



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



'A living monument'

Foundation honors St. John Paul II, helps youths live their dreams, page 7.

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Maggie Banet is the recipient of the 2025 Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor given to an educator in the archdiocese. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Teacher crosses a bridge in life and finds a closer bond with Christ and her students

By John Shaughnessy

FLOYD COUNTY—Driving from her home in southern Indiana to her job in Kentucky, Maggie Banet had the growing feeling that she needed to make a dramatic change in her life.

For years, she had been teaching at a public school that was ranked first academically in Kentucky, a school where she loved the students, their supportive families and her caring colleagues. It was a dream job in the eyes of many, but something was missing for Banet.

As she crossed the bridge spanning the two states, a short

Bible verse often jumped into her thoughts, a verse from Colossians 3:23 that she summed up in this way, “Work for the Lord and not for men.”

“I wanted to please my principal and the administration,” she recalls. “The pressure from the top down to stay at the number one spot was extremely difficult. I would repeat that verse to myself to remember that, ultimately, I need to please God first.”

Amid those thoughts, she heard from a friend—a secretary at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County—that there was an opening for a teacher.

See **TEACHER**, page 8

State legislation could put mission of Catholic hospitals at risk

By Victoria Arthur

Catholic hospitals in Indiana could face challenges in fully carrying out their mission, including providing care for the poor and vulnerable, if legislation moves forward that could potentially strip them of their non-profit status.

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is closely following legislation at the Statehouse aimed at easing health

care costs for patients—a goal that the Catholic Church shares—while also working

to ensure that Catholic hospitals can continue to fulfill the Christ-centered care that has always defined them. Of particular concern is House Bill 1004, which would deny hospitals their tax-exempt status if they charge above certain Medicare reimbursement rates.

“Ultimately, our engagement with House Bill 1004 and other health care bills is focused on helping our Catholic health care systems remain rooted in their Catholic identity while providing exceptional care for the whole person,” said Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

The ICC, which speaks on public policy issues on behalf of the five Catholic bishops of Indiana, has shared with lawmakers the principles that guide the state’s Catholic health care institutions along with their counterparts nationwide. These

principles are outlined in the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) for Catholic Health Care Services, written and published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The ERDs, which are derived from centuries of Catholic theology and social

See **LEGISLATION**, page 9



Roarke LaCoursiere

Walking with Moms in Need process helps parishes support moms through local resources

By Natalie Hoefer

When it comes to pregnant and parenting mothers seeking help, the assistance most often sought is not surprising.

“A lot of the time it’s diapers,” Brie Anne Varick admits with a smile.

“But it’s not always diapers,” she adds in a more serious tone. “Maybe it’s transportation, or shelter, or food. It could be pre-natal care, post-natal care, child care, mental health support, help paying rent, clothes, furniture.”

Finding and contacting different agencies to meet these various needs can be difficult and time-consuming for these moms in need, says Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity.

But she has a vision, a hope: that any mother in need “could walk into their local parish, and everyone would

See **MOMS**, page 16



-PREGNANT?
-SCARED?
-CONFUSED?
LET US HELP!

Scan the QR Code for local resources in the greater Indianapolis area to help you through your pregnancy and beyond.

The Sanctity for Life committee of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis places stickers with the above image on mirrors in bathrooms at the church and the surrounding area to share a list of local resources for pregnant and parenting moms that the team created through the Walking with Moms in Need process. (Submitted photo)



Visitors gather in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 30. Pope Francis did not pray the *Angelus* in the square because he is following doctors' orders to rest. The Vatican released a written message from the pope to accompany the *Angelus*. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

God's mercy is for everyone; everyone needs healing, pope writes

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—God is always merciful toward everyone, Pope Francis wrote.

“He heals our wounds so that we can love each other as brothers and sisters,” he said in the text he prepared for the midday *Angelus* prayer on March 30.

While the 88-year-old pope was back at the Vatican and had appeared briefly on the balcony of Rome’s Gemelli Hospital on March 23, the Sunday he was discharged, to offer his blessing, he was following doctors’ orders to rest and did not make a televised or public appearance.


The pope’s message focused on the day’s Gospel reading, the parables of the lost sheep and the lost Prodigal Son from

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32. The Pharisees are scandalized instead of happy that sinners are being welcomed by Jesus, so Jesus tells them the parable of the son who squandered his inheritance and repented and was still loved and welcomed by his father.

“This is how Jesus reveals the heart of God: He is always merciful toward all,” the pope wrote.

“Let us live this Lent as a time of healing, all the more as it is the Jubilee,” he wrote, saying he, too, was experiencing this period as a time of healing “in my soul and in my body.”

“That is why I give heartfelt thanks to all those who, in the image of the Savior, are instruments of healing for



Public Schedule of

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

April 6–15, 2025

April 6 – 2 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for 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 youths of St. Jude and Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary parishes, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

April 9 – 7 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for youths of Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Roch and

St. Matthew the Apostle parishes, Indianapolis, and Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Beech Grove, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

April 10 – 8:15 a.m.

Virtual Judicatories meeting

April 10 – 10 a.m.

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

April 10 – 5:30 p.m.

St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities Gala at Galt House, Louisville, Ky.

April 13 – 10 a.m.

Palm Sunday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

April 15 – 2 p.m.

Chrism Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral followed by reception at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

their neighbor with their word and their knowledge, with kindness and with prayer,” he wrote. “Frailty and illness are experiences we all have in common; all the more, however, we are brothers in the salvation Christ has given us.”

Like the other messages he released on Sundays, the pope also called for prayers for peace, including in Myanmar, “which is also suffering so much because of the earthquake,” and he made two urgent appeals.

Concerning the increasing instability in the wake of the collapse of the government of national unity in South Sudan, the pope renewed a “heartfelt appeal to all leaders to do their utmost to lower the tension in the country.”

“We must put aside our differences and, with courage and responsibility, sit around a table and engage in constructive dialogue. Only in this way will it be possible to alleviate

the suffering of the beloved South Sudanese people and to build a future of peace and stability,” his message said.

Also in Sudan, “the war continues to claim innocent victims,” he said, urging the international community to “increase its efforts to address the appalling humanitarian catastrophe.”

“I urge the parties concerned in the conflict to put the safeguarding of the lives of their civilian brothers and sisters first; and I hope that new negotiations will begin as soon as possible, capable of securing a lasting solution to the crisis,” the pope wrote.

The pope also praised “positive events” taking place in the world, for example, “the ratification of the agreement on the demarcation of the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which is an excellent diplomatic achievement. I encourage both countries to continue on this path.” †

Archdiocesan chrism Mass to be celebrated on April 15 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

The annual archdiocesan chrism Mass will be celebrated at 2 p.m. on April 15 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis. Catholics from across central and southern Indiana are invited to take part in the liturgy.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will be the principal celebrant and homilist at the Mass that will take place on Tuesday of Holy Week.

The liturgy will feature the blessing of

oils used in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the anointing of the sick, in priestly ordinations and in the dedication of churches and altars. Representatives from parishes and religious communities across central and southern Indiana will be present to receive the blessed oils.

Priests serving in the archdiocese will also renew their ordination promises during the chrism Mass. †


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. †



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Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion?

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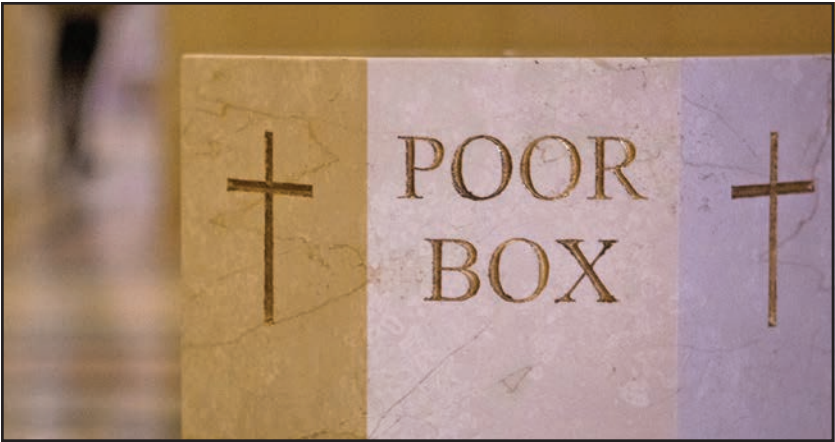
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Editorial



An illustration shows a poor box at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on Jan. 26, 2020. (OSV News illustration/Tyler Orsburn)

Stewardship and the joy of giving alms

During Lent, we are encouraged to engage in the three ascetic practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Prayer allows us to talk to God and to listen to his word. Fasting is a disciplined approach to self-denial, to giving up good things that we may want but which we don’t really need. And almsgiving (donating money, food or clothing to people who are in need) is an expression of Christian stewardship. Stewardship is a concept that is frequently misunderstood. Contrary to popular belief, stewardship is not fundraising or the Sunday collection. It is not a program sponsored by a parish or diocese that is designed to encourage the giving of time, talent and treasure. And finally, stewardship is not tithing (giving 10% to the Church or charities). These are all good things, and many of them can be expressions of stewardship, but they are not *what stewardship is*. So, what *is* stewardship? Stewardship is a practical form of Christian spirituality. It is like Ignatian, Franciscan or Benedictine spirituality. It is a way of following Jesus and living the Gospel that requires discipline, commitment and a willingness to give generously of ourselves. Stewardship is an attitude of the mind and heart that expresses itself in action. You can’t just think stewardship thoughts. You can’t just feel like you’re being generous or charitable or kind. You have to actually put these thoughts and feelings into practice. A Christian steward is one who acknowledges that God is the rightful owner and the true giver of all things (spiritual and material). Stewards freely admit that everything that they have, and everything they are, is a gift that they have received from a good and gracious God. Yes, Christian stewards may have worked hard and accumulated many possessions. But the intelligence and the talents and the professional skills that they possess today were all given to them as gifts—from God, first of all, but also from their parents, teachers, mentors, spouses and families, and from colleagues and friends. Nothing that Christian stewards possess—physically, mentally or spiritually—comes entirely of their own making. All is grace, unmerited and undeserved, and everything is meant to be taken care of and shared generously with others.

—Daniel Conway

In 1992, the U.S. bishops published a pastoral letter on stewardship titled, “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response.” In it, they describe a Christian steward as: “One who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them generously with others, and returns them to the Lord with increase.” Gratitude comes first. We can’t be good stewards if we are bitter, resentful or constantly complaining about the wrongs done to us or all the things we don’t have. Saying “thank you” changes our perspective. It improves our attitude. Accountability comes next. A good steward accepts responsibility for taking care of the gifts he or she has been given. And accountability is an active virtue. It requires honesty, integrity and the willingness to disclose information about what we have done, or failed to do, with our material and spiritual gifts. Generosity flows from gratitude and accountability. If we are truly grateful, we will want to share our gifts with others. If we are really taking responsibility for our thoughts, beliefs and actions as a Christian, we won’t want to selfishly hold anything back. Everything belongs to God, and God has given these material and spiritual gifts to us to take care of them, and to share them generously with others. Giving back to the Lord with increase is the fourth characteristic of a Christian steward. We are called to grow God’s gifts, to give back more than we were given to begin with. God gave us brains to develop and use. We also received emotions, talents and skills that can either be neglected and ignored or matured for our own good and the good of others. When we stand before the Lord at the gates of heaven his question will be: “What did you do with all the gifts I gave you?” Can we honestly say that we took what we were given, developed it, and shared it gratefully and generously with others? Almsgiving—charitable giving to those who are poor—is a particular expression of Christian stewardship. The more we practice almsgiving, the more we experience the joy of giving. As pilgrims of hope, let’s share joyfully and generously all the gifts that God has given us.

Reflection/John Shaughnessy

In a world of brokenness, this gift may help save us

A group of my friends raised their glasses together, celebrating her life. Two other friends drove more than an hour to be there for her viewing. Others shared their condolences in texts, cards, e-mails and conversations, both in person and by phone. Nearly everyone offered their prayers, and some arranged for an offering of a Mass for her. Then there were the messages they shared, all from the heart. One included this tribute to mothers from the late Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty. “The most important person on Earth is a mother. She cannot claim the honor of having built Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral—a dwelling for an immortal soul, the tiny perfection of her baby’s body. ... The angels have not been blessed with such a grace. They cannot share in God’s creative miracle to bring saints to heaven. Only a human mother can. Mothers are closer to God the Creator than any other creature; God joins forces with mothers in performing this act of creation.”

Another touching message came from a mother of two young children who had never met my mom, yet she handwrote a note that brought me to tears, “I was sorry to hear of the passing of your mother, Doris. Even at 96 years young, there is no one on Earth like a mother. I’m sure she is loved and missed.” That sentiment, echoed by others, struck deep to the heart of a reality that our family has embraced about life, love and loss: While we know we have been extraordinarily blessed by the long life of our mother, there is also the pain that comes with the loss, no matter how long you have a person in your life. We have also embraced the advice that has been shared by friends who know the pain of that loss. A couple—one raised Catholic, the

other Jewish—wrote, “We hope you can remember the many happy occasions, funny stories and the many years you had with your mother. Reflecting on what our parents did for us and the life lessons they taught us has been—and continues to be—helpful for us. We hope the same for you.” Another friend offered this thought, “One unexpected silver lining for me is seeing something I know my parents would love. I take a conscious beat to see it through their eyes. It becomes a bittersweet meditation.” A constant through all the condolences has been a focus on God’s lasting love in our mom’s passing, an emphasis captured in one card’s message: “May God’s loving presence comfort you, His perfect peace restore you, and His promise of eternal life sustain you during this time of loss.” In a world of brokenness, God calls us to give hope to each other, to share our joy together and to serve each other. And we are at our best when we follow his call to provide comfort and compassion to each other in the toughest times of our lives. I’ve witnessed and benefitted from the way my mom answered all those calls. And now I know again the comfort, the compassion and the embrace of community from people who share that approach to life. I also hold onto the Church’s belief in the communion of saints—and my personal belief that my mom is in heaven with my dad. And I embrace the words that a friend shared in relation to my mom’s passing, a message under the title of “Carrying Them Forward.” “We carry them forward in the stories we tell, the traditions we keep, in the love we share. They live through us, in the kindness we give others. Their legacy is not just in the past but in every moment we honor their memory.” I will also carry forward the great gift of compassion that everyone has shared during this time.

(John Shaughnessy is the assistant editor of The Criterion.) †

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 Jesus forgives our sins, he also calls us to unite with God

In the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, the scribes and the Pharisees bring an adulterous woman to Jesus and make her stand in the middle of the crowd that has gathered around him. Their motives are not righteous. They are using her to trap Jesus.

“Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery,” they say. “Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say?” (Jn 8:4-5)

Jesus says nothing. Instead, he bends down and begins to write in the dust with his finger. We do not know what he was writing, but whatever it was, it clearly made the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees uncomfortable.

When they persist in asking him to judge the woman, Jesus says, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (Jn 8:7). The Lord holds up a mirror to these self-righteous men so they can see themselves as they really are—sinners. Presumably, they do not want their sins exposed. And, as a result, “they went away one by one, beginning with the elders” (Jn 8:9).

Then, when he is left alone with the woman, Jesus straightens up and says to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replies, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore” (Jn 8:10-11).

We are all sinners. We are all guilty of thoughts, feelings and actions that separate us from communion with God and with our sisters and brothers in Christ. The Lord knows this, but he still loves us. He forgives us and invites us to repent and to renew our relationship with him.

There is no suggestion in this story, or anywhere in the Gospels, that Jesus is permissive or “soft” when it comes to confronting the reality of sin. His teachings are clear and unequivocal. Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him, and our Lord’s burning desire is that every person he encounters be united with God and each other. He does not condemn us sinners. He makes it clear that he has come into the world for us and for our salvation. And so, to each of us in our own ways he says, “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore” (Jn 8:11).

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

During his public life, Jesus not only forgave sins but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the people of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God’s forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the people of God. (#1443)

We do not know whether the unnamed woman in this story ever ate or drank with Jesus, but we know for certain that she would have been welcome. Even the hypocrites who were the objects of our Lord’s most stern and unrelenting criticism would have been welcomed by him if they had repented and promised to sin no more.

To say this has become something of a cliché, but Jesus loves sinners, not their sins. The distinction is important because of the fact that we are all sinners. If Jesus had condemned the adulterous woman, then in fairness he would also have to

condemn the scribes and Pharisees who accused her, all the people in the crowd, and all of us. It’s a simple fact that we are all sinners, but the astonishing thing is that we are all called to repent, receive God’s forgiveness, change our lives, and become saints!

Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us that everyone, the pope included, is a sinner. We should acknowledge this humbly and seek God’s forgiveness which is readily available to us in the sacrament of penance. What Jesus detests is hypocrisy—the refusal to admit that we are sinners and our insistence on judging others, condemning other people for their sins. Jesus loves and forgives us. But he asks us to admit that we are sinners and to forgive others as God has forgiven us.

This Lent, let’s acknowledge our sinfulness and ask God’s forgiveness. He will not refuse us. And let’s examine our consciences to identify those attitudes and actions of ours that are hypocritical. Do we judge others harshly while failing to acknowledge our own sins? If so, let’s ask God for the grace to repent, to change our self-righteous attitudes, and to forgive others in Jesus’ name. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Así como Jesús perdona nuestros pecados, también nos llama a unirnos a Dios

En la lectura del Evangelio del quinto domingo de Cuaresma, los escribas y los fariseos llevan ante Jesús a una mujer adúltera y la obligan a colocarse en medio de la multitud que se ha reunido en torno a él. Sus motivos no son honestos; quieren usarla para atrapar a Jesús.

“Maestro, esta mujer ha sido sorprendida en el acto mismo del adulterio — le dicen—. Y en la ley, Moisés nos ordenó apedrear a esta clase de mujeres. ¿Tú, pues, qué dices?” (Jn 8:4-5).

Jesús no dice nada. En lugar de eso, se agacha y empieza a escribir en la arena con el dedo. No sabemos lo que estaba escribiendo, pero fuera lo que fuese, claramente incomodó a los hipócritas escribas y fariseos.

Entonces insistieron en pedirle que juzgara a la mujer, a lo que Jesús contestó, “El que de ustedes esté sin pecado, sea el primero en tirarle una piedra” (Jn 8:7). El Señor les muestra un espejo a estos santurrones para que puedan verse como realmente son: pecadores. Es de suponer que no quieren que sus pecados salgan a la luz y, en consecuencia, “se fueron retirando uno a uno comenzando por los de mayor edad” (Jn 8:9).

Luego, cuando se queda a solas con la mujer, Jesús se incorpora y le dice: “Mujer, ¿dónde están ellos? ¿Ninguno te ha condenado?” “Ninguno, Señor,” respondió ella. Entonces Jesús le dijo: “Yo tampoco te condeno. Vete, y desde ahora no peques más” (Jn 8:10-11).

Todos somos pecadores; todos somos culpables de pensamientos, sentimientos y acciones que nos separan de la comunión con Dios y con nuestros hermanos y hermanas en Cristo. El Señor lo sabe, pero aun así nos ama. Nos perdona y nos invita a arrepentirnos y a renovar nuestra relación con Él.

Ni en este relato ni en ninguna parte de los Evangelios se sugiere que Jesús sea permisivo o “blando” a la hora de enfrentarse a la realidad del pecado. Sus enseñanzas son claras e inequívocas: el pecado es ante todo una ofensa a Dios, una ruptura de la comunión con Él, y el deseo ardiente de nuestro Señor es que cada persona con la que se encuentra esté unida a Dios y entre sí. No nos condena por pecadores y deja en claro que ha venido al mundo por nosotros y para nuestra salvación. Así pues, nos dice a cada uno y de una forma específica: “Vete, y desde ahora no peques más.”

Según el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*:

Durante su vida pública, Jesús no sólo perdonó los pecados, también manifestó el efecto de este perdón: a los pecadores que son perdonados los vuelve a integrar en la comunidad del pueblo de Dios, de donde el pecado los había alejado o incluso excluido. Un signo manifiesto de ello es el hecho de que Jesús admite a los pecadores a su mesa, más aún, Él mismo se sienta a su mesa, gesto que expresa de manera conmovedora, a la vez, el perdón de Dios y el retorno al seno del pueblo de Dios (#1443).

No sabemos si la mujer anónima de esta historia comió o bebió alguna vez con Jesús, pero sabemos con certeza que habría sido bienvenida. Incluso los hipócritas que fueron objeto de la crítica más severa e implacable de nuestro Señor habrían sido bien recibidos por él si se hubieran arrepentido y prometido no pecar más.

Aunque suene a una frase trillada, Jesús ama a los pecadores pero no sus pecados. La distinción es importante porque todos somos pecadores. Si Jesús hubiera condenado a la mujer adúltera, entonces, para ser justos, también tendría que condenar a los escribas y fariseos que la acusaron, a toda la

gente de la multitud y a todos nosotros. Es un hecho simple que todos somos pecadores, pero lo asombroso es que todos estamos llamados a arrepentirnos, recibir el perdón de Dios, cambiar nuestras vidas y convertirnos en santos.

El papa Francisco nos recuerda repetidamente que todos somos pecadores, incluido él mismo. Debemos reconocerlo con humildad y buscar el perdón de Dios, que está a nuestra disposición en el sacramento de la penitencia. Lo que Jesús detesta es la hipocresía: la negativa a admitir que somos pecadores y nuestra insistencia en juzgar a los demás, en condenar a otras personas por sus pecados. Jesús nos ama y nos perdona, pero nos pide que admitamos que somos pecadores y que perdonemos a los demás como Dios nos ha perdonado a nosotros.

En esta Cuaresma, reconozcamos nuestra condición de pecadores y pidamos perdón a Dios; no nos rechazará. Y hagámonos un examen de conciencia para identificar actitudes y acciones hipócritas. ¿Juzgamos duramente a los demás mientras no reconocemos nuestros propios pecados? Si es así, pidamos a Dios la gracia de arrepentirnos, de cambiar nuestras actitudes farisaicas y de perdonar a los demás en nombre de Jesús. †

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 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 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.

Marian University Evans Center, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **Film Screening: Tolton Speaks,** 6:30-8:30 p.m., documentary on America’s first Black priest, postulator of Father Augustus Tolton’s cause for canonization Bishop Joseph N. Perry will be present, free. Information: 317-955-6557, smcnamee@marian.edu.

April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6, 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 10
St. Mary Parish, 629 Clay St., North Vernon. **Soup Supper and Lenten Study,** 6-8 p.m., last 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 12
Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity,** 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, visit with elder sisters and help them with activities such as Bingo, exercise, baking

and more. Information, registration: teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org, jluna@spsmw.org, 361-500-9505.

April 13
St. Joan of Arc Church, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Tenebrae Service,** 7 p.m., featuring archdiocesan *schola cantorum* Vox Sacra, free. Information: 317-236-1513, amotyka@archindy.org.

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.

April 18
Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange,** presenter TBA, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on April 15. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Way of the Cross,** noon. Information: 317-574-8898, catholiccemeteries.cc.

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Way of the Cross,** noon. Information: 317-784-4439, catholiccemeteries.cc.

April 26
White River State Park, 801 W. Washington St., Indianapolis. **St. Vincent de Paul Love Your Neighbor 5K Run/Walk and One-mile Fun Run,** 9-10:30 a.m., registration opens 7:30 a.m., \$29 adult,

\$25 student, \$19 family, walk-ups welcome. Information, registration: 317-924-5769, ext. 260, dsweeney@svdpindy.org, svdpindy.org/neighbor.

Roncalli High School, 3300 Prague Road, Indianapolis. **ROAR: The Greatest Show on Earth fundraiser,** 5:30-10 p.m., appetizers, cocktails, silent auction, dinner, live entertainment, proceeds benefit Roncalli students, staff and families, \$150, registration deadline April 18. Information, tickets: roar25.givesmart.com, 317-787-8277, byoung@roncalli.org.

Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School, 5000 Nowland Ave., Indianapolis. **Scecina Memorial Club 53 Fundraiser,** 6 p.m., food, drinks, \$10,000 reverse raffle, live entertainment, games, \$80 until April 8, \$100 after, registration deadline April 23. Information, tickets: 317-352-3282, adamsmith@scecina.org.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Faithful Citizens Rosary Walk,** 10:45-11:45 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: holyroary.prolife@gmail.com.

April 26, May 3, 17, 24
St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis. **“Know Your Fertility” Class in Spanish,** 6-8 p.m., four sessions, \$75. Information, registration: ccorona@archindy.org, 317-800-9306.

April 27
SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N., Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Disabilities Awareness Mass,** 10 a.m., reception following Mass at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Cetner, 1400 N. Meridian St. Information: 317-236-1448, jbryans@archindy.org.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Filipino Mass,** Divine Mercy 3 p.m., rosary 3:10 p.m., Mass 3:30 p.m. with homily in English, every fourth Sunday. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

St. Ann’s Golf Course, 360 E. County Road 350 N., North Vernon. **Missy’s Hope Golf Scramble,** 8 a.m., benefitting Missy’s Hope Maternity Home, \$200 per four-person team, register by April 27. Information, registration: 812-767-2897. †

Retreats and Programs

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

April 25-27
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Worldwide Marriage Encounter,** 8 p.m. Fri.-4 p.m. Sun., includes

three meals Sat., two meals Sun., and Sunday Mass, \$75 application fee to reserve space plus free-will offering to cover cost of retreat. Information, registration: wwme.org/apply, 317-863-5680.

April 26, 27
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Divine Mercy Weekend: Two Days of Divine Mercy Devotions and Talks,** Sat. 9 a.m.-1p.m., Sun. 1-4 p.m., Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Terrance M. Chartier presenting, free. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

April 28-May 2
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Priest Retreat: Faith Stories from the Gospel of John,** Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell presenting,

\$625 single, \$1,250 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

May 2-4
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend,** 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$330 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

May 8
Virtual guided meditation series via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., every second Thursday of the month through May, offered by Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, free, registration required. Information, registration: events.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

May 15, June 10
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St.,

Indianapolis. **Day of Silence,** 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: archindy.org/fatima-events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

May 16-18
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **The Rosary Zone,** Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

June 6-8
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Praying the Mass: Eucharistic Spirituality,** Benedictine Father Lorenzo Penalosa presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats. †

Evangelization workshop will take place on April 26 in Indianapolis

The archdiocesan Office of Evangelization is offering a workshop titled “Evangelization 101: A Simple Approach to Forming Teams, Witnessing and Accompanying One Another” at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, 535 E. Edgewood Road, in Indianapolis, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on April 26.

This workshop is open to all parish ministry leaders, pastors and parish life coordinators.

Brian Miller, evangelization director for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, will equip and inspire participants with a basic approach to encouraging parish communities and their leaders to share the good news of Jesus Christ—a call

Christ gave to all of his followers: “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news” (Mk 16:15).

Miller will speak on how to bring others together to pray and offer strategies to reach out to a parish’s three audiences: the unchurched, alienated Catholics and practicing Catholics.

A \$30 fee will be assessed to an attendee’s parish for the event, which includes lunch and materials. Registration is required at tinyurl.com/markevang25.

For more information, contact Anita Bardo, archdiocesan evangelization coordinator, at 317-236-1466 or abardo@archindy.org. †

Program honoring Earth Day will take place at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods on April 26

An Earth Day Festival will be held at the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. on April 26.

The festival includes live music; wildlife presentations; demonstrations on woodcarving, spinning, weaving and crafts; nature shows; kids’ activities; exhibits; tours of the facility’s organic gardens, alpaca and horse barns; and a bake sale.

Vendors and educational exhibitors

will be present for Earth-friendly shopping and to expand knowledge of how to be better stewards of our planet.

Food vendors will also be available for purchasing snacks, beverages and meals, with options for all ages and dietary needs.

Admission is free; however, donations will be accepted.

For more information, go to spsmw.org/event/earth-day-festival-2025 or contact the White Violet Center at 812-535-2932 or wvc@spsmw.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

PAUL AND KAREN (LEWIS) AINSLIE, members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 4.

The couple was married in St. Michael Church in Grand Ledge, Mich., on April 4, 1975.

They have two children: Cheryl and Nathan Ainslie.

The couple also has six 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.

Polish talent foundation is ‘best living monument’ to St. John Paul II

WARSAW (OSV News)—During his pilgrimage to Poland in 1999, St. John Paul II highlighted the stark contrasts in living conditions across the country, pointing out challenges faced by many families in small towns and villages.

Opportunities for children and young people were limited, and in some cases, seemed unattainable. The pope called for solidarity.

In response to this appeal, the Polish bishops’ conference established the “Dzielo Nowego Tysiąclecia” (“The Work of a New Millennium”) foundation in the Jubilee Year 2000. Today, 20 years after John Paul’s death on April 2, 2005, it still grants scholarships to talented youths who are pursuing a wide range of careers, from musicians to doctors, inventors to athletes.

“Talents are born in every family. It is a gift from God,” said Father Dariusz Kowalczyk, president of the board of the foundation, in an interview with OSV News. “But young talents, if not properly supported in their development, have no chance of realizing their potential.”

“Dzielo”—translated from Polish as “The Work”—helps talented, underprivileged youths from small towns by implementing the teachings of the pope. It funds educational scholarships and supports scientific development and spiritual growth.

“This is how we understand the building of a civilization of love, which John Paul II spoke about: adequate and, above all, effective help,” Father Kowalczyk said. “Supporting young, ambitious people who have the chance to develop their talents, go to the best universities and train for their dream professions.”

Monika Teresa Butryn, a 26-year-old cellist, comes from a small village in northeastern Poland. She said that she owes the Dzielo foundation for her education and the opportunity to develop her great passion for music. The community of

the foundation also helped her shape her life attitudes.

“The formative program provided by the foundation during my studies at the Music Academy in Kraków encouraged me to engage in regular volunteer work, which, in my case, was helping with therapeutic activities for children with disabilities,” she said. “This experience taught me a lot, made me more sensitive to the situations of others, and made me realize that I am in a privileged position, and my duty is to serve those in need.”

In addition to the scholarship program, Dzielo offers its scholarship recipients the opportunity to attend summer formative camps, where they can strengthen their faith and build a strong, supportive community.

“I see a group of people there who share the same values,” said Father Kowalczyk, “I see youth who have aspirations, and who often come from families facing significant challenges.”

Jakub Kuczek is only 18 years old, yet he already has a serious invention to his name—a “Rescue Capsule”—a device designed to save drowning people, which has gained nationwide recognition. The work on his startup was made possible by support from the papal foundation.

“In the future, I would like to design technological components, create new solutions and, most importantly, serve God and people,” Kuczek told OSV News.

Another scholar recipient of the foundation, Angelika Arendacz, continues to achieve sports success. After winning the European Karate Championship, she switched disciplines and became the vice-champion of Poland in Olympic boxing this year.

“As a scholarship recipient, I especially appreciate the opportunity to meet wonderful people with different stories,” Arendacz said. “They are people with open hearts, warm and friendly, who create an incredible community. I am glad

to be part of it.”

“This is a powerful group of people,” said Father Kowalczyk.

“Over the course of 25 years, the foundation has supported several thousand youths. They have chosen all possible fields of study. We have clerics, artists, technologists, doctors, lawyers, athletes, scientists and politicians among them. There is no profession today in which we don’t have our scholarship alumni.”

The Polish priest emphasized that what the foundation teaches its youth is the pursuit of success, but not in worldly terms.

“What is true success?” asked Father Kowalczyk. “It is elemental goodness, wisdom, and holiness. We tell them: Yes, grow, conquer the world, but above all, grow in humanity. If you lose your humanity, you lose everything.”

Dominik Tudrym dreamed of becoming a firefighter. If it hadn’t been for the foundation’s support, he wouldn’t have been able to study or develop his life plans.

“Being a scholarship recipient of the foundation gives me great motivation for personal development, but most importantly, spiritual growth,” Tudrym said. “Thanks to the summer camps, I



Recipients of scholarships from the “Dzielo Nowego Tysiąclecia” (“The Work of a New Millennium”) foundation are seen in a July 8, 2024, photograph in Gniezno, Poland. Established in the Jubilee Year 2000 as a fruit of St. John Paul II’s 1999 pilgrimage to Poland, today—20 years after his death on April 2, 2005—the foundation is called the “best living monument” to the pope, granting scholarships to talented youths who are pursuing a wide range of careers, from musicians to doctors, inventors to athletes. (OSV News photo/ courtesy FDNT)

meet young people like me, willing to act and bear witness to their faith.”

The young firefighter told OSV News that Dzielo “is a living monument to St. John Paul II, and I feel like a brick in that monument.”

The monument is growing. In line with the Holy Father’s call to “become witnesses to mercy in today’s world,” every year more than 2,000 scholars from nearly every corner of Poland and war-affected areas of Ukraine create an extraordinary monument built by Poles grateful to St. John Paul II.

Father Kowalczyk recalled that when the pope learned about the establishment of the foundation he allegedly said: “Such monuments you can erect to me.” †

Tragic earthquake hits war-torn Myanmar, with massive death toll and little aid

(OSV News)—On March 28, a powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit the Mandalay-Sagaing region in southwestern Myanmar, causing multi-story buildings to collapse and raising concerns about a significant death toll.

Tremors were also felt in neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, India, Laos, Thailand and China.

Due to the ongoing civil war, information from Myanmar remains scarce, but social media has been flooded with videos showing buildings and half-constructed skyscrapers collapsing in the wake

of the disaster, the AFP news agency reported.

The death toll rose significantly in Myanmar from 150 on March 28 in the afternoon to more than 2,000 people on March 31. The death toll is expected to increase by thousands more. In neighboring Thailand, Bangkok city authorities said so far six people had been found dead, 26 injured and 47 were still missing.

Pope Francis was praying for victims of the earthquake on March 28. In a telegram sent to civil and Church authorities in the two countries most affected—Myanmar and Thailand—Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said the pope was “deeply saddened by the loss of life and widespread devastation.”

“Pope Francis offers heartfelt prayers for the souls of the deceased and the assurance of his spiritual closeness to all affected by this tragedy,” the message said. The pope also prayed that emergency workers would be given “the divine gifts of fortitude and perseverance.”

A 7.7-magnitude earthquake was followed shortly by a 6.4-magnitude aftershock, causing widespread destruction in Myanmar. Buildings were toppled, roads were torn apart, and the iconic Ava bridge collapsed. The colonial-era bridge was built 91 years ago by the British Empire over the Irrawaddy river.

The powerful quake transformed a major hospital in Myanmar’s capital into a “mass casualty area,” according to AFP and UCA News reports.

Myanmar’s military

government declared a state of emergency and appealed for blood donations and foreign aid to arrive.

“As much support as possible for the ongoing rescue efforts” are needed, junta leader Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said on March 28.

“The number of casualties is expected to rise further,” he said.

Aid is already on the way from several countries including China, India and South Korea.

President Donald Trump, commenting on the news of the earthquake, said the U.S. would help Myanmar by sending aid.

“It’s terrible,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on March 28. He said, “It’s a real bad one, and we will be helping. We’ve already spoken with the country.”

Caritas Poland, part of Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church’s charitable arm, asked for urgent donations and said that in cooperation with the international headquarters it is preparing aid for the devastated region.

The conflict made the already suffering Myanmar communities go through another devastating pain. In 2021, the military ousted a civilian government in a coup that triggered the civil war.

“The tragedy is that relief efforts are scarce or completely absent,” a source in the Catholic community of Mandalay, near Sagaing, told Fides news agency, part of the Vatican’s Dicastery of Evangelization.

“We see so much solidarity among the people, but we register the complete absence of the state. The area of Sagaing, epicenter of the earthquake, is one of those where clashes are strongest due to the ongoing civil war. In the general instability, there is no organized relief for the victims,” said the Fides source who requested anonymity due to security reasons.

“In junta-controlled areas, a few firefighting corps are busy in the capital Naypyidaw and in Mandalay, where several multi-story buildings have collapsed, but so many other areas are completely left to their own devices. The state is completely disinterested in the citizens, their condition and well-being,” said the Fides source.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey’s estimates based on predictive models, Myanmar’s death toll could exceed 10,000, and economic losses could exceed its annual economic output. †



Rescue personnel work at the site of a collapsed building in Mandalay, Myanmar, on March 29, following a strong earthquake. The 7.7 magnitude quake hit midday on March 28, with an epicenter near Mandalay, bringing down scores of buildings, killing more than 2,000 people, with the death toll expected to rise, and leaving countless others buried in the rubble. (OSV News Reuters)

TEACHER

continued from page 1

“It was literally divine providence,” says Banet, about that moment six years ago. “I feel like the Lord just picked me up out of my toughest year of teaching. He opened the door at St. Mary’s. I came to interview, and they offered me the job. I literally cried tears of joy.”

Banet had another moment of joy earlier this year when the fifth-grade teacher was chosen as the recipient of the Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor given to an educator in the archdiocese.

‘We’re going to sing to the Lord because we love him’

Each teacher across the archdiocese designs their classroom in their own vision, and the atmosphere that Banet strives to create for her students is one of joy, discovery and faith.

The emphasis on faith is especially evident, from the Christian songs that sometimes serve as background music during religion and even math classes, to the various Bible verses that are printed on colorful pieces of paper and displayed prominently around the room.

“*Be still and know that I am God*” (Ps 46:10).

“*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Phil 4:13).

“I cannot think of a more boring way to start teaching, especially during religion class, than to say, ‘OK, open your book to page seven,’ ” Banet says. “When you’re talking about God and how absolutely amazing he is, I just can’t bring myself to open a textbook.

“Sometimes we’ll start with a song or end with a song and the kids’ faces just light up. ‘Hey, we’re going to sing to the Lord because we love him.’ The goal is for them to have a relationship with Jesus.”

She takes a diverse approach in helping her students reach that goal, sometimes appealing to the children’s goofy, fun-loving side and other times focusing on their thoughtful, deeper emotional side.

“She always makes religion fun,” says fifth-grader Livie Luckett with a

big smile. “One time, we were learning about the followers of Jesus, and she put a duck towel on her head, and she made us follow her around like we were the followers of Jesus.”

Banet went deeper with her students during a recent religion class when she shared an excerpt on sacrifice and suffering from the book *33 Days to Eucharistic Glory* by Matthew Kelly— at one point focusing on this passage, “Choose a relationship in your life that is struggling and pour into it the unmitigated love of daily sacrifice.”

She capped off the lesson by playing the song “How Beautiful” by Twila Paris about the body of Christ, a song that brought tears to some of her students.

“Before I heard these songs, I really didn’t listen to religious music,” says Will Block, another fifth-grader. “When she introduced me to these songs, it inspired me to learn more about Jesus and feel more attached to him.”

High expectations and high energy

While she’s laser-focused on helping her students move closer to Jesus, Banet continues to strive to bring out the best in them academically.

“Maggie isn’t just enthusiastic, she is also effective,” says Tracy Jansen, principal of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School. “Her students respond to the energy she brings daily. Her students consistently score in the top 15% of ILEARN math scores [administered by the Indiana Department of Education]. After assessments are administered, she eagerly analyzes the data and fills in learning gaps, ever focused on student learning and growth.”

Her high energy approach shows in the fact that she doesn’t have a chair for herself in her classroom. And instead of

a desk, she has a large, rolling cart with shelves, where she keeps her computer and phone.

“I’m always on the move,” she says. “I’m always walking around, talking or teaching or doing hand motions or checking their math work. Or we’ve moved to the big carpet in



The recipient of the 2025 Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award, Maggie Banet smiles on March 26 with her fifth-grade students at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

the back of the room where the kids can sit if I want to do a more intimate lesson, or the kids need to get out of their seats for a while.

“Even if I had a chair I wouldn’t sit there. I just walk around the room and put myself close to the kids that are struggling. I’m looking over their shoulder, figuring out who’s got it and who needs help.”

At 41, Banet also knows where to turn when she needs help in her various roles—as a teacher; as the wife of her husband of 13 years, Alex; as the mother of their three children, James, 9, Anna, 7, and Grace, 3.

“Some days, I feel like I’m in survival mode,” says Banet, a 2002 graduate of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville. “Those two tasks that have been gifted to me—my job and being a mom—take every ounce of my time and energy. At the end of the day, if I feel I’ve given everything to my ministry at school and everything to my family, then I’ve given everything to the Lord, without many extra minutes to spare.”

She fills those spare extra minutes in her day with prayer.

“I have an ongoing conversation with God throughout the day. Just a quick ‘thank you.’ A quick ‘help me,’ ” she says. “And I truly feel he talks back.”

The conversation with God extends to her students

Sometimes, the conversation turns her to a Scripture verse, including one she often relies on, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

“I’ve talked with my colleagues about that one often,” she says. “I’ll come into my class, and I might feel unprepared, and I might feel inadequate. And every single time I pray that things will go smoothly, that God will put the right words in my mouth, he never fails. I cannot take any of that credit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit just takes over.”

She uses a similar approach in guiding her students to understand the importance of seeking God’s words and wisdom in their lives. She has her students memorize one Scripture verse a week.

“I tell the kids that memorizing Scripture is like memorizing math facts. You don’t need them all the time. But when you need it, it’s not going to be helpful if they’re not in your memory bank. It’s really gotten the kids excited about the Bible. When we go to Mass on Fridays, they’ll hear a song and there will be a verse in it that we’ve memorized, and they’ll look at me with their eyes wide open, like, ‘Oh! There’s our verse!’

“They’re starting to learn what is in

the Scriptures and why it’s important to them. I hope I give them a taste of how God can use Scripture in your life. You pull that verse from your memory bank when you’re feeling frightened or when you’re feeling discouraged or when you’re feeling joyful. If they know how to make that connection, I hope they will do that more as they get older.”

Fifth-grader Millie Wheatley says that learning the Scripture verses has already had an impact on her and her classmates.

“At the beginning of the year, I never read the Bible,” Millie says. “But ever since Mrs. Banet started doing this, it’s helped me learn a lot more about God and how powerful he is. And it’s made me read the Bible more and get me closer to God.”

‘It’s such a gift’

Six years have passed since Banet daily crossed the bridge from her home in southern Indiana to her job in Kentucky. Six years have passed since she crossed a figurative bridge in her life—from an emphasis on preparing students to succeed on test scores to an emphasis on helping them develop their faith, their relationship with God and their focus on reaching heaven.

Receiving the Saint Theodora award thrills her, yet not nearly as much as what she gets to do as a Catholic school educator.

“The Bible says to go and make disciples of all nations [Mt 28:19]. If I’m going to share my faith like the Lord tells me to, what better way to do it—‘Here’s a group of children: mold them, teach them,’ ” she says.

“I walk in every day, and I’ve been given 20 10-year-olds who look at me with anticipation of, ‘What are we going to do next?’ They hang onto your every word. They’re able to get my jokes and make connections. I absolutely love my job. I have to pinch myself some days that I get to be here. And it’s such a gift to be given the opportunity to share my faith in such an easy, enjoyable manner.”

That gift ties into another Scripture verse that has become crucial to her. It’s a verse she’s had her students memorize, all in her hope that they will rely upon it throughout their lives: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Prv 3:5)

“I don’t know how people make it through life without faith,” she says. “It is just the driving force behind everything I do. In the end, all that matters is my faith and did I share it. When I have my ups and downs in life, I always remember that Jesus is the constant.

“He’s the one doing the work. He’s the one changing hearts. I’m just the tool he’s chosen to use. And for that, I’m forever grateful.” †

Four other educators were finalists for archdiocese’s highest honor for education

While Maggie Banet of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs in Floyd County received this year’s Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award, the archdiocese’s Office of Catholic Schools also recognized the four other finalists for the highest honor for an educator in the archdiocese.

The four other finalists were:

—**Daniel Farrell**, a teacher and

assistant principal at St. Michael School in Greenfield.

—**Erin Koester**, a teacher at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis.

—**Kathleen O’Donnell Ray**, a teacher at Holy Spirit School in Indianapolis.

—**Chad Tuley**, a teacher at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis. †



Maggie Banet shares a family photo with her husband Alex and their three children, Grace, 3, Anna, 7, and James, 9. (Submitted photo)

What’s the hardest thing you’ve given up or done for Lent? See how you compare to a fifth-grader

By John Shaughnessy

What’s the hardest thing you’ve ever given up or done during Lent?

That question was posed to the children in Maggie Banet’s fifth-grade class at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County after their teacher said that she would find it extremely difficult to give up taking hot showers.

In conversations that followed, some of her students shared the most challenging thing they’ve given up or done during Lent.

See how you compare to a fifth-grader.

Here are 10 of their top sacrifices and challenges during Lent:

- Ice cream
- “Trying not to be mean to my sister.”
- “I’m giving up buying things for myself.”
- “Limiting my screen time.”
- Skittles
- “Not arguing with my parents when they tell me to do things.”
- “Not playing video games.”
- “Trying to be more respectful to my parents and classmates.”
- “Giving up desserts.”
- “Trusting in God more—to know he’s always there and not ignore him.” †

Catholic Charities USA leader awarded Notre Dame’s prestigious Laetare Medal

(OSV News)—The leader of an organization representing a national network of Catholic domestic humanitarian agencies will receive the oldest and most prestigious honor bestowed exclusively on American Catholics.

The University of Notre Dame announced on March 30 that Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, has been selected as the 2025 recipient of the school’s Laetare Medal.



Kerry Alys Robinson

Robinson will be presented with the medal during the university’s commencement on May 18.

The award’s name points to *Laetare* Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent in the Church’s Roman liturgical calendar. The day’s entrance antiphon for Mass begins with the word “*Laetare*,” Latin for “rejoice,” with the liturgy anticipating the joy of Easter.

The inscription on the medal, “*Magna est veritas et praevalabit*,” is Latin for “Truth is mighty, and it shall prevail.” The award, inaugurated in 1883 as a counterpart to the papal Golden Rose honor, is bestowed annually by the school to a Catholic “whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity.”

Notre Dame’s president, Holy Cross Father Robert Dowd, said the university named Robinson this year’s recipient for her “boundless compassion, visionary leadership and inspiring example of faith-filled service.”

He noted Robinson “has dedicated her career to serving the Church, standing in solidarity with those on the margins so that they may experience the abundant love of God.”

Robinson was appointed head of Catholic Charities USA in 2023, becoming the second layperson and the second woman to lead the organization. A longtime advocate for greater leadership opportunities for women, youth and laity in the Church, she was invited by the Vatican in 2012 to advise officials on how to engage women leaders.

She took the helm at Catholic Charities after almost two decades at the nonprofit Leadership Roundtable, of which she was the founding executive director. Established in 2005 amid the clerical abuse crisis, Leadership Roundtable works to ensure transparency and accountability in the business operations of the Church in the United States. Robinson later served as the nonprofit’s global ambassador and executive partner.

Her appointment at Catholic Charities has coincided with an accelerating shift in the nation’s public discourse on issues such as migration and outreach to those made vulnerable by natural disasters, economic hardship and other circumstances.

However, Robinson has stressed that ministering to



Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, has been named as the 2025 recipient of the University of Notre Dame’s Laetare Medal, bestowed exclusively on American Catholics. (Submitted photo)

migrants and refugees, and all of the efforts undertaken by Catholic Charities throughout the U.S. and its territories, are a response to the call of the Gospel.

“The charitable services we provide are fundamental to who we are as Christians,” she said in a Jan. 23 joint statement with Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, chair of the U.S. bishops’ committee on migration, and Sister Mary Haddad, a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and president and CEO of Catholic Health Association of the United States.

The statement—issued in response to the Trump administration’s lifting of restrictions on immigration arrests in “sensitive locations” such as houses of worship and schools—affirmed that human dignity “is not dependent on a person’s citizenship or immigration status.”

Robinson was born into a devoutly Catholic, philanthropic family, a legacy Robinson said she has upheld since her earliest years.

Her great-grandparents, John and Helena Raskob, established the Raskob Foundation in 1945, with John having made his fortune as a financial executive for DuPont and General Motors. He and Helena met while she was playing organ at St. Mary’s Church in Wilmington, Del.

The family foundation has through the decades funded

a wide array of Catholic efforts, including seminarian formation, humanitarian assistance, maternal and child care, and education, awarding more than \$5 million in domestic and \$1.87 million in international grants in 2024.

Robinson, who became a member of the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities as a teen, said in the Notre Dame announcement that five generations of her family have served as foundation volunteers.

“Through that experience, we are exposed to the very best of what the Church does through the example of our applicants who are women and men, ordained, religious and laypeople,” she said. “Their commitment to helping, healing and caring for those in need rendered them compelling role models whose example deepened my faith and inspired me to study theology and Catholic social teaching. I am grateful for so much of what our faith offers.”

She views the Church and her work with Catholic Charities through that same lens of gratitude.

“I have always loved the Church and held its potential in the highest esteem,” Robinson said in Notre Dame’s announcement of her selection for the Laetare Medal. “The Church’s explicit religious mission has formed the person I am. That it is the largest humanitarian network in the world renders me forever committed to its health and vitality.” †

LEGISLATION

continued from page 1

teaching, encompass a multitude of principles and policies that promote a Catholic health care institution’s “commitment to human dignity and the common good.” They include calling for generous care for the poor and the most vulnerable in society, along with a comprehensive program of pastoral and spiritual care for all patients.

“The bishops’ main concern is that our Catholic health systems should be able to maintain their Christ-centered approach to health care,” said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC. “Catholic health care clearly contributes to the common good. Additionally, we see how our Catholic health systems are demonstrating a desire to be attentive to the high cost of health care and their commitment to be leaders in price transparency, quality care for the whole person and accessible care all across Indiana.”

The largest Catholic health care networks statewide are Ascension St. Vincent and Franciscan Health. Along with Trinity Health, a Catholic network with a presence in northern Indiana, hospitals run by these organizations could lose their non-profit status if House Bill 1004 becomes law,



Alexander Mingus

and therefore potentially compromise their ability to practice according to their Catholic values.

House Bill 1004, which is currently awaiting further action in the Senate Appropriations Committee, passed the Indiana House in late February on a 68-26 vote. Among other provisions, the measure would strip a hospital of its tax-exempt status if it charges more than 300% of Medicare rates for a given service.

Representatives of Ascension St. Vincent point out that because Medicare reimbursement rates are often far below what is required to complete necessary services for a patient, the ability for Catholic hospitals to carry out their mission—especially in providing care for those who cannot afford it—could be placed in serious jeopardy.

“Our main concern is that if our not-for-profit status is revoked, our commitment to our mission, which is rooted in the loving ministry of Jesus’ Gospel values, is going to be inhibited in a way that will not allow us to serve the needs of our communities at large,” said Loraine Brown, chief mission integration officer at Ascension St. Vincent, whose statewide network includes Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis.

Brown said that last year alone, Ascension St. Vincent provided \$358 million in charity care and community benefits to those in need statewide. In addition to its 19 hospitals, Ascension St. Vincent operates more than 300 clinics and doctor’s offices, along with seven smaller hospitals of under 25 beds that serve people in small rural communities.

Community health access workers with Ascension St. Vincent assist people around the state with a wide variety of services every day in keeping with Catholic values and following the results of Ascension’s regular community needs assessments, according to Brown. Among the top needs, she said, are access to health care, maternal and fetal health concerns and behavioral health.

“Our health access workers are embedded in each of our hospitals, and they help patients and community members connect to resources,” said Brown, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. “If they don’t have insurance, we help them sign up for it. If they need transportation to a doctor’s appointment, we set that up and help cover that cost.”

In addition, Brown pointed to her organization’s efforts to improve maternal and fetal health in Indiana, along with its commitment to healthy babies and children. She said mothers in need frequently receive help for necessities ranging from diapers to car seats, all to “ease the burden” for the most vulnerable mothers and families.

“We are a Catholic ministry, just like every Catholic parish in Indiana is a ministry of the Church,” Brown said. “We want to continue to care for the poor and vulnerable and continue the legacy of our founding religious congregations.”

At the same time, she added, lowering health care costs “is as important to us as it is to the legislators.”

“Stewardship is a Catholic social teaching principle, and we always want

to be good stewards of our resources,” Brown said. “We work on being as creative as possible so that we can provide the highest level of quality health care at the most reasonable cost.”

As the fate of House Bill 1004 remains unclear, Brown said her ultimate hope is that Catholic health care institutions in Indiana can continue their “outreach to the communities that are in need of healing.”

In a recent ICC podcast, Mingus discussed the Church’s centuries-old commitment to healing, begun by Christ himself.

“As everything does, it all points back to Christ,” Mingus said. “Christ the divine physician is our model for health care. Christ inspired the early Christians to set up networks of charity, which were really the first hospitals, as an expression of the Church’s ministry. That’s the root of Catholic health care.

“Our hope today is that this same core mission exists within all of our Catholic health care entities in Indiana and beyond.”

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

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

The seven last words of Christ make for a meaningful reflection during Lent

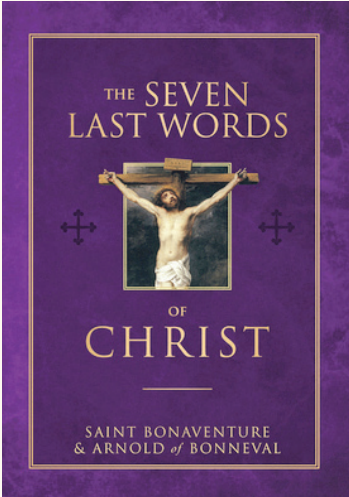
By Natalie Hoefer

Among the four Gospels, Christ spoke seven times while on the cross. Those seven “words,” or sayings, provide much to ponder during Lent, particularly on Good Friday.

Reflection aids on the topic abound, from books (like *The Seven Last Words of Christ* by St. Bonaventure and Arnold of Bonneval) to podcasts to apps to online sites. Or simply reflect prayerfully on how the phrases speak to you.

Here are the seven last words of Christ:

- “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34).
- “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43).
- “Woman, behold your Son. Behold your Mother” (Jn 19:26-27).
- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46, Mk 15:34)
- “I thirst” (Jn 19:28).
- “Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit” (Jn 19:30).
- “It is finished” (Lk 23:46). †



As we approach the end of Lent and Holy Week focusing on Jesus’ final days before his crucifixion, we would do well to reflect on his last words.

Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

Batesville Deanery

- April 4, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Martin campus of All Saints Parish, Dearborn County
- April 8, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
- April 8, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist campus of St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Decatur County
- April 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
- April 9, 6-8 p.m. at St. Maurice, Napoleon
- April 10, 6-8 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhausen
- April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
- April 11, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
- April 11, 6-8 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Osgood
- April 16, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:

- Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. and Saturdays 4-5 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan
- Saturdays after 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Nicholas, Ripley County

Bloomington Deanery

- April 6, 6:30 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
- April 16, 6-9 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, all in Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center

Connersville Deanery

- April 11, 5:30 p.m. at Holy Family campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Richmond

Indianapolis East Deanery

- April 10, 7 p.m. at Holy Spirit, sacrament in English and Spanish

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the East Deanery are as follows:

- Second and fourth Sundays after 10 a.m. Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Indianapolis North Deanery

- April 14, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., no appointment needed

Indianapolis South Deanery

- April 8, 6-7 p.m. at St. Ann

- April 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- April 16, 6-9 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

- April 9, 6 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
- Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the West Deanery are as follows:
- Wednesdays of Lent (excluding Holy Week), 6-7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
 - Fridays of Lent (excluding Good Friday): 4-5 p.m. at St. Christopher; 5-6 p.m. at St. Monica; 6-7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel

New Albany Deanery

- April 7, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight
- April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Seymour Deanery

- April 9, 6 p.m. at Holy Trinity, Edinburgh

Terre Haute Deanery

- April 8, 6 p.m. at St. Joseph, Rockville
- April 8, 6-8 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
- April 9, 6 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Clinton †

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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

John Paul II’s challenge to culture still seen in ‘Evangelium Vitae’

By John M. Haas, OSV News

(OSV News)—Pope St. John Paul II could well be called the “apostle of life.” He spent his entire pontificate boldly proclaiming the inviolability of innocent human life.

On his first pastoral visit to the United States in 1979, he stood on the Mall in Washington amid the symbols of U.S. institutional power and he called on all Americans “to stand up for life.” Throughout his pontificate, the pope never hesitated to declare the right to life in the presence of heads of state, power brokers and arbiters of national social policy.

When it came to the life issues, Pope John Paul was best known for his powerful 1995 encyclical “*Evangelium Vitae*” (“The Gospel of Life”). This year marks the 30th anniversary of its issuing. It remains relevant today.

St. John Paul spoke of “atrocious crimes” and “murderous violence” in contemporary societies (#8, #9). He said that those who would choose abortion have an attitude that “is shameful and reprehensible” (#64).

What is distinctive about the pope’s teaching on life issues, however, is that they do not deal simply with personal morality. They are always placed in a cultural context. Above all else, “The Gospel of Life” is a penetrating analysis and critique of contemporary seemingly advanced societies.

In the encyclical, the pope spoke of “attacks, affecting life in its earliest and its final stages, attacks that ... raise questions of extraordinary seriousness. It is not only that ... these attacks tend no longer to be considered as ‘crimes’; paradoxically, they assume the nature of ‘rights,’ to the point that the state is called upon to give them legal recognition and to make them available through the free services of health care personnel” (#11). He says we have come “to interpret ... crimes against life as legitimate expressions of individual freedom, to be as acknowledged and protected as actual rights” (#18).

The cultural decline, the loss of social protections for innocent life, are what seemed to baffle and dismay the pope above all else. “How did such a situation come about?” he asked. “In the background there is the profound crisis of culture, that generates skepticism in relation to the very foundations of knowledge and ethics, and that makes it increasingly difficult to grasp clearly the meaning of what man is, the meaning of his rights and duties” (#11).

The pope saw civilization itself faced with the danger of its own self-destruction. He writes elsewhere that “we are facing an immense threat to life: not only to the life of individuals, but, also, to that of civilization itself” (#59).

St. John Paul told us that nations once considered civilized are reverting “to a state of barbarism” (#14). Whenever we see legally sanctioned abortion, we are dealing with a “tyrant state” engaging in a “tragic caricature of legality” through such actions as court rulings (#20).



Pope John Paul II, who later became St. John Paul II, blesses a baby on Jan. 13, 2002, during an annual baptism liturgy in the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel. Thirty years ago, he issued “*Evangelium Vitae*,” a landmark encyclical letter on the Church’s teaching on the dignity and sacredness of life. (OSV News photo from Catholic Press Photo)

These developments, the pope told us, “have a perverse and evil significance” as we suffer “the most alarming corruption and the darkest moral blindness” (#20, #24).

The pope’s words were not hyperbolic. Since abortion was legalized nationwide in the U.S. with *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, around 65 million children have died from abortion. While the Supreme Court’s 2022 *Dobbs v. Women’s Health Organization decision* overturned *Roe*, it has not stemmed the numbers of abortion in the U.S. Available data actually points to a slight increase in the number of annual abortions in 2023, the most recent year for which data is available, when compared to the years immediately preceding *Dobbs*.

The problem, of course, is that the social threat to innocent human life is not fundamentally a political or juridical problem at all. It is, as the pope showed us, a cultural problem.

When the pope visited Los Angeles in 1987, he gave a description of culture as “all those things that reflect the soul of a nation.” He asked, “How is American culture evolving today? ... Your music, your poetry and art, your drama, your painting and sculpture, the literature that you

are producing—are all those things that reflect the soul of a nation being influenced by the spirit of Christ for the perfection of humanity?”

A nation’s culture reflects its deepest beliefs. And it is fundamentally religion that gives rise to culture.

Our nation has always afforded protection to the vulnerable in our midst because we cherished each individual human life. At one point, unborn children were protected by law because we cherished children. Infanticide and euthanasia were unspeakable—indeed, unthinkable. There was an underlying respect and love for human life that came to be reflected in the law. This love and respect did not arise from the law, however. The law arose from the love and respect. Their roots were much, much deeper.

Our nation in its origins was Christian, a fact that the pope acknowledged repeatedly during his second pastoral visit to the United States. We afforded profound respect to human beings because we believed each person was created in the image and likeness of God.

In “The Gospel of Life,” Pope John Paul reminded us that the incarnation “reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who ‘so loved the world that he gave his only Son’ [Jn 3:16], but also the incomparable value of every human person” (#2).

The dignity of every person can be seen in the fact that each is the image and likeness of God, and each has been redeemed “at a great price” by Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6:20). It is this profound religious insight that gave rise to the reverence shown the innocent in the laws of our nation.

St. John Paul taught us that the most fundamental place to begin to restore legal safeguards to human life is in deepening the religious beliefs of our people, and that God is the ultimate source of the dignity of the human person.

Following the teachings and example of St. John Paul, there is absolutely nothing more important that our bishops and priests can do to restore a sense of the sacredness of human life than to celebrate Mass with devotion and reverence and to offer this greatest of all prayers for the protection of innocent life.

In “*Evangelium Vitae*,” the pope taught us the Eucharist is the infinite gift of love. If we can instill once again, in the people of God, a sense of wonder and awe in the presence of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament of the altar, then we shall begin to see a culture of death begin to crumble, and we will witness the emergence of a culture of life and a civilization of love.

(John M. Haas is the John Cardinal Krol Professor of Moral Theology at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary near Philadelphia. He was the president of The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia from 1996 to 2019 and then served as senior fellow until January 2025.) †



Rohini Brijlall is pictured in a file photo holding her 3-month-old son Zakarya as Sister Mary Elizabeth, then vicar general of the Sisters of Life, talks with the child at the religious community’s Holy Respite residence in the Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood of New York City. Holy Respite serves as a home and support center for pregnant women in crisis and new mothers. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Soaring tree built bridges, including when riding the winds of change

This is the story of a tree. An Eastern Cottonwood soaring 108 feet high, stretching its arms across three yards and anchoring the entire street. It was a defining feature of its St. Paul, Minn., neighborhood near Nativity of Our Lord Parish.

“Oh, you’re the people with the tree!” locals would say when they met John and Dia Boyle and determined which house is theirs.

Sixty-something empty nesters, John is a professor of Catholic studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, and Dia is a writer. She recently published a book titled *The Thoughtful Home*.

The cottonwood had been part of that equation, one reason she loved her little home. She’d write at the table and admire the tree. “We liked the shade and the beautiful craggy bark and the squirrels and nuthatches scurrying up and down and how it filled the view from our library window,” Dia said.

Everyone loved the tree.

But it had to go.

Last June a branch fell, knocking out their electrical box, gouging the siding, shattering a window and shredding a corner of a neighbor’s roof.

The tree posed an unmistakable danger.



So the Boyles hired a tree-removal crew and set a date, a Tuesday in mid-September. The Sunday before, the couple hosted a goodwill party in their backyard so neighbors could toast to the cottonwood. Dia served champagne, beer, cookies and nuts. It was a chance to do a little PR, expressing their regret and reviewing logistics. (The street would soon be blocked off and cars would have to be moved.)

Removal of the cottonwood was the topic of conversation all week. Come Tuesday, spectators gathered for the main event, bringing coffee mugs and lawn chairs. People would walk by and stop to watch the crane and chat. Folks from the other side of the alley were observing from their elevated decks and upper floors. A neighbor invited the Boyles to come watch from his deck. They had never been in his yard before. It was the most they’d ever socialized with their neighbors.

“What I had seen as potentially upsetting to neighbors turned out to be a really good bridge to better connections,” Dia said.

After three days of work, the cottonwood was gone.

Suddenly, Dia could see the sky. Comings and goings of neighbors. Birds fluttering around their feeders. Sunshine. The cottonwood left room to expand Dia’s garden, and this spring, for the first time, she’s planting vegetables that need sun.

The change she had dreaded, it turned out, made her happy.

The tree has become a metaphor. Dia references it when friends face upheaval—a change of mind, of address, of heart. She counsels them lovingly.

When the winds of change blow, look up and lean into the Creator of all. Trust that he is guiding you, protecting you, loving you. Trust in the good being done beneath the surface.

Take stock in our identity as Catholics: We are eucharistic people. In the midst of uncertainty, we are fed and fortified by the body of Christ. As the word Eucharist suggests—its meaning, a guidepost—we offer our thanksgiving. “In all circumstances, give thanks,” St. Paul urges (1 Thes 5:18).

Be gentle with yourself. Make peace with the peculiar reality of change: that two good things aren’t mutually exclusive. Dia had loved the tree—and she loved its absence. You can love your old house and your new one; you can love your single life and married life—in different ways, for unique reasons.

Allow room in your heart to be surprised. It could work out like the cottonwood. The change you’ve feared just might broaden your view, letting you see more birds and beauty, giving you more space and sunshine, making your garden grow.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.) †

Catholic in America/Jason Adkins

Gambling on sports is now everywhere, but should Catholics support it?

Sports gambling seems to be everywhere, especially when watching or listening to sports—both collegiate and professional. In fact, during March Madness, nearly 68 million Americans are expected to wager more than \$15 billion on the NCAA basketball tournament.

Yet few people besides key stakeholders with lots of money to make are paying attention to how the legal landscape of sports gambling is unfolding in our state capitols since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), allowing states to create their own regulatory frameworks around sports gambling.

This issue, often playing out behind the scenes, is already repeating both the predatory aspects of the Big Tobacco scandal while exacerbating addiction like the opioid crisis. In the next 10 years, it is predicted to absorb \$1 trillion in revenue. More and more people are calling legalization a huge mistake.

Fortunately, one Catholic, Les Bernal, is serving as a resource to those working to prevent more people from being victimized. Bernal is the national director of Stop Predatory Gambling, a national advocacy organization that is exposing the harms of online sports gambling. He recently joined my OSV podcast, Catholic in America, to explain why he is so passionate about gambling.

In the years since PASPA, 39 states and the District of Columbia have legalized sports gambling in some form. Some states allow sports gambling at physical sites, such as tribal casinos. Others allow it online as well through apps such as DraftKings or MGM.

Predatory gambling, according to Bernal, is not church bingo, a friendly poker game, meat raffles, or even office pool NCAA tournament brackets. There is no “house,” and these are private, social forms of gambling. Even horse racing is called pari-mutuel betting, where people bet against others.

What sports gambling legalization does, according to Bernal, is to create a partnership between the state and the gambling industry for commercial sportsbooks to operate. In his words, it is state-sanctioned consumer financial fraud and taxation through exploitation.

“The longer you participate in it, there is a mathematical guarantee that you will lose all your money,” says Bernal. And with online sports gambling, he notes, not only are we putting Las Vegas on Main Street, we are putting it in everyone’s pocket via their cell phone.

In a recent study of 700,000 online sports gamblers, fewer than 5% withdrew



more money than they put in. And if you are skilled at sports betting or know how to beat the algorithm, you can get kicked off the platform. In fact, underscoring the predatory nature of the industry, veteran gamblers will exhibit addictive behavior such as checking their bets at all hours of the night so that companies will put bonus cash in their accounts. It’s a good way to “zero out” (in industry parlance) those who are more likely to spend (and, therefore, lose) money.

The house really does always win.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “[g]ames of chance [card games, etc.] or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement” (#2413).

Already, the evidence is coming in that legalized sports gambling is doing just that.

The data shows that calls to gambling helplines in Virginia rose 387% after the first year of legalization. In New Jersey, it is believed 6% of residents now have a gambling disorder. And a recent commission of 22 academic experts convened by the medical journal *The Lancet* concluded that existing studies and surveys demonstrate that gambling’s prevalence poses a significant threat to public health.

A 2024 Bloomberg article, “Sports Betting Apps Are Even More Toxic Than You Thought,” summarized the data of how sports betting is impacting the financial health of Americans. In states that allow online betting, the average credit score drops by almost 1% while the likelihood of bankruptcy increases by 28% and the amount of debt sent to collection agencies increases by 8%.

Buttressed by the evidence pouring in after PASPA betting was struck down, Catholics should follow Bernal’s lead and see this issue as one of major concern in our protection of the poor and vulnerable. We need to shed light on the harms of the deals that continue to be brokered among politicians and moneyed gambling interests.

In states where sports gambling has not been legalized, strong efforts should be made to oppose it. In places where it has been legalized in some form, it should be prevented from further expanding, especially online.

(Jason Adkins is host of a new *Our Sunday Visitor* podcast called “Catholic in America,” which explores topics related to the missionary imperative of faithful citizenship in our time. You can find “Catholic in America” on the major podcast platforms or visit catholicinamerica.osvpodcasts.com.) †

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

How well do you deal with transition in life? Allow God to reveal the next step

As is sometimes quoted, “The only thing in life that is constant is change.” And if you are blessed with a long life, you will see great changes in your lifetime.

I am 64. I was born in 1960. (Stay with me here: there is a reason for talking about myself briefly.)

Sixty years before I was born, it was 1900. The average life expectancy of a man was approximately 45! The car was a relatively new invention and there were very few good roads to drive on. The telephone was just gaining popularity. There was no idea of a computer, atomic bomb or the Internet. The Civil War had taken place only 35 years earlier, and no one could have imagined the horrors of World War I and World War II. (My cousin, Joe, remembers my great-grandmother telling stories about her father, who served in the Civil War.)

My point is that life is full of transition: a new apparatus, new phone apps, a new job or adapting to life after marriage, the arrival of that first child or the life after the sudden death of someone close. Change will



come. The question is always how a person will deal with transition to a new situation?

I hear people say that they can’t wait until things return to “normal” from the pandemic. Spoiler alert—there is no normal. Our task as humans seems to be to adjust or adapt to the constantly changing situation called life.

There are multiple examples of people in transition in Scripture. One can remember the nation of Israel as it transitioned from Egyptian slaves to a society of nomads wandering in the desert. (You may remember that it was not an easy transition. It was reported that there was much “grumbling.”)

Another example was the transition from Apostles following Jesus in Galilee to fledgling evangelists with a mission to move out among the Gentiles. So, where can we turn for a sense of peace and calm as we continually try to adjust to the many curve balls that life will inevitably throw our way?

Could prayer be the answer?

Maybe it is prayer that constantly changes our hearts as we adapt to change in life. We can’t rush God’s actions. We have to be patient with our prayer as we

continue to live in the present—waiting. Prayer is my gift to God—to just be together—to sit quietly.

I have been dealing with a transition in my own life. Exactly what my transition was or how I have adjusted is not as important as the reality that this process will take much reflection and patience to wait for God—in his time—to reveal the “next chapter” to me in this period of transition.

Annually, Catholics move through a liturgical season of the year that is based on waiting—Advent. Most of us are not very adept at the skill of patiently waiting. And this is not just a passive waiting: it requires a readiness for action when God reveals the next step. “Practicing” is good for us.

Do you have a process to allow for periods of quiet time to rest in the Lord as you wait for his plans to be revealed to you in this world that is often filled with much uncertainty? Where is he trying to send you? To quote Dr. Seuss, “Oh, the places you’ll go!”

(Richard Etienne has a degree in theology from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and resides in Newburgh, Ind.) †

Fifth Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 6, 2025

- Isaiah 43:16-21
- Philippians 3:8-14
- John 8:1-11

The Book of Isaiah supplies the first reading for Mass this weekend in Lent. The reading is from the second part of Isaiah, written at a time that was not the best period in the history of God’s people.



The people had been rescued from exile. They, or their parents or grandparents, had survived the conquest of the Hebrew kingdoms by the Babylonians, the conquest that resulted in the exile.

By no means was all well. The land was not overflowing with milk and honey. On the contrary, it was lifeless and desolate. This starkness easily prompted people to be cynical and to deny that God cared for the people, the tendency even to say that God did not exist.

With great power and clarity, the prophet insisted that God will make all things right. He is almighty. He will not forsake the people. He will cause rivers of life-giving water to flow through the arid land.

For the second reading, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. The Christians of Philippi had this in common with Christians living in every other major city of the Roman Empire. They were few, by comparison, and their devotion to Christ drew them into a lifestyle and a way of thinking utterly opposite the prevailing culture. Not surprisingly, hostility, official and unofficial, engulfed them.

Paul in this epistle, as he did in his other epistles, encouraged these Christians, but also challenged them. It is eloquent in its message, using the imagery of racing. Paul says that he has not yet finished the race, but he has his eyes on one goal alone, namely the finish line. When he crosses this line—in other words when he dies an earthly death—he will have won the race because he will enjoy life everlasting.

For its third reading this weekend, the Church gives us a selection from

St. John’s Gospel, which is a literary gem. It tells its version of the life and teaching of Jesus with remarkable brilliance and appeal. Its eloquence and relevance captivate the minds of readers.

Such is certainly the case in this reading. The danger before the woman, and the mercy of God in Christ, are so evident.

By way of explanation, the woman had been caught in the act of adultery. Jewish law and custom were very hard on female adulteresses, not to victimize women, but rather to secure the racial integrity of the people who were chosen to be God’s special people. It was the worst of offenses.

If an adulterous woman gave birth to a child conceived outside her marriage, presenting the child as her husband’s, fraud would upset the family’s line of descent, and the identity of the people might be in jeopardy.

Ultimately, it was a trick. The opponents of Jesus knew that showing mercy to the woman would be in accord with the Lord’s teaching. Yet, any semblance of downplaying her misconduct would appear to disregard the law of Moses and Jewish custom.

Fearlessly, Jesus came to the woman’s rescue by forgiving her. He also upheld the sinfulness of adultery by admonishing her not to sin again.

Reflection

Next weekend, the Church will observe Palm Sunday. Only two weeks of Lent remain.

Sin can be powerful in its ability to entrap. People can be attached to sinful patterns, feeling the power of sin and despair and giving up any hope of reform.

These readings remind us that anyone who attempts to repent, and truly follow the Lord, is never as helpless as it might seem.

The strength of the Lord always is available, if we honestly ask for it.

The Gospel’s story is beautiful and profoundly reassuring. Jesus always awaits anyone who seeks mercy, who wishes to reform, even the woman guilty of adultery. †

Daily Readings

Monday, April 7

St. John Baptist de la Salle, priest
Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62
or *Daniel 13:41c-62*
Psalms 23:1-6
John 8:12-20

Tuesday, April 8

Numbers 21:4-9
Psalms 102:2-3, 16-21
John 8:21-30

Wednesday, April 9

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95
(Response) *Daniel 3:52-56*
John 8:31-42

Thursday, April 10

Genesis 17:3-9
Psalms 105:4-9
John 8:51-59

Friday, April 11

St. Stanislaus, bishop and martyr
Jeremiah 20:10-13
Psalms 18:2-7
John 10:31-42

Saturday, April 12

Ezekiel 37:21-28
(Response) *Jeremiah 31:10-13*
John 11:45-56

Sunday, April 13

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
Luke 19:28-40 (procession)
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalms 22:8-9, 17-18a, 19-20, 23-24
Philippians 2:6-11
Luke 22:14-23:56
or *Luke 23:1-49*

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

The Church remains holy despite the bad behavior of some of its members

Q Are there any saints who had a difficult relationship with the Church? (New York)



The answer to this question would depend on exactly what you mean by “a difficult relationship” or even the term “the Church.” But the short answer is that yes, there have been many saints who were treated very badly by Church leaders of their day through no fault of their own.

To give just a few examples: St. Joan of Arc was condemned as a heretic in a clearly biased and politically motivated ecclesiastical trial and was subsequently burned at the stake.

St. John of the Cross was imprisoned and regularly beaten by the members of his own religious community due to his work for the reform of the Carmelite order. St. Mary MacKillop of Australia was unjustly excommunicated in retaliation for her reporting child abuse.

And St. Padre Pio was, for a time, forbidden from exercising public priestly ministry due to concerns about his extraordinary mystical gifts, notably his stigmata (i.e., his bearing of the five wounds of Christ on his own body).

And to put things into perspective, we only know about these and other saints; stories of “friendly fire” persecution because they have been formally canonized. It’s likely that there are other holy but less famous Catholics throughout history—who would be saints in the strict technical sense of any person who is actually in heaven—who endured similar sufferings.

This can be one of the most difficult scenarios for faithful Catholics to wrap their minds around. Unlike other

organizations, the Church as a visible institution was founded by Jesus himself and exists to continue his saving mission in the world until the end of time.

We believe that the Church is holy. Naturally, the darker chapters in the lives of these saints can prompt the question of how the Church could apparently hurt her own members.

This is where it becomes important to make some distinctions. “The church” as the people of God and the spotless bride of Christ does not hurt people. Rather, sinful human beings within the Church do. While this can still be a difficult truth, in some ways it should not be surprising. After all, during his passion and death Jesus himself was denied and abandoned by his own Apostles who would go on to become the Church’s first bishops.

Of course, this in no way excuses bad behavior on the part of bishops, religious superiors or anyone else who represents the Church in the course of their ministry. We should keep in mind that the canonized saints who were persecuted by the Church did not become saints because they were naïve to this reality of fallen human nature or because they cheerfully kept up a “party line” they knew to be false.

Instead, these men and women were saints because of their clarity of spiritual insight, which allowed them to know and love the Church for what it truly is, and because of their courageous fidelity and patience under trials from those in the Church who ought to have behaved in a way befitting their vocation but failed to do so.

Pope Benedict XVI discussed this dynamic in a general audience on Jan. 26, 2011. Reflecting on the life and witness of St. Joan of Arc, he said: “In Jesus, Joan contemplated the whole reality of the Church, the ‘Church triumphant’ of heaven, as well as the ‘Church militant’ on Earth. According to her words, ‘About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they’re just one thing.’ This affirmation, cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [#795], has a truly heroic character in the context of [her] trial of condemnation, before her judges, men of the Church who were persecuting and condemning her. In the love of Jesus, Joan found the strength to love the Church to the very end, even at the moment she was sentenced.”

(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

Pilgrimage

By Benedictine Sister Susan Lindstrom

We enter Jerusalem with Jesus overcome by the deafening shouts of, “Hosanna!” seeing our teacher, mentor, friend esteemed, honored, recognized for who He is. Eagerly we anticipate the Passover, unaware that just ahead lie days of agony, of loss, of pain, of love, of betrayal, of fear, of forgiveness, of suspicion, of sacrifice. But Jesus knows ... these are the final moments, His last opportunity to teach His disciples, the end of a ministry that has attracted followers, alienated the law-keepers, filled some with awe and praise, others with anger and hatred. Now is the acceptable time, soon to be the day of salvation. And so we walk the Jerusalem journey, to the cross, to the tomb, to eternal life!



(Benedictine Sister Susan Lindstrom is a professed religious of the Sisters of St. Benedict at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. Photo: Pope Francis celebrates Mass with the ordinaries of the Holy Land and the papal delegation in the Cenacle in Jerusalem on May 26, 2014. The Cenacle is believed to stand on the site of the structure where Christ celebrated the Last Supper with the Apostles.)

(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

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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.

ANDRES, David E., 83, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, March 8. Husband of Kay Andres. Father of Janet Cavanaugh and Julie Dorr. Brother of Jim and Tom Andres. Grandfather of five.

BLAHUNKA, Amanda N., 22, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, March 12. Daughter of Dave and Cindy Blahunka. Sister of Krista and Evan Blahunka. Granddaughter of Joy Molter.

BROOKS, Sally, 83, St. Ambrose, Seymour, March 22. Mother of Elizabeth McTighe, Susan Stuckwisch and Tom Brooks. Sister of Jack, Joe and Mike Miller. Grandmother of five.

BRUNO, Jr., Nicholas J., 85, St. Mary, Greensburg, March 21. Husband of Mary Elizabeth Bruno. Father of Juli Foran, Jim and Mike Bruno. Brother of Maureen Nicolai. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of two.

DOTI, Donna, 98, St. Joseph University Parish, Terre Haute, March 14. Mother of Roseanne Davis, Maria, Brian, David, Dean, John and Rob Doti. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 12.

DREW, David E., 61, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, April 20, 2024. Father of Justin Drew. Son of Jerry and Nancy Drew. Brother of Amy and Mike.

DUNBAR, Melvin, 79, St. Peter, Franklin County,

March 18. Father of Bethany Hartman, Melanie Lindsey, Michael and Nicholas Dunbar. Brother of Judy Ellis and Wayne Dunbar. Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of eight.

GETTELFINGER, Frances, 90, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, March 19. Wife of Rex Gettelfinger. Mother of Diane and Alan Gettelfinger. Sister of Margaret Smith and Marabeth Thomas. Grandmother of three.

KNUTSON, Joan M., 92, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Dec. 17, 2024. Mother of Kathy Ryan, Beth Wood, Colleen, Eric, Mike, Pat and Scott Knutson. Sister of Jean Morfas and Mary Wojtowich. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of seven.

KNUTSON, Robert A., 92, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, June 6, 2023. Husband of Joan Knutson. Father of Kathy Ryan, Beth Wood, Colleen, Eric, Mike, Pat and Scott Knutson. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of seven.

MILLER, Paul J., 78, St. Joseph, Corydon, March 24. Husband of Sarah Miller. Brother of Dorothy Graham and Dennis Miller.

PASTOR-ESPANA, Javier, 51, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 19. Father of Nayeli, Daniel and Mario Pastor. Son of Francisco Pastor and Elfega Espana.

PATRICK, Linda, 77, St. Joseph University Parish, Terre Haute, March 16. Sister of Randy Patrick. Aunt and great-aunt of several.

PERRY, Edwin R., 85, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 15. Husband of Mary Katherine Perry. Father of Emily Goddard, Charlene, Bryan and Kevin Perry. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of four.

RENDER, Mary Jane, 81, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, March 18. Mother of Allison Porter and Meredith Render. Grandmother of two.

SCHLOSSER, William, 65, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, March 14. Father of Maxine, James, Joseph and William Schlosser. Son of Beverly

Remembering the slain



Candles and memorials are seen in the sanctuary of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Tlahuelilpan, Mexico, on March 23. They were placed there in honor of eight young people shot dead outside a church in Salamanca, in the western state of Guanajuato on March 16. (OSV News/courtesy Father Jorge Atilano)

Creamer. Brother of Rob Butler and Bart Schlosser. Grandfather of seven.

SCOTT, Donald, 87, St. Joseph University Parish, Terre Haute, May 27, 2023. Husband of Susan Scott. Father of Shannon Scott McGinnis, Courtenay, Megan and Donald Scott. Brother of Barbara Scott Obenchain. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of three.

THORN, Pauline, 80, St. Michael, Cannelton, March 17. Mother of Danielle Corley, Paula Howell, Pat Luther, Gary and Rick Smith. Sister of Ann Craig, Cathy Frank, Janice McGraw, Helen Merrick, Alice Popham, Donny, Gerald, John, Larry and Raymond Wethington. Grandmother of 18. Great-grandmother of 18.

WEEKLY, Annie L., 87, All Saints, Dearborn County, March 19. Sister of Rita Alig. Aunt of several.

WHITE, Julie M. (Young), 65, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, March 14. Wife of William White III. Mother of Andrea Sherwin and William White. Sister of

Monica Jones, Patricia Young, Michael, Noah and Philip. Grandmother of six.

WILDER, Jeffrey L., 71, St. Jude, Indianapolis,

March 12. Father of Alex, Evan, Jeffrey, Jr., and Marcus Wilder. Brother of Debbie Cothron, Cheryl Pendick, Greg and Larry Wilder. Grandfather of three. †

Providence Sister Joan Mary Schaefer served in Catholic schools for 46 years

Providence Sister Joan Mary Schaefer, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on March 20 at Mother Theodore Hall on the campus of her religious community’s motherhouse. She was 95.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on March 29 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Joan Mary was born on Feb. 7, 1930, in Cicero, Ill. She entered the Sisters of Providence on July 22, 1948, and professed final vows on Jan. 23, 1956.

Sister Joan Mary earned a bachelor’s degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master’s degree in education at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

During her 76 years as a member of the

Sisters of Providence, Sister Joan Mary ministered as an educator in Catholic schools for 46 years in California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts and Missouri. After retiring from full-time ministry in education in 1998, she continued to serve as a substitute teacher in and around Chicago. In 2017, she returned to live at the motherhouse where she served her religious community in a number of ways.

In the archdiocese, Sister ministered at the former St. Ann School in New Castle from 1951-53, St. Mary School in Richmond (now St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School) from 1954-55 and the former St. John the Evangelist School in Indianapolis from 1956-59.

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

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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

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

317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

Pope: Jesus pursues brokenness to offer healing

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Jesus seeks out people in their woundedness and isolation to offer healing and hope, even when they feel furthest from God, Pope Francis said in a prepared catechesis.

“Jesus awaits us and lets himself be found precisely when we think there is no longer hope for us,” the pope wrote in the text prepared for his general audience on March 26.

Although Pope Francis returned to his residence at the Vatican on March 23 after more than five weeks in the hospital, his general audience and other appointments were suspended to allow time for his recovery.

Jubilee pilgrims, even knowing Pope Francis was not holding an audience, continued to make their way to the Vatican and to the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica.

As part of his catechetical series for the Holy Year 2025, themed “Jesus Christ, our hope,” the pope reflected on Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well as recounted in St. John’s Gospel. The catechesis follows a previous reflection on the nighttime meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Unlike Nicodemus, who went looking for Jesus, the Samaritan woman encountered him unexpectedly. She went to the well at an unusual hour—noon, when it was

very hot—perhaps to avoid others. “She did not expect to find a man at the well at noon; in fact, she hoped to find no one at all,” the text said. Yet Jesus chose to pass through Samaria and stop at that very place and time, waiting for her.

“Jesus here thirsts above all for the salvation of that woman,” the catechesis said, explaining that Jesus’ request—“Give me a drink” (Jn 4:7)—reveals a divine desire to begin a relationship and offer the “living water” of grace.

Quoting St. Augustine, the pope wrote, “The one who asked for a drink was thirsting for the faith of the woman.”

Jesus’ knowledge of her difficult past of having had five husbands and now living with a sixth man is not a source of judgment, the pope’s message said, but a starting point for healing. The woman is invited to read her story in a new light.

The number six, the catechesis noted, often symbolizes imperfection in the Bible. Jesus could be “an allusion to the seventh bridegroom, the one who will finally be able to satiate this woman’s desire to be truly loved,” it said. “And that bridegroom can only be Jesus.” †

More than 100 men accepted into Knights of Columbus' fourth degree

Criterion staff report

On March 22, members of the Father Edward F. Sorin Province (named after the first president of the University of Notre Dame) of the Indiana State Council of the Knights of Columbus gathered in Indianapolis at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral to hold a ceremony—called an “exemplification”—accepting third-degree Knights into the fourth degree.

After the exemplification, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson was the principal celebrant at a Mass in the cathedral. Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind., and Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Diocese of Gary, Ind., were concelebrants at the liturgy.

Known as the “patriotic degree,” the Knights’ fourth degree focuses on patriotism built upon Jesus’ words, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” (Mt 22:21; Mk 12:17).

Knighting with a sword is also part of the exemplification of the patriotic degree, when the member becomes a “Sir Knight.”

This year marks the 125th anniversary of patriotism being added as a principle for Knights’ members. This was also the first time in Indiana that the ceremony was open to and witnessed by the Knights’ family members and guests since the organization

initiated new procedures in 2020. Prior to the ceremony, a relic of Blessed Father Michael McGivney, the founder in 1882 of the Knights of Columbus, was placed for veneration in the cathedral’s Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

After the liturgy, those present were invited to take part in a dinner at McGowan Hall, home of Mater Dei Knights of Columbus, Council #437, where the keynote speaker was Supreme Master Michael McCusker from the Knights’ Supreme International Headquarters in New Haven, Conn.

Speakers at the dinner encouraged the Knights in attendance to strengthen their resolve to be full-time witnesses and to follow the “litany of great men and women [who] have built and continue to build an empire of hope” through their lives of faith.

All Knights are encouraged to emulate Blessed Father McGivney, who was devoted to the praying of the most holy rosary.

Following the example of Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton, known as the “Rosary Priest,” Knights were also asked to embrace two of the priest’s most popular phrases: “The family that prays together stays together,” and “A world at prayer is a world at peace” as they put their faith into action. †



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson processes toward the altar of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on March 22 to celebrate Mass with members of the Father Edward F. Sorin Province (named after the first president of the University of Notre Dame) of the Indiana State Council of the Knights of Columbus. (Submitted photos by Steve Lutz)



Members of the Knights of Columbus listen to a speaker in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis at a ceremony—called an “exemplification”—accepting third-degree Knights into the fourth degree on March 22.



Supreme Master Michael McCusker addresses fellow Knights during a March 22 ceremony—called an “exemplification”—accepting third-degree Knights into the fourth degree in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Also pictured at left is former District Master Richard Santangelo.

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Dan Shea, RHU
Long time Parishioner of St John the Evangelist
Indianapolis.

Parishes create network to show moms, ‘We love you and acknowledge you’

NOVI, Mich. (OSV News)—Shelly Pozos Lule hadn’t planned for another pregnancy, but in early 2022, she found out she was expecting twins. She already had four children—two boys and two girls—and had recently unexpectedly become a single parent.

“I was married for 10 years. My husband went to get papers and ended up never coming back, so that left my kids and me alone,” Pozos Lule told *Detroit Catholic*, the archdiocesan news outlet. “I [already] had my tubes tied because we had four kids—we had two boys and two beautiful little girls, and that was the end of our journey of having kids.

“It was our time to enjoy them and love them and watch them grow and give them everything they need, and then after he left and was not able to come back, I ended up getting pregnant with twins.”

Because of the emotional toll, Pozos Lule lost her job. She moved in with her mom in a small trailer home and sent her two young boys to live with their father’s family in Mexico.

“I had hit rock bottom,” Pozos Lule recounted. However, a year earlier, Pozos Lule, who lived in Milford, Mich., at the time, had called dozens of churches and organizations for help avoiding eviction.

One of the parishes she called was Holy Family in Novi, where she spoke to Roxanne Hundsrucker, the parish’s Christian service director. Hundsrucker was able to recommend resources but couldn’t provide direct help because Pozos Lule was outside of her district.

“She said, ‘If you don’t hear anything, give me a call back, and we will figure something out,’ ” Pozos Lule said. “I did figure some things out [and] a year later, I ended up having the [twin] boys, and somehow she showed up at my doorstep with a whole bunch of baby stuff—double of everything. She stays in contact with me, makes sure I have diapers, food, gas cards—whatever she can do for me, she does for me.”

Hundsrucker has the backing of her parish to support moms like Pozos Lule, but also relies on the wealth of resources organized through Walking with Moms in Need, an initiative launched by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2020 and adopted by the Archdiocese of Detroit in partnership with Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan. (See related article on page 1)

The initiative aims to equip and assist Catholic parishes and parishioners in raising awareness about resources that help pregnant and parenting moms.

Since it was launched, “Catholics in dioceses and parishes across the country have put the Gospel of Life into action, uniting in a shared mission to surround pregnant and parenting mothers in need with loving support and personal accompaniment,” said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities in a March 18 statement to mark the initiative’s fifth anniversary.

“Heroic volunteers have stepped forward to make our parishes places where a mother can be connected with

meaningful resources and assistance and, most importantly, know that she and her baby are not alone,” he continued.

The bishop noted that the March 25 anniversary of Walking with Moms in Need coincides with the feast of the Annunciation and the 30th anniversary of St. John Paul II’s pro-life encyclical, “*Evangelium Vitae*” (“The Gospel of Life”).

“Walking with Moms in Need was inspired by that landmark encyclical,” he added.

Kathleen Wilson, coordinator of the Archdiocese of Detroit’s Gospel of Life and Project Rachel ministries, oversees the initiative within the archdiocese alongside Carolina Aguilar-Gariby, parish engagement coordinator.

Wilson envisions every parish within the archdiocese having its own “vibrant” ministry to walk with women—not only within the parish, but also in the surrounding communities.

“Currently, we have upwards of 50 parishes who have gone through much of the process to offer this ‘ongoing work of mercy’ in their parish community,” Wilson wrote in an e-mail to *Detroit Catholic*.

Wilson explained there is no single “right way to implement the ministry into parish life,” and every parish has done it differently—often in a way that fits their unique charism or gifts. Wilson and her team, in turn, will offer them support.

To become “formally listed as a Walking With Moms In Need parish begins with the desire to make it known that: ‘We are a safe place, a people of life, we see you and are here to help—come walk with us!’ ” Wilson said.

The work Hundsrucker has done alongside co-workers, volunteers and parishioners at Holy Family is one example of how Walking with Moms in Need has borne fruit in southeast Michigan.

When the initiative was first announced, despite the lockdowns brought about by COVID-19, Hundsrucker virtually gathered anyone in the parish’s circle engaged in pro-life activities or ministries for regular discussions about how to implement the vision into their parish life.

“We started with the parish inventory; we went into a year of things that we were going to do in the way of educating people and informing people of walking with moms in need in the parish,” Hundsrucker told *Detroit Catholic*.

Beth Locricchio, a member of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Plymouth, Mich., is one of many people who have walked with a young married woman named Stephanie, 28, as she navigated an unexpected pregnancy while putting herself through school—with her husband away for more than two months.

“On your own, it is so hard to do these kinds of things, but when we have the body of Christ, it’s just nice to have all these different people and different resources willing to reach out and help when needed,” Locricchio said. “Even after the pregnancy, they are constantly trying to find different resources for these young women. They really think outside the box. As the name suggests, ‘Walking with Moms,’ they want it to be personal.

“It’s one thing to say that you are pro-life, but how



Roxanne Hundsrucker, left, and Shelly Pozos Lule are pictured together in an embrace at Holy Family Catholic Church in Novi, Mich., on Nov. 11, 2024. Pozos Lule found friendship and support in Hundsrucker, the parish’s Christian service director, when she faced a crossroads after her husband left her and she suddenly became a single parent to four kids while pregnant with twins. (OSV News photo/Valaurian Waller, Detroit Catholic)

are you helping the mothers? How are you helping the babies?” Locricchio added. “It has been such a blessing to see the inroads of so many people coming and walking alongside and putting their energy behind really being that support to these moms.”

Hundsrucker continues to educate parishioners and bring them on board, and in the meantime, created a calendar where each month, the parish choses a different agency or organization to support.

The ministry also has opened doors to partnerships with pregnancy resource centers, thus strengthening them. Priests have become more aware of the need to accompany pregnant and parenting women, and more people have become involved with the pro-life landscape who perhaps wouldn’t otherwise.

As someone who never felt called to do sidewalk counseling, Hundsrucker said Walking With Moms in Need provides her and others with a way to take action.

For Hundsrucker, the next steps involve working as a family of parishes to seek out women who need them and inviting them into the parish community, where they can find resources, love and support.

“We need to walk with those women, and we can tell them, ‘No, don’t have an abortion.’ But now we need to see what their needs are,” Hundsrucker said. “A lot of times, it is financial or spiritual or emotional, and if somebody just has that person to mentor them and say, ‘It is going to be OK, God is going to be with you,’ that goes a long way. It is not going to be perfect, but God is going to be there, and your needs are going to be met because you are going to encounter people who are going to help you meet those needs.”

“It would be good if we all worked together and found out what we can do to gather up more moms,” Hundrucker added. “I know they are there. They are everywhere, and we have a lot more to give.” †

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know at least where in the community to meet her needs.”

That vision is the goal of the Walking with Moms in Need initiative launched by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in March of 2020.

The initiative involves three primary steps for parishes or groups of parishes.

First is to compile what Varick calls a “wholistic” inventory of resources for pregnant and parenting moms local to the parish, using a downloadable chart with three categories: pregnancy help-related resources, general help-related resources and help available from the parish.

“If there are any gaps in local resources, parishes should ask, ‘Are we a parish that has the people and resources to fill in the gap?’ ” Varick notes. “This [process] is a great first step for a parish to discern if there’s anything more they can do.”

Next, the parish creates a way to make

the list available, such as on a website or flyer.

Finally, the parish communicates with parishioners and the community to raise awareness of the list and how to access it.

The USCCB created a website with helpful tools to walk parishes through the process, including a webinar, a comprehensive Parish Action Guide, the previously mentioned inventory chart, sample timelines and a series of 12 videos to form parishioners, as the USCCB site says, on “what it truly means to walk with a woman through an unexpected pregnancy.”

Varick worked with the archdiocesan Catholic Charities-Social Concerns ministry to complete a Walking with Moms resource inventory for central and southern Indiana. The list can be found at www.walkingwithmomsindy.org.

“I wanted to model at the archdiocesan level what a parish pro-life ministry could do to adopt” the Walking with Moms process, she says.

The Sanctity of Life committee at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis completed the process about four years ago.

“We started pretty much when [the initiative] started,” says Sheryl Dye, a member of the committee.

Members were assigned different sections of the inventory to research local resources for moms.

“It was time-consuming, but Indianapolis is big and is very blessed with so many resources,” says Dye. “We didn’t just look at Catholic resources, but we only included resources that aligned with Catholic teaching.”

Once the list was complete, the parish’s director of communications and special events, Megan Fish, created a database.

“We plugged the list in, then she created a page that can be accessed on St. John’s website,” says Dye. “I go through it periodically to keep it up to date.”

Fish created stickers with a message and a QR code as an easy way to access the online list. The team placed stickers on mirrors in bathrooms at the church and in the local community.

“We put them in men’s bathrooms, too, not just women’s, because a man might know someone who needs that kind of help,” says Dye.

The Respect Life committee at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis also utilized QR code technology, creating business cards and index cards with the code on one side and a pro-life prayer on the other to distribute at the parish’s ministry fair.

“We also have an enlarged picture of the QR code on a bulletin board at the back of church, and sometimes we put it in the parish bulletin,” says Margaret Stempky, head of the committee. “We



want parishioners to know, ‘If you know someone in need, you can scan this [QR code] with your phone and get the information.’ I think people are so willing to help if they just know how.”

The Walking with Moms in Need initiative does more than help parishes in assisting pregnant and parenting mothers.

“It shows that the Church is for the baby in the womb and also for the mom, that we love them both,” says Varick. “That we want to help the mom choose life, but we also want to help her and her family after the baby is born. Helping them both has always been the Church’s pro-life mission.”

Stempky appreciates the dual focus.

“That’s probably one of the big misconceptions, that people don’t understand how very much the Catholic Church does for moms,” she says.

“For so long, pro-life messaging was all about the [unborn] baby, which is true. But we need to continue the message that we’re here for the moms.”

(For more information about the Walking with Moms in Need initiative and for parish resources on how to implement the process, go to www.walkingwithmoms.com. For further questions or help in starting the parish process, contact Brie Anne Varick at bvarick@archindy.org or 317-236-1543.) †



‘It shows that the Church is for the baby in the womb and also for the mom, that we love them both. That we want to help the mom choose life, but we also want to help her and her family after the baby is born. Helping them both has always been the Church’s pro-life mission.’

—Brie Anne Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity