psalms 106:19-23
John 5:31-47

Friday, April 4
St. Isidore, bishop and doctor of the Church
Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22
Psalms 34:17-21, 23
John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday, April 5
St. Vincent Ferrer, priest
Jeremiah 11:18-20
Psalms 7:2-3, 9b-12
John 7:40-53

Sunday, April 6
Fifth Sunday of Lent
Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalms 126:1-6
Philippians 3:8-14
John 8:1-11

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Canon law lays out the minimum for penitential practices for Latin Catholics

Q I am a longstanding vegan. So, when Lent comes each year there’s nothing for me to skip. No meat is already my regular routine. But at age 70, and even if I wasn’t vegan, is it true that seniors are no longer bound by Lenten fasting and abstinence requirements? (Indiana)



A The short answer is that, even at age 70, you are still bound to abstinence from meat on Ash Wednesday and Lenten Fridays—even if, in your case as a vegan, you wouldn’t be doing anything special or “extra” in this regard.

Canon 1252 of the *Code of Canon Law* tells us that “the law of abstinence binds those who have completed their fourteenth year.” This means that children under the age of 14 are not strictly required to abstain from meat on Fridays. Though, of course, younger children may still abstain even without being bound to do so. And I imagine that, in practice, many if not most children raised in Catholic families will wind up observing Friday abstinence along with the rest of their household.

Notably, the canon does not name an upper age limit for abstinence, so we can conclude that after the age of 14 this obligation is binding for the rest of a Catholic’s life.

In contrast, canon 1252 does give us both an upper and lower age for observing the Church’s law on fasting, stating: “The law of fasting binds those who have attained their majority, until the beginning of their sixtieth year.” In other words, Catholics are required to fast on the Church’s two obligatory fast days, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, from the time they turn 18—that is, reaching the age of majority or

legal adulthood—until age 59 i.e., when they are beginning their 60th year of life, a year which is completed on their 60th birthday.

The Church’s law does not give an explicit explanation for these different age ranges, but my own thought is that this is likely due to the varying level of difficulty between these two penitential practices. Occasionally going without meat, especially for non-vegans who can easily make up the “missing” protein with eggs, dairy or seafood, is not a health risk and would be physically taxing for only a very small number of people.

On the other hand, fasting—which in the Latin Catholic discipline (distinct from the discipline in Eastern Catholic Churches) means eating only one full meal in a day with two smaller meals or snacks permitted if necessary—can be more challenging. So, it makes sense that the Church would not seek to strictly impose this on young people who may still be growing, nor on senior citizens whose strength may be naturally diminishing due to age.

But it’s good to keep in mind that canon law only gives us the basic minimum of what we should do, largely so that all the faithful “may be joined together in a certain common practice of penance” (canon 1249) for the sake of community and a corporate witness to the faith.

These bare-bones common requirements are therefore not necessarily a comprehensive blueprint for each individual to actually grow in holiness most effectively. And so it would be worthwhile for many Catholics to prayerfully discern whether they might benefit from freely taking on some additional penitential practices appropriate to their particular life and vocation.

For example, while vegans or vegetarians already fulfill the law of abstinence by just sticking to their usual meat-free eating habits, it might make sense for them to consider adopting an additional penance for Lent. However, this would be an optional choice made for a deepening of their own personal spirituality.

Likewise, canon 1252 concludes its discussion of age limits by noting that: “pastors of souls and parents are to ensure that even those who by reason of their age are not bound by the law of fasting and abstinence, are taught the true meaning of penance.”

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

My Journey to God

To The Prodigal

By Leonard Easlick

First self-inherited, then dispossessed by self-same self-love, O rebellious son, you lay beside the swine yet have no rest nor help from stranger since the money’s run.

“Perhaps,” you think, “I’ll not go back. For my “brother will surely berate me, and not “without cause. Heavy on my shoulders I “have placed this weight, and can that be forgot?”

I beg you, son, do not let these thoughts keep your feet from the path. Let your hunger push you even to the servant’s place. For sleep now may well mean death. Surely you will blush, but mercy tires men, not Divinity. Go home! Go home! The Father waits for thee!



(Leonard Easlick is a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis. Photo: This 1773 painting titled “The Return of the Prodigal Son” by Pompeo Batoni depicts the scene of the merciful father embracing his repentant son in the parable in Lk 15:11-32.)(Public domain image downloaded from commons.wikimedia.org.)

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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.

BILL, JoAnn, 74, All Saints, Dearborn County, March 10. Wife of Thomas Bill. Mother of Beverly Wilson, Jon and Tom Bill. Grandmother of five.

BOZARTH, Ronald G., 88, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 14. Father of Marc Bozarth and Ronald Lindstrom. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of 15. Great-great-grandfather of two.

CROSS, Sharon A. (Evans), 82, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora, March 15. Mother of Randy Cross. Grandmother of four.

GOFFINET, Mary A., 92, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, March 15. Mother of Debra Harper, Diane White,

David and Kevin Goffinet. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of nine.

HARTLAGE, Sr., Clarence A., 96, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, March 5. Father of Linda Whitlock, Terri Hartlage Zink and Michael Hartlage. Brother of Emarita Leitner and Kenneth Hartlage. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of 16.

HENN, Polly (Sharp), 99, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Feb. 14. Mother of Amy, Elisabeth, Ellen, Gretchen, Laura, Martha, Merry, Tess and Carl. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of six.

LAMM, Ruth, 78, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, March 11. Mother of Kelly Stanton-Knapke and Troy Stanton. Sister of Jack Lamm. Grandmother of three.

MARTIN, Jr., Leo, 87, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, March 16. Father of Cherry Reagan, Lynn Reynolds and Steve Martin. Brother of Joan Dyer, Irma Jandreau, Marlene Thibeault, John and Ronald Martin. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of 13.

OPFERMAN, Gilbert R., 95, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 26. Husband of Marcella Opferman. Father of Jan Williams, Gil, Congregation of the Mission Brother Tim and Tom Opferman. Brother of Jackie Rucinski. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 12.

Marquette gets multimillion-dollar gift to boost natural family planning institute

(OSV News)—Marquette University in Milwaukee received recently a \$7.5 million gift to endow its Institute for Natural Family Planning within the College of Nursing. The Jesuit university revealed on Feb. 27 the gift came from the Richard L. Boland Love for Life Foundation, Inc., also known as the Betty and Dick Boland Foundation.

For years, Elizabeth A. “Betty” Boland provided financial support for the Marquette institute, said Mary Schneider, director of the newly renamed Boland Institute for Natural Family Planning.

“Betty was a nurse, and she was also involved with teaching NFP [natural family planning]—this was her passion,” said Schneider.

A few years after Boland’s death in 2022, the foundation wanted to do more. Schneider, Marquette University and the foundation began mapping out the future.

“The Boland Foundation called me and said, ‘You need to think big,’ ” Schneider told OSV News.

Marquette’s NFP institute opened in 1998 and was led by Richard Fehring. The Marquette Method—a fertility awareness-based method of family planning developed

by Fehring and others—helps couples achieve or avoid pregnancy by using a fertility monitor to track a woman’s cycle. The institute conducts family planning research and trains health care professionals and couples in the method.

According to Marquette, the Marquette Method is 98% effective when used correctly, and more than 100 instructors teach the method, both in person and online, worldwide.

The Catholic Church believes that using artificial contraception or artificial assisted reproductive technology to avoid or achieve pregnancy is immoral, but supports the use of natural family planning methods such as the Marquette Method.

In his 1968 encyclical “*Humanae Vitae*,” St. Paul VI encouraged Catholic medical professionals to “strive to elucidate more thoroughly the conditions favorable to a proper regulation of births” and “by the study of natural rhythms succeed in determining a sufficiently secure basis for the chaste limitation of offspring.”

Schneider sees the NFP institute’s work as medical and spiritual. “We’re here to strengthen families and to save souls—that is our goal,” she said.

“This gift is a wonderful reflection of our collaboration between Marquette University and the global Catholic Church,” Marquette President Kimo Ah

Yun said in a statement. “We are grateful to the Boland Foundation for ensuring our Natural Family Planning Institute continues its impactful work far into the future.”

Schneider is excited to use the gifted funds to invest in current projects and hire more employees.

“The most important asset is our staff, and the ability to grow staff is huge,” she said. They also have a few projects in the works, including launching a Marquette Method app to help users track their fertility and communicate with their instructor. “We’ve been working on it for a while now, but it’s been hard because we’ve only had small amounts of money here and there,” she said.

Unlike some female technology providers, they hope to make data security a top priority while continuing to research, said Schneider.

“We want to make sure that people’s information is secure, but also we need large data sets to answer research questions. So there’s a fine line we have to walk,” she said. “We want to make sure that what we’re putting out there is quality.”

After testing in the upcoming months, they hope to release the app by the end of the year.

The institute also is working to establish a Marquette Method presence in Uganda. Last year, the institute partnered with the Masaka Diocese, the Kampala Archdiocese and the Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau to launch a feasibility study with Ugandan couples.

“If the Marquette Method of NFP is accepted by the couple and is effective for couples, then it is feasible to work toward helping the Uganda Catholic health care systems establish the Marquette Method NFP teacher training programs into their nursing schools,” Schneider said. “And after this, their vision is to also put it into medical schools in Uganda.”

The Boland foundation gift comes at a time when many couples are becoming more aware of negative complications that can come with artificial contraception.

“Now, young people are asking, ‘Do I want to put these drugs into my body? Because I’m not feeling so good, and I don’t like the side effects,’ ” Schneider said.

She sees young Catholic couples who are interested in NFP both because of the Church’s teaching but also as part of a healthier lifestyle. Schneider is hopeful more people will learn about fertility awareness-based methods like the Marquette Method.

“I would love to see [NFP] become something that just rolls off the tongue of every health care provider, [where] they know it is effective and can help them understand the woman’s reproductive health care,” she said. †

Youth revival

Youths of St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis, joined by Jesuit Father Adam DeLeon, pose on Feb. 23 in their Indianapolis East Deanery faith community's church during its annual Youth Revival. Among other things, the youths during the event shared with each other the ways in which God has blessed them. Father DeLeon, an assistant principal at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis, was a guest speaker at the revival. (Submitted photo)

PELTON, Ronald, 88, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 13. Husband of Patricia Pelton. Father of Monica Hesik, Eric and Kurt Olson and John and Ron Pelton. Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of one.

PRYOR, Myron J., 73, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Feb. 27. Husband of April Pryor. Father of Laurien Compton, Erin Williams, Bryan Harris, Jr., and Myron Pryor. Brother of Beverly Jones,

Lannie and Sam Pryor, and Kevin and Anthony Walker. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of 12.

ROACH, Linda S., 81, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Feb. 5. Wife of Charles Roach, Sr. Mother of Dawn Rutter, Debra Spencer and Charles Roach, Jr. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 10.

SAMPLE, Harold, 87,

St. Mary, Greensburg, March 18. Husband of Erika Sample. Father of Diana Coblentz, Eric and Harold Sample. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of four.

THIEL, Joan, 94, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 17. Mother of Dianne Dixon, Amy Hutsell, Carolyn Land, John and Joseph Thiel. Sister of Franciscan Sister Ann Pitsenberger. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of several.

Great-great-grandmother of one.

WENDLING, Donald L., 92, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 16. Father of five. Grandfather of four.

WILSON, Carol A., 83, All Saints, Dearborn County, March 10. Mother of Tammy Cunningham, Theresa Horstman, Deron and Doug Hornbach. Sister of Allen and Dan Fox. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of six. †

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:

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

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:

- Ethics Point**
Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810
- 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



Father Tonny Kizza blesses Dr. Richard Fehring with Father Matthew Widder, in the background, in the Boland Institute for Natural Family Planning at Marquette University in Milwaukee on Oct. 29, 2024. Marquette received a \$7.5 million gift in late February to endow its Institute for Natural Family Planning. The institute opened in 1998 and was led by Fehring. (OSV News photo/courtesy Marquette University)

Investing with Faith/Kimberly Pohovey

Donor-advised funds allow you to put your faith into action

Charitable giving is a powerful tool that enables individuals to make a positive impact on the causes they care about.

For many, this generosity is rooted in faith and the belief that giving is an expression of compassion, love and service to others. Managing donations efficiently and strategically, however, can often be challenging.

Donor-advised funds (DAFs) provide an innovative and flexible solution to this dilemma, allowing individuals and families to combine the benefits of giving with enhanced control and tax advantages, all while staying true to their values and faith.

One of the unique benefits of a donor-advised fund is that it allows you to be your own grantmaker. This means you can directly influence which causes receive funding, how often and for what purposes. You can recommend grants to the organizations you care about, providing you with complete control over your charitable giving.

A DAF is a philanthropic vehicle that allows individuals or organizations to contribute assets to a charitable fund, which is then managed by a public charity or a financial institution that offers DAF services, such as the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation. The key feature of a DAF is

the ability to advise or recommend how and when the funds should be distributed to qualified charitable organizations.

Once you contribute to a DAF, the fund is technically owned and operated by the sponsoring organization, but as the donor, you retain the privilege of advising the fund on the distribution of grants to charitable organizations. This provides donors with a streamlined and flexible way to manage their charitable giving, enjoy tax benefits and support causes they care about through time.

DAFs are a powerful tool for families who want to give together in a way that reflects their shared values and beliefs. For families who seek to weave their faith into their giving, a DAF can be a unifying force that enables them to engage in meaningful acts of charity while preserving a sense of shared purpose.

Key benefits of donor-advised funds

DAFs offer a range of benefits that appeal to individuals and families who want to maximize the impact of their giving while minimizing administrative burdens. Some of the key advantages include:

- Immediate tax deductions: Donors receive an immediate charitable tax deduction when contributing to a DAF. This allows donors to reduce their taxable income in the year of the donation, freeing up more resources for further giving.
- Flexibility in timing: Donors have the ability to contribute assets to the fund at any time, but they are

not required to distribute funds to charities immediately. This provides the flexibility to plan donations over several years while still receiving the tax deduction upfront.

—Investment growth: Assets in a DAF can grow tax-free. Donors can choose from a range of investment options, allowing their contributions to potentially increase in value before being distributed to charitable causes.

—Ease of administration: DAFs simplify the process of managing charitable donations. The sponsoring organization handles all of the administrative tasks, such as issuing donation acknowledgements and ensuring compliance with IRS regulations. This reduces the workload for donors who want to focus on their philanthropy.

—Privacy: Donors can choose to remain anonymous when making charitable donations through a DAF. If desired, donors can have their names appear publicly, but many prefer the ability to remain private about their charitable giving.

—Low minimum contribution: Many DAFs have relatively low minimum contribution requirements, making them accessible to a wider range of individuals, not just those with large estates or substantial incomes.

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(Kimberly Pohovey is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese. Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan. For more information on the Catholic Community Foundation, visit www.archindy.org/CCF, e-mail ccf@archindy.org, or call 317-236-1482.) †

Pope appeals to communicators to assist peacemakers by disarming words

ROME (CNS)—People in the world of news and communications need to understand the full importance of words, Pope Francis wrote.

While war offers no solutions to today's conflicts, peacemakers need new vitality and credibility, and they should be assisted by people in communications, he said in a letter to Luciano Fontana, editor-in-chief of *Corriere della Sera*, an Italian daily.

"There is a great need for reflection, calmness and an awareness of complexity" when it comes to working for peace, fraternity and justice, which requires "commitment, work, silence and words," he wrote.

The newspaper published on March 18 the typewritten letter signed by

the pope from Rome's Gemelli Hospital, where the pope had been recovering from respiratory difficulty and infections.

Fontana had sent the pope a message expressing his closeness and good wishes for his health, according to *Corriere della Sera*. He also asked the pope if he had any words or appeals to make to the international community and people experiencing war given the important, "serious and delicate" events unfolding in the world.

The pope replied, thanking the editor for his sentiments and noting how "war appears even more absurd" when one is experiencing illness.

"Human fragility has the power to make us more lucid about what endures and what passes, what brings life and

what kills," the pope wrote. "Perhaps for this reason, we so often tend to deny limits and avoid fragile and wounded people: they have the power to question the direction we have chosen, both as individuals and as a community."

He encouraged the newspaper and "all those who dedicate their work and intelligence to informing through communication tools that

now connect our world in real time to feel the full importance of words.

"They are never just words: they are facts that shape human environments. They can connect or divide, serve the truth or use it for other ends," the pope wrote. "We must disarm words to disarm minds and disarm the Earth" and facilitate reflection, calm and deeper awareness of how complex reality is. †

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This is a screenshot of the St. Katharine Drexel Route for the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage 2025. Three perpetual pilgrims selected shared their expectations and preparations with OSV News, ahead of the pilgrimage, which begins in Indianapolis on May 18 and ends with Mass in Los Angeles on the feast of *Corpus Christi* on June 22. (OSV News/courtesy of National Eucharistic Pilgrimage)

Pilgrims look forward to bringing Eucharist across 21 dioceses

(OSV News)—It may feel counterintuitive, but Charlie McCullough says that pilgrimage “teaches us how to live a normal life.” That has been his experience after traveling the southern route of the 2024 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage from the Texas-Mexico border to Indianapolis over the span of two months.

This year, he is doing it again—on a different route, with a different group—as the team lead of the 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage from Indianapolis to Los Angeles.



Charlie McCullough

“When we go on a pilgrimage, we’re taking time to set a goal and to walk towards that goal, and in regular life, we have the goal of heaven, and every single day we’re taking a step toward heaven,” McCullough told OSV News on March 6.

Last year, he joined the pilgrimage right after graduating from Texas A&M with an engineering degree. Now the 23-year-old is preparing to take time away from his job in Austin, Texas, to travel the 3,300-mile route with seven first-time pilgrims. He is expecting to lean on his experience from last summer to support this year’s pilgrims, who will accompany the Eucharist along the way.

“Last summer ... I was more focused on the communities that we would encounter, on fellowship at different parishes and evangelization, whereas this summer, all those things will still be present in my day-to-day, but my primary focus will be getting to serve and take care of the seven other pilgrims and minister to their needs,” McCullough said.

The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage launched last

year with 30 pilgrims in four groups traveling with the Eucharist along routes from points in the nation’s north, south, east and west to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress on July 17-21, 2024. Both the pilgrimage and congress were part of the U.S. bishops’ three-year National Eucharistic Revival.

At the end of the congress, its chairman, Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., announced another pilgrimage in summer 2025. It begins in Indianapolis on May 18 and ends with Mass in Los Angeles on the feast of *Corpus Christi* on June 22. It also coincides with the 2025 Jubilee Year.

Unlike last year’s pilgrimage, this year’s event has only one route with far fewer pilgrims. They expect to focus on bringing the Eucharist to various places for Mass and adoration, accompanied by short processions, rather than last year’s emphasis on walking major parts of the route in hours-long eucharistic processions. The 2025 route, named for St. Katharine Drexel, has stops planned in 21 dioceses and four Eastern Catholic eparchies across Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

Two of the perpetual pilgrims are from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Rachel Levy, archdiocesan coordinator of young adult ministry, and Cheyenne Johnson, director of Catholic campus ministry at Butler University in Indianapolis, are among those who will participate. They were featured in an article in the March 14 issue of *The Criterion*.

Leslie Reyes-Hernandez, a high school math teacher in Phoenix who volunteers at Grand Canyon University Newman Center, is among this year’s new perpetual pilgrims. The 26-year-old said she saw clips of last year’s pilgrimage on social media, but did not understand the

endeavor until the National Eucharistic Congress. When it was announced that another pilgrimage would happen in 2025, she knew she wanted to be part of it.

“Immediately, I’m like, no way. OK, God, I truly want to do that,” she told OSV News.

Going on the pilgrimage means starting her summer vacation before the end of the academic year, but explaining her plans to others at the public school where she works has provided opportunities to share her faith and talk about Jesus’ true presence in the Eucharist, she said.

Reyes-Hernandez grew up in a Chicago suburb and is excited for the pilgrimage to go through Illinois, stopping in her home diocese of Joliet as well as Peoria, where she went to

college at Illinois State University and regularly prayed at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception. She is also looking forward to a retreat planned for the pilgrims in Flagstaff, Ariz.



Leslie Reyes-Hernandez

“When I think of Jesus in the monstrance, Jesus in the Eucharist, I truly think of joy, but pure joy—not just happiness, but joy,” she said. “I’m so excited to continue growing in God’s joy and being able to share all of the fruits that he continues to work through me, and for the rest of the country, for the rest of the world, to continue experiencing our Lord’s joy.”

Traveling with Reyes-Hernandez will be Arthur Acuña, a perpetual pilgrim from Las Vegas who works for The Aquinas Institute, the Catholic campus ministry at Princeton University in New Jersey. He graduated from Princeton in 2023 with a degree in chemical and biological engineering and plans to pursue a doctorate. In the meanwhile, the 24-year-old feels called to contribute to the ministry that solidified his faith.

Last summer, Acuña—who goes by “Ace”—bought a last-minute ticket to the National Eucharistic Congress

after seeing photos of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage on Instagram. He had been vaguely aware of the pilgrimage—and even attended an event with the Eastern Route pilgrims in New Jersey—but like Reyes-Hernandez, he previously had no sense of its immense scope.

“I remember just seeing the amount of devotion breathing out of those photos,” Acuña said. “You see people processing with the canopy and with the Blessed Sacrament, and you have people kneeling on the streets ... praying rosaries, and you see the gaze of the public just captured in these images. ... I was like, ‘That’s amazing. How could I miss such a big movement in the Church?’ ”

The pilgrimage and congress inspired Acuña to apply to join this year’s pilgrimage. “Since the Eucharist was such an important part of my faith coming alive, I know that I wanted to be a part of helping people encounter him all along the Drexel Route,” he told OSV News.

Acuña is looking forward to bringing the Eucharist to communities in Los Angeles affected by the wildfires earlier this year, he said. McCullough also expects that part of the pilgrimage to be powerful and “to see how he [Jesus] brings hope to them [Angelenos] in a unique way.

“It’s fitting that Christ would want to go to a place that has been hurt and has been wounded,” he noted.

Despite his experience from last year, McCullough expects this year’s pilgrimage to “continue to surprise me every day.

“Every day with Jesus, there is a new opportunity to fall in love with him,” he said, “and to experience a unique grace.” †



Perpetual Pilgrim Charlie McCullough, left, prays during Mass on May 19, 2024, at San Pedro Church in Brownsville, Texas, at the end of the first day of the pilgrims’ journey along the St. Juan Diego Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. McCullough is the team lead of the 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage from Indianapolis to Los Angeles. (OSV News photo/Tom McCarthy)