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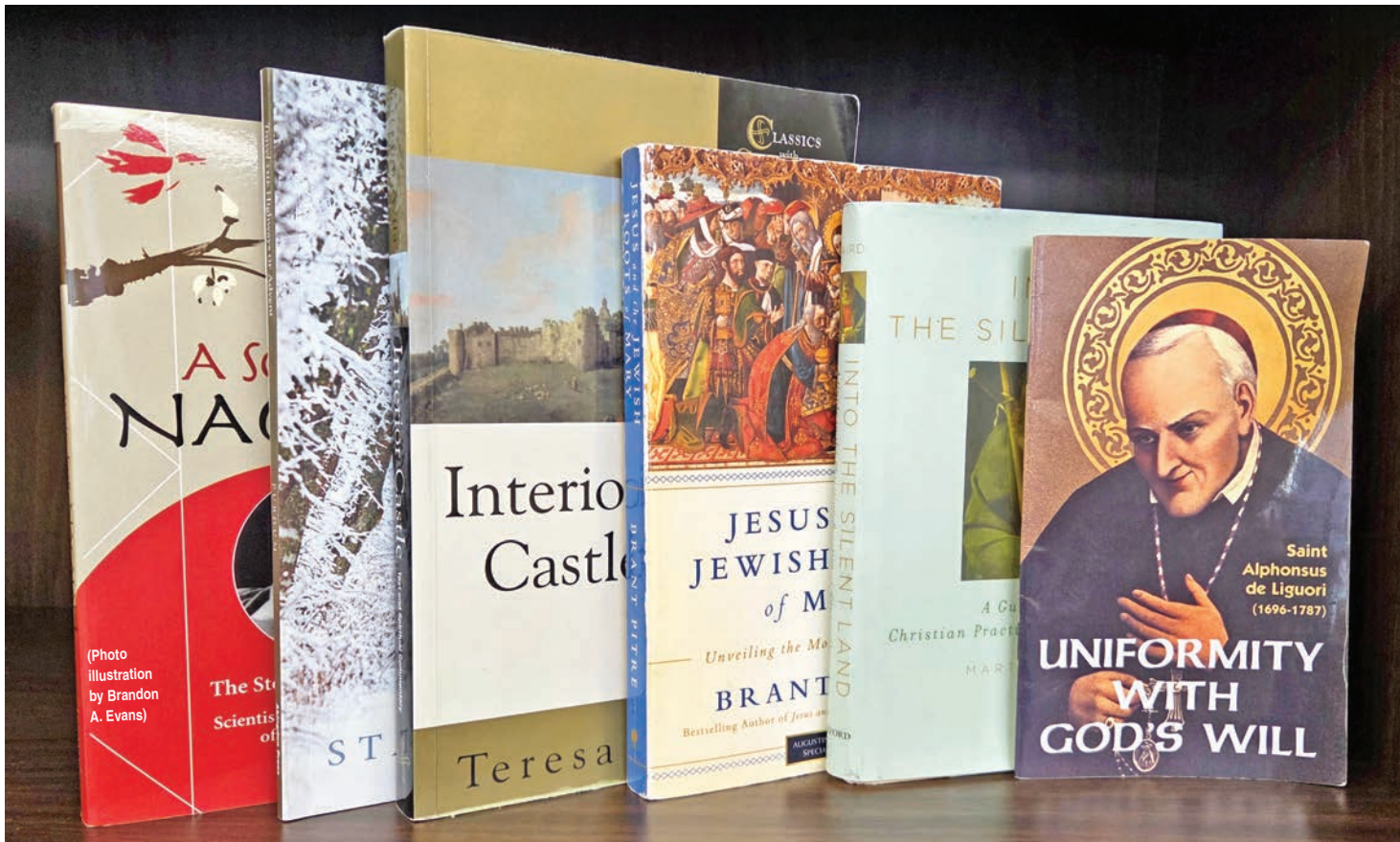
## One with Christ

Priest offers suggestions for making the most of Holy Week, page 3.

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## Searching for a book to lead you to a deeper relationship with God? Try these

First of at least two parts

By John Shaughnessy

Laura Soto knows the power of a good book. One of her favorites led her mother into a deeper relationship with God as she was dying.

The book—*Surprised by Truth: 11 Converts Give the Biblical and Historical Reasons for Becoming Catholic* by Patrick Madrid—also helped to lead her mother, Cathy Markland, into full communion with the Church before she died at the age of 69 in 2023.

“As an adult convert myself, I have always found myself drawn to conversion testimonies,” Soto says. “Not only have I read this book several times, I have given it to a few people I have encountered in my life who have had questions about the Catholic Church. My mother, in particular, had some ideas of what the Catholic Church believed and taught that were incorrect.

“After witnessing how my husband and I have attempted to raise our kids in the faith and pass along the importance of it, she began to ask questions over the years. Once she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and started undergoing

treatment, I went out on a limb and gave her a copy of the book and encouraged her to read it in the hope that it may help in answering some lingering questions. She did read it.”

Near the same time, her mother learned the cancer had spread and stopped responding to treatment.

As Markland prepared to go into hospice, Soto took another leap of faith and asked her mom if she would like to speak to their pastor about becoming Catholic. When her mother surprised her by saying yes, Soto reached out to Father Richard Doerr of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese.

“By the grace of God, she was able to be welcomed in the Catholic Church two weeks before her death. She received the sacraments of reconciliation, first Communion, confirmation and anointing of the sick on the same day,” Soto says. “The Mass was celebrated at her bedside, and it was one of the most joyful experiences I have ever had.”

Soto also remembers that moment as providing “a deep sense of peace” for her mother.

“I have also given this book to my uncle who, upon learning of my mother’s conversion on her deathbed, was interested in learning more about the Catholic Church.”

See BOOKS, page 8

## ICC tracking key bills as legislative session nears finish line

By Victoria Arthur

With the 2025 General Assembly in its final few weeks, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and its allies are calling for engagement on pivotal legislation

regarding school choice, immigration and other key issues.



Universal school choice is

within reach for Indiana families this year, as draft versions of the state budget proposed by Gov. Mike Braun and the Indiana House of Representatives called for removal of the income cap on the current Choice Scholarship Program, more commonly known as the voucher program. School choice has faced a more uncertain path in the Senate, which was set to release its version of the state budget at press time.

“We are now getting down to the nitty gritty of the legislative session,” said John Elcesser, executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA). “All eyes are on the April revenue forecast, set for release on the 16th, which will certainly have an impact on all K-12 education funding.



John Elcesser

Choice advocates are still optimistic about achieving universal school choice, but nothing is a done deal. It is very important that all non-public school advocates reach out to their legislators.”

In the last budget year, 2023, the Indiana General Assembly expanded school choice eligibility to 97% of families statewide. While advocates hailed near-universal school choice as a major step forward for Indiana two years ago, they point to the administrative burden that has remained for both families and schools to determine income eligibility for participating in the program.

See BILLS, page 8

## A child and a teacher draw closer to God on a shared journey of faith

By John Shaughnessy

One main goal in life has evolved for Benedictine Sister Nicolette Etienne during her 40 years as an educator—to help her students know their value as beloved children of God.

Yet when Nolan Walker entered her sixth-grade religion class at Holy Name of Jesus School in Beech Grove, he came with an attitude that dismissed everything about the Catholic faith.

Their two polar approaches came through in their words.

“As I grew deeper in my faith, my priorities changed as to what was important for the students to know,” says Sister Nicolette, who teaches sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade religion at Holy Name. “It became a mission of mine that my students would know how to build the kingdom of God, how to walk in a manner worthy of their calling, and how to know, love and serve God.”

See TEACHER, page 9

With the help of Benedictine Sister Nicolette Etienne, Nolan Walker has traveled a three-year journey to a close relationship with God. (Submitted photo)







Pope Francis greets the faithful in St. Peter's Square at the end of the closing Mass for the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers at the Vatican on April 6. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

# Ailing pope surprises pilgrims during Jubilee of the sick

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—With thousands of infirmed people and those who care for them gathered in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis, seated in a wheelchair and wearing a nasal cannula, made an unexpected appearance to greet the crowd.

"A happy Sunday to you all, many thanks!" the pope said to them with a strained voice.

Appearing at the end of the closing Mass of the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers on April 6, the pope shocked the thousands gathered in the square who broke out in cheers upon seeing his nurse, Massimiliano Strappetti, wheel him out of St. Peter's Basilica and into the square.

After his brief greeting, doctors in white lab coats, some wearing red clown noses, and infirmed people in wheelchairs applauded as Pope Francis was taken through the crowd to leave the square.

The appearance marked the first time Pope Francis had been seen in public since he was discharged from Rome's Gemelli Hospital on March 23 after more than five weeks of treatment for breathing difficulties and double pneumonia.

Prior to appearing in the square, Pope Francis went to confession in St. Peter's Basilica and passed through the Holy Door, the Vatican press office said.

Although the pope did not attend the entirety of the Mass, his spiritual presence was made tangible through the large cloth banner bearing his papal coat of arms that hung from the central balcony of the basilica. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, presided over the Mass as the pope's delegate and read the pope's homily.

Even amid pain, illness and human fragility, "God does not leave us alone and, if we abandon ourselves to him precisely where our strength fails, we can experience the consolation of his presence," the pope wrote. "By becoming man, he wanted to share our weakness in everything. He knows what it is to suffer."

Organizers expected some 20,000 pilgrims to come to Rome for the Jubilee

celebration, including patients, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and other health care workers from more than 90 countries.

Doctors and infirmed people were seated in the front rows for the Mass; health care workers wearing white lab coats served as lectors during the liturgy.

In his homily, the pope emphasized that the experience of illness, though painful, can become "a school in which we learn each day to love and to let ourselves be loved, without being demanding or pushing back, without regrets and without despair."

The pope urged society not to marginalize the weak and vulnerable but to embrace them as essential members of the community, quoting Pope Benedict XVI who said that a society unable to accept its suffering members "is a cruel and inhuman society."

In his written message to accompany the *Angelus*, published by the Vatican after the Mass, Pope Francis reflected on his personal experience of illness.

"During my hospitalization, even now in my convalescence I feel the 'finger of God' and experience his caring touch," he wrote. "On the day of the Jubilee of the sick and the world of health care, I ask the Lord that this touch of his love may reach those who suffer and encourage those who care for them."

He expressed deep gratitude for health professionals, "who are not always helped to work in adequate conditions and are sometimes even victims of aggression," calling for resources to be "invested in treatment and research, so that health systems are inclusive and attentive to the most fragile and the poorest."

The pope also renewed his appeal for peace in the world, urging the international community to act with urgency in places devastated by war.

"May the weapons be silenced and dialogue resumed; may all the hostages be freed and aid brought to the population," he said, naming Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Congo, Myanmar and Haiti among the suffering regions. †



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

April 13–22, 2025

**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, Indianapolis

**April 16 – 10 a.m.**  
Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

**April 17 – 7 p.m.**  
Holy Thursday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**April 18 – noon**  
Way of the Cross with Knights of

Columbus at American Legion Mall, Indianapolis

**April 18 – 3 p.m.**  
Good Friday Service at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**April 19 – 9 p.m.**  
Easter Vigil Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**April 22 – 10 a.m.**  
Spring Business Meeting for Priests and Parish Life Coordinators at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, Greenwood

**April 22 – 2 p.m.**  
Council of Priests meeting at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish

## SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad Archabbey announce Easter liturgies

The Easter liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, and the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln, 200 Hill Dr., in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

**SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral**  
• April 19, Holy Saturday—9 p.m. Easter Vigil at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. Livestreaming not available.  
• April 20, Easter Sunday—10 a.m. Mass, also available via livestream at [www.spppc.org/streaming](http://www.spppc.org/streaming).

**Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln**

Times listed below for Easter services are Central Time. All services at the archabbey will be livestreamed at [www.saintmeinrad.org/live](http://www.saintmeinrad.org/live).

• April 19, Holy Saturday—5 p.m. vespers, 8 p.m. Easter Vigil  
• April 20, Easter Sunday—10:30 a.m. Easter Mass During the Day, 5 p.m. vespers.

For the Easter liturgical schedules of other religious communities or parishes in the archdiocese, contact their offices. †

## 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 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

**Bloomington Deanery**  
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 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 16, 6-9 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood †



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# Priest offers five suggestions for making the most of Holy Week

By Sean Gallagher

Holy Week is the high point of the Church’s liturgical year. It is a week marked by solemn and ultimately joyful liturgies in which Catholics give worship to God and enter more fully into Christ’s passion, death and resurrection.



Fr. Michael Keucher

Holy Week, which takes place from April 13-20 this year, offers the faithful many opportunities to take part in liturgies overflowing with deeply symbolic rituals, starting with Palm Sunday and going forward to the chrism Mass, the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday, the Easter Vigil on the night of

Holy Saturday and the joyous liturgies of Easter Sunday. Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan vocations director and pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County, offered five suggestions to readers of *The Criterion* to help them make the most of Holy Week this year.

- **During Holy Week, spend at least five minutes a day looking at a crucifix**—“Kneel if you can. Looking at the sacrifice of Jesus reminds us of the power and depths of his love. It is also a summons to us to have a similar love in return.”
- **Do a technology fast one day of Holy Week**—“Focus that day on our Lord’s passion. If the weather is fair, go outside and read and pray one of the Passion accounts” (Mt 26:30–27:66, Mk 14:26–15:47, Lk 22:39–23:56 and Jn 18:1–19:42).
- **Pray for priestly vocations on Holy Thursday**—“This is the day Jesus

gave us the priesthood. You can find all kinds of beautiful priestly vocation prayers online.

Pray especially for the priests who have given you and your children the priceless gifts of the sacraments of baptism, holy Communion, confession, the anointing of the sick and last rites and matrimony.”

- **If in good health and of adult age, do a simple bread and water fast on Good Friday**—“Jesus models fasting for us and teaches us to do it. Doing this on Good Friday is a way for us to join ourselves to Christ’s suffering and death.”

- **Make a good confession before Easter**—“There is nothing as refreshing as having a clean conscience and a life set on God. God wants to give you a new, fresh start!” †



Cesar, left, Julio and Margarita Zuñiga kneel in prayer on Nov. 3, 2023, during a Mass at St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

## LENT 2025

## Pope Francis begins to receive very limited visits, Vatican says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As Pope Francis continues his recovery at the Vatican, he is very slowly beginning to get back to his old routine of meeting with top Vatican officials, the Vatican press office said.



Pope Francis

In addition to working with his secretaries, he met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, on April 7, the press office said in a briefing with reporters on April 8. The pope is also in contact with other dicasteries by phone and goes over the texts and documents he receives from them, it added. His regular phone calls to Holy Family Parish in Gaza, which were sporadic during his hospitalization, continue.

Pope Francis was released from Rome’s Gemelli Hospital on March 23 after more than five weeks of treatment for breathing difficulties, double pneumonia and a polymicrobial infection in his airways. His doctors had said he would need two months to convalesce following his release, which included staying home, avoiding visitors and keeping up with pharmacological, respiratory and physical therapy. However, the pope surprised the faithful when he appeared in St. Peter’s Square on April 6 at the end of the closing Mass of the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers. It was the first time Pope Francis had been seen in public since he was discharged from the hospital. (See related article on page 2.) A Vatican source said the pope’s appearance still fit within his doctors’ recommendations, as the moment was very brief, it was outdoors and he greeted just a few

people. A period of convalescence means being more careful about certain things and that was being respected, the source said. The apparent difficulty the pope has in raising his arms, such as when he blessed or greeted the crowds in his last two public appearances, is connected with his long hospitalization and subsequent reduced mobility, the source added. The pope is following physical therapy that is meant to increase and improve all aspects of his mobility. After concelebrating Mass with his secretaries each day, the pope spends “a good part” of his morning doing his physical therapy and respiratory therapy, which have led to some improvements as his condition and tests remain stable, the press office said. The rest of the day is dedicated to prayer and working. †

## USCCB ends cooperative agreements with government after work suspended

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) said it would not renew its cooperative agreements with the federal government related to children’s services and refugee support after its longstanding partnerships with the federal government in those areas became “untenable.” Earlier this year, the Trump administration suspended a federal refugee resettlement program as part of its broader effort to enforce its hardline immigration policies. The ensuing halt in federal funding for the USCCB’s refugee resettlement services is the subject of ongoing litigation, and it prompted the conference to lay off about a third of the staff in its Migration and Refugee Services Office in February. A spokesperson for the USCCB told OSV News the bishops were seeking reimbursement of \$24,336,858.26 for resettlement services (PRM and ORR programs) that was still pending payment as of April 7. “This situation has been brought to us by the decisions of the government,” Anthony Granado, associate general secretary for policy and advocacy for the USCCB, told OSV News. Despite decades of partnership with the USCCB’s Migration and Refugee Services, across administrations of both parties, including the first Trump administration, Granado said, “we’ve been placed in an untenable position now. “It is clear that the government has decided that it wishes to go about doing this in a different way that doesn’t include us, and so we were kind of forced into this position,” Granado said. Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the USCCB and head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, said in an April 7 statement it was “heartbreaking” to announce the bishops’ conference would not renew its

“existing cooperative agreements with the federal government related to children’s services and refugee support. “This difficult decision follows the suspension by the government of our cooperative agreements to resettle refugees,” he said. “The decision to reduce these programs drastically forces us to reconsider the best way to serve the needs of our brothers and sisters seeking safe harbor from violence and persecution. As a national effort, we simply cannot sustain the work on our own at current levels or in current form.” Citing the government’s suspension of the cooperative agreements to resettle refugees, Archbishop Broglio said that the conference has “been concerned with helping families who are fleeing war, violence, and oppression find safe and secure homes. “Over the years, partnerships with the federal government helped expand lifesaving programs, benefiting our sisters and brothers from many parts of the world,” Archbishop Broglio said. “All participants in these programs were welcomed by the U.S. government to come to the United States and underwent rigorous screening before their arrival. These are displaced souls who see in America a place of dreams and hope. Some assisted American efforts abroad at their own risk and more seek a place to worship and pray safely as they know God calls them.” He added, “Our efforts were acts of pastoral care and charity, generously supported by the people of God when funds received from the government did not cover the full cost.” Federal law requires that unaccompanied refugee minors be cared for, and the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement historically has turned to

faith-based organizations, including the USCCB, to carry out this work. A spokesperson for HHS did not immediately respond to a request for comment from OSV News about its cooperative agreement with the USCCB. Granado said the conference’s cooperative agreements with the federal government were “really about people. “From the Church’s perspective, this is about responding to the Gospel command—Jesus says in the Gospel, ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me,’ ” he said, referencing Jesus Christ’s words in Matthew 25:35-40 regarding his final judgment. “This has been a blessing and a beautiful part of the USCCB and the Catholic Church in the United States.” The children and refugees impacted

“are real people, real families” as well as “the staff whose work will be impacted,” Granado said. As the agreements end, Archbishop Broglio added, “we will work to identify alternative means of support for the people the federal government has already admitted to these programs. We ask your prayers for the many staff and refugees impacted.” The USCCB, Archbishop Broglio said, “will continue advocating for policy reforms that provide orderly, secure immigration processes, ensuring the safety of everyone in our communities. “We remain steadfast in our commitment to advocating on behalf of men, women, and children suffering the scourge of human trafficking,” he said. †

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

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

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

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

Please send your submissions to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at [jshaughnessy@archindy.org](mailto: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. †





Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher* Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*  
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Editorial



A relic and poster of St. John Paul II stand in a side chapel in the Church of the Holy Spirit, near the Vatican, on April 2, the 20th anniversary of the Polish pope's death. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

Like John Paul II, let us pray and work to help heal our fractured world

“Bless us, Holy Father John Paul II. Bless the Lord’s Church on its journey, that it may be a pilgrim of hope. Bless this lacerated and disoriented humanity, that it may find the way back to its dignity and its highest vocation, that it may know the riches of God’s mercy and love.”  
—Cardinal Pietro Parolin in a homily delivered on April 2 marking the 20th anniversary of the death of St. John Paul II

A message shared during a memorial Mass on April 2 in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican marking the 20th anniversary of the death of St. John Paul II offered a stark reminder of how much our fractured world is still desperately in need of healing.  
And we believe those prayers for healing were at the forefront of John Paul II’s petitions during his pontificate, continued during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI and are front and center as Pope Francis guides our Church as its universal shepherd.  
As people tasked with being our brothers and sisters’ keepers, we also need to continue our prayers for that healing.

St. John Paul never gave up in his prayers for humanity, Cardinal Parolin said during the homily of the Mass, even while “many of his appeals remained unfortunately unheeded, as happens even to great prophets.” And despite the trials and tribulations we currently see around the world, we cannot give up on humanity as well.  
Cardinal Parolin, who began serving in the Vatican Secretariat of State under the late pope starting in 1986, recalled the legacy and spirituality of the Polish pope, whose pontificate of more than 26 years was the third longest in history.  
The cardinal cited the late pope’s words he shared “with impressive force from the very first unforgettable homily at the inauguration of his pontificate: ‘Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ,’ ” who knows what humanity is meant to be and points the way to eternal life, Cardinal Parolin said.  
Because of that conviction, the late pope “could address with authority and firmness not only the Catholic faithful, but also peoples and government leaders,” urging them to “be aware of their responsibility to defend justice, the dignity of human persons and peace,” Cardinal Parolin said.  
That mission is far from over.

Despite recent victories in our efforts to build a culture of life, some in society still believe the killing of unborn children is a necessity and a right, and others believe assisted suicide should be the norm in our world.  
Sadly, 20 years after John Paul II’s death, too many people in society continue to dismiss the tenet that the dignity of human life begins at conception and ends at natural death. Many also are hard-pressed to envision peace on Earth—especially with people of other faith traditions and cultures. As Catholics, we must never forget we are called to see Jesus in others and be Jesus for others.  
Conflict spans the globe—in the Holy Land, between Russia and Ukraine, in Myanmar, South Sudan and in many other places where peace is desperately needed.  
It is a peace we believe John Paul II and his successors have prayed for each day, a peace we each must also continue to keep as part of our Lenten petitions and beyond.  
After the memorial Mass, dignitaries processed to St. John Paul’s tomb to pray. Cardinal Baldassare Reina, the papal vicar of Rome, read a prayer, asking for the saint to bless the world’s young people and the faithful so they would be “tireless missionaries of the Gospel today.  
“Bless every family,” the cardinal said, underlining how the pope warned against “Satan’s assault against this precious spark of heaven that God has lit on Earth. Make us strong and courageous in defending the family.  
“Pray for the whole world, scarred by so many injustices and lacerated by absurd wars, which turn the world into a bloody battlefield, deliver us from war, which is always a defeat for everyone,” Cardinal Reina said.  
As we approach Holy Week and Christ’s resurrection at Easter, let us take Cardinal Parolin’s words to heart and pray for our “lacerated and disoriented humanity, that it may find the way back to its dignity and its highest vocation, that it may know the riches of God’s mercy and love.” It is through the Cross that true resurrected life is offered to us.  
And may we, through God’s grace, follow Christ’s lead as pilgrims of hope on our earthly journey.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Greg Erlandson

‘Put no trust in princes’

Scoring presidential administrations on some kind of Christian scale would seem to be an effort doomed to fail. Political agendas and actions rarely align easily with the teachings of the Gospel.  
Much was made of Joe Biden as only our second Catholic president. He was often photographed leaving Mass, for example, and reportedly carried a rosary in his pocket.  
Yet the actions of his administration to protect legalized abortion earned it criticism from Church leaders. Others criticized him for the unwavering support of Israel’s war on Gaza.  
Baptizing his administration as the “most Catholic ever” would seem a stretch and misleading as well. Better to evaluate its actions—good and bad—in the light of Church teachings and the Gospel.

But despite the Psalm’s insistence that we “put no trust in princes” (Ps 146:3), the temptation to muddle our political biases and persuasions with our religion seems overwhelming these days.  
Less than 100 days into the current administration, a leading Catholic layman, Tim Busch, has declared that “Donald Trump’s administration is the most Christian I’ve ever seen.” This assessment, Busch says, is not an assessment of Trump’s personal faith, but that he has Catholics and other Christians in his administration and has certain policies Busch finds praiseworthy.  
Of course, the same could have been said of Biden by his supporters.  
But we as Catholics are asked to assess how Christian or moral an administration is not by its members or its rhetoric, but by its actions.  
The first Trump administration gets credit for appointing three conservative Supreme Court justices who helped overturn *Roe v. Wade*, but abortion has not been a priority of the second administration, which appears to view the status quo division of pro-life and pro-choice states as just fine.  
In addition, it has sought to widen access to IVF treatments, a procedure not supported by the Church.  
Others have criticized it more harshly for its treatment of immigrants, the poor both here and abroad, the elderly and other vulnerable populations.

But we as Catholics are asked to assess how Christian or moral an administration is not by its members or its rhetoric, but by its actions.

Take, for example, Pope St. John Paul II’s admonition in his apostolic exhortation “*Ecclesia in America*,” that “the Church in America must be a vigilant advocate, defending against any unjust restriction the natural right of individual persons to move freely within their own nation and from one nation to another. Attention must be called to the rights of migrants and their families and to respect for their human dignity, even in cases of non-legal immigration.  
“Migrants should be met with a hospitable and welcoming attitude,” the saint adds (#65). For Catholics, this challenges us to examine policies and actions in this light, and in the light of the Bible’s many instructions on caring for the stranger and the migrant.  
As for the massive cuts in a wide range of public-serving agencies recommended by the Department of Governmental Efficiency, St. John Paul II in “*Evangelium Vitae*” warns about a “culture which denies solidarity and, in many cases, takes the form of a veritable ‘culture of death.’ This culture is actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency” (#12).  
One aspect of the culture of death concerns issues like abortion. But putting medical care of the disabled and elderly at risk, or slashing funding for international aid programs or abandoning refugees would also demand consideration.  
Perhaps all of this is good reason for our Church leaders today to prioritize instruction in the social teachings of the Church. Indeed, in “*Ecclesia in America*,” St. John Paul II calls for exactly that, saying it is “important ‘that in America the agents of evangelization [bishops, priests, teachers, pastoral workers, etc.] make their own this treasure which is the Church’s social teaching and, inspired by it, become capable of interpreting the present situation and determine the actions to take’ ” (#54).  
The bishops might start by reminding us that we are Catholics first, Americans second and members of political parties a distant third.

(Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter @GregErlandson.) †

Letter to the Editor  
Reader: We should embrace Jesus’ admonition to care for the poor

Lately, I have seen several charitable advertisement campaigns (including a recent Catholic Relief Services request) that reference “uncertain funding sources” or words to that effect. It’s obvious they are referring to cutbacks in spending by the federal government.  
I have always been of the opinion that charity is not a function of the federal government. In fact, I view the government as a competitor in this area.  
Often government dollars go to groups such as Planned Parenthood that I don’t support. And most importantly, I’ve always felt that Jesus’ various admonitions to care for the poor were addressed to each of us personally rather than to any government to act for us.  
My tax preparer noted that in her

experience charitable giving had dropped off by as much as 50% since before the standard deduction for income taxes was raised a few years ago. It seems to me that a lot of us have acted as Pontius Pilate and washed our hands of the need to support the poor because Uncle Sam was taking care of it.  
As a matter of honesty and open disclosure, I too, find tithing to be difficult. So many modern demands are placed on a family’s earnings. (Citizens Energy Group recently raised my “budget” amount by \$28 per month!)  
But this is certainly a worthy goal to aspire to—supporting those less fortunate than ourselves.

Robert Rose  
Indianapolis



ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## To know the joy of Easter, take up your cross first

This Sunday, we will celebrate Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord. This is a day of paradoxical joy and sadness. It inaugurates Holy Week, the most solemn week in the liturgical calendar, and it leads to Easter, the most joyous day of the Church's year.

On Palm Sunday, our joy does not come from our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We know that these shouts of "Hosanna" will not last even a week. And our sadness comes not just from his suffering and death, but also from the fact that we, like the first disciples, have so often betrayed and abandoned him.

Dominican Father Sebastian White, Editor of *Magnificat*, writes:

*Palm Sunday's liturgy is unusual in giving us two Gospel passages: one at the beginning, for the blessing of the palms, and then another at the usual time for the readings. It is, I believe, precisely by bringing so closely together Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his suffering and death a few days later that Palm Sunday's particular lessons emerge (Magnificat, Vol. 27, #2).*

The lessons of Palm Sunday are that the only way to experience the

everlasting joy of Easter is by taking up our crosses and following Jesus. And the only way to accomplish true death-to-self is to obey the will of God our Father.

Sadness and joy were brought together when the Son of God "emptied himself taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7). When Jesus lowered himself in the most profound act of humble service imaginable, "God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).

Jesus, who is infinitely greater than we are, became one with us. He who never sinned "became sin" and took upon himself the guilt, shame and sadness that belong to us alone (2 Cor 5:21). "I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face," the prophet Isaiah says of the Suffering Servant (a prophetic image Jesus), "I did not shield from buffets and spitting" (Is 50:4-7).

The suffering and death experienced

by our Savior Jesus Christ led directly to his Resurrection. That is why on Palm Sunday our joy is mixed with sadness, and our hope is tinged with despair. We know that we have been Redeemed, but we also know that it was because of our sins, the inheritance of a fallen humanity, that our Lord's sacrifice was required. We will rejoice greatly on Easter Sunday, but first we must share in Christ's passion and, to the extent possible for us, we must atone for our sins.

Of course, as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, we know that the Lord's triumph over sin and death is absolute. Whatever sadness we may feel now, the joy of Easter will overcome. We may be tempted to feel that God has abandoned us—as Jesus was tempted, briefly, on the cross (Ps 22:2a)—but "hope never disappoints" (Rom 5:5). And in the end, the joy of Christ's Resurrection overpowers every negative human emotion.

As Father Sebastian says in the issue of *Magnificat* quoted earlier:

*When we experience ups and downs in life—or when a great cross is suddenly placed upon us—it is not*

*a sign that God has forgotten about us or that his plan for us has failed. Just as Jesus' own short journey from a royal welcome to an ignominious death was all part of the divine plan for the redemption of the world, so the vicissitudes of our own life are firmly within God's loving providence.*

We rejoice on Palm Sunday because we know that our sadness, which is real, will not last. If we share in our Lord's suffering, and follow him on the way of the cross, our sorrow will be transformed by a love that is stronger than death into a joy that satisfies our every desire.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus suffered the most intense agony, and as a result, his humanity cried out to be relieved of the pain and sorrow that he knew would come: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done" (Lk 21:42).

God's will, not ours, overcomes all sadness and brings joy everlasting. This Palm Sunday, let's pray for the grace to say "yes" to God's will, empty ourselves of all selfishness and sin, and follow Jesus on the road to joy. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## Para conocer la alegría de la Pascua, primero cargue su cruz

Este domingo celebramos el Domingo de Ramos de la Pasión del Señor, un día de paradójica alegría y tristeza. Con esta celebración se inaugura la Semana Santa, la más solemne del calendario litúrgico, que culmina en la Pascua, el día más alegre del año eclesial.

En el Domingo de Ramos, nuestra alegría no proviene de la entrada triunfal del Señor en Jerusalén. Sabemos que estos gritos de "Hosanna" no durarán ni una semana. Y nuestra tristeza no proviene solamente de su sufrimiento y muerte, sino también del hecho de que nosotros, como los primeros discípulos, lo hemos traicionado y abandonado muchas veces.

El padre dominico Sebastián White, editor de *Magnificat*, escribe:

*La liturgia del Domingo de Ramos tiene la particularidad de ofrecernos dos pasajes del Evangelio: uno al principio, para la bendición de las palmas, y otro en el momento habitual de las lecturas. Creo que precisamente al vincular tan estrechamente la entrada triunfal de Cristo en Jerusalén con su sufrimiento y muerte unos días después, surgen las lecciones especiales del Domingo de Ramos (Magnificat, Vol. 27, #2).*

La lección del Domingo de Ramos es que la única manera de experimentar la alegría eterna de la Pascua es cargar con nuestras cruces y seguir a Jesús. Y la única manera de lograr la verdadera muerte del ser es obedecer la voluntad de Dios, nuestro Padre.

La tristeza y la alegría se unieron cuando el Hijo de Dios "se despojó de sí mismo y tomó la forma de esclavo. Por lo que Dios también lo exaltó hasta lo sumo, y le confirió el nombre que es sobre todo nombre, para que al nombre de Jesús se doble toda rodilla de los que están en el cielo, y en la tierra, y debajo de la tierra, y toda lengua confiese que Jesucristo es Señor, para gloria de Dios Padre" (Flp 2:7-11).

Jesús, que es infinitamente más grande que nosotros, se hizo uno con nosotros. Él, que nunca pecó, "se hizo pecado" y tomó sobre sí la culpa, la vergüenza y la tristeza que solo nos pertenecen a nosotros. "Ofrecí Mi espalda a los que me herían, y Mis mejillas a los que me arrancaban la barba"—dice el profeta Isaías sobre el siervo sufriente (una imagen profética Jesús)—"no escondí Mi rostro de injurias y salivazos" (Is 50:6).

El sufrimiento y la muerte que vivió nuestro Salvador Jesucristo condujeron directamente a su Resurrección. Por eso, el Domingo de Ramos nuestra

alegría se mezcla con la tristeza, y nuestra esperanza se tiñe de desesperación. Sabemos que hemos sido redimidos, pero también sabemos que fue a causa de nuestros pecados, herencia de una humanidad en decadencia, que requirió el sacrificio de nuestro Señor. Nos alegraremos mucho el Domingo de Resurrección, pero antes debemos compartir la pasión de Cristo y, en la medida de nuestras posibilidades, expiar nuestros pecados.

Por supuesto, como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo, sabemos que el triunfo del Señor sobre el pecado y la muerte es absoluto. Sea cual sea la tristeza que sintamos ahora, la alegría de la Pascua lo superará. Podemos tener la tentación de sentir que Dios nos ha abandonado, al igual que Jesús estuvo tentado, brevemente, en la cruz (Sal 22:2) pero "la esperanza no desilusiona" (Rom 5:5) y, al final, la alegría de la Resurrección de Cristo supera toda emoción humana negativa.

Como dice el padre Sebastián en el número de *Magnificat* antes citado:

*Cuando experimentamos altibajos en la vida, o cuando de repente nos cae encima una gran cruz, no es señal de que Dios se haya olvidado*

*de nosotros o de que su plan para nosotros haya fracasado. Así como el corto viaje de Jesús desde una bienvenida real hasta una muerte ignominiosa fue parte del plan divino para la redención del mundo, las vicisitudes de nuestra propia vida se encajan perfectamente dentro de la amorosa providencia de Dios.*

Nos alegramos el Domingo de Ramos porque sabemos que nuestra tristeza, que es real, no durará. Si compartimos el sufrimiento del Señor y le seguimos por el camino de la cruz, nuestro dolor se transformará, gracias a un amor más fuerte que la muerte, en una alegría que satisfará todos nuestros deseos.

En el huerto de Getsemaní, Jesús sufrió la agonía más intensa y, como resultado, su humanidad clamó por ser aliviada del dolor y la pena que sabía que vendrían: "Padre, si es Tu voluntad, aparta de Mí esta copa; pero no se haga Mi voluntad, sino la Tuya" (Lc 21:42).

La voluntad de Dios, no la nuestra, supera toda tristeza y trae la alegría eterna. Este Domingo de Ramos, pidamos la gracia de poder decir "sí" a la voluntad de Dios, vaciarnos de todo egoísmo y pecado, y seguir a Jesús por el camino de la alegría. †



Events Calendar

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

**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](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

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

**April 18**  
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Way of the Cross**, noon. Information: 317-574-8898, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

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

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence., Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Way of the Cross for Justice**, 11 a.m.-noon, Information: [spsmw.org/events](http://spsmw.org/events), 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org).

**April 20**  
Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, O’Shaughnessy Dining Hall, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Easter Lunch**, 12:30-2:30 p.m., \$30 adults, \$15 ages 3-12, ages 2 and younger free, purchase tickets in advance by April 13. Information, registration: 812-535-3131, [tinyurl.com/speasterlunch25](http://tinyurl.com/speasterlunch25).

**April 21**  
Landsbaum Auditorium, Lugar Center, 1433 N. 6th 1/2 St., Terre Haute. **Food Insecure: A Documentary that Hits Home**, 4-5 p.m., discussion following film, free. Information, registration: [secure.qgiv.com/for/foodinsecuredocumentary](http://secure.qgiv.com/for/foodinsecuredocumentary).

**April 24-May 29**  
Christ the King Parish, 5884 N. Crittenden Ave., Indianapolis.

**Project Hope: Faith-Based Mental Health Support Group**, six consecutive Thursdays sessions, 7-8:30 p.m., 8-10 participant limit, mental health professional present, registration required, free. Information, registration: 317-236-1543, [bvarick@archindy.org](mailto:bvarick@archindy.org).

**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 adults, \$25 students, \$19 families, walk-ups welcome. Information, registration: [svdpindy.org/neighbor](http://svdpindy.org/neighbor).

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, 535 East Edgewood Road, Indianapolis. **Evangelization 101 Workshop: A Simple Approach to Forming Teams, Witnessing and Accompanying One Another**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Diocese of St. Louis evangelization director Brian Miller presenting, \$30 fee assessed to parish, includes lunch and materials, registration required. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/markevang25](http://tinyurl.com/markevang25),

317-236-1466, [abardo@archindy.org](mailto:abardo@archindy.org).

White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Earth Day Festival**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., nature shows, live music, kids’ craft activities, demonstrations on spinning, weaving and woodcarving, visit the alpacas, bake sale, food vendors, freewill donations. Information: [spsmw.org/event/earth-day-festival-2025](http://spsmw.org/event/earth-day-festival-2025), 812-535-2932, [wvc@spsmw.org](mailto:wvc@spsmw.org).

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](http://roar25.givesmart.com), 317-787-8277, [byoung@roncalli.org](mailto: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](mailto: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: [holyrosary.prolife@gmail.com](mailto:holyrosary.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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:mariasolito@yahoo.com).

St. Anne’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.

**April 30**  
**Virtual Series: Learn About Our Benedictine Vows—Obedience, via Zoom**, 7 p.m., last of three sessions, hosted by Sisters of St. Benedict of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Ind. (Evansville Diocese), free, registration required. Information, registration: 812-367-1411, ext. 2830, [vocation@thedome.org](mailto:vocation@thedome.org).

**May 2**  
Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 6 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, [msross1@hotmail.com](mailto:msross1@hotmail.com). †

Retreats and Programs

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

**April 25, May 16, June 20**  
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

**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 freewill offering to cover cost of retreat. Information, registration: [wwme.org/apply](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto: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](http://events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto: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](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto: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](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

**May 17**  
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Divine Mysteries in the Universe**, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Jesuit Father Edward Kinerk presenting, \$30, Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

**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](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

**June 13-15**  
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **St. Jacinta of Fatima: A Prophetess for Our Times**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Jacinto Chapin facilitating, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$368 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

**June 20-22**  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Making “Soma” from “Sarx”: The Transformative Power of the Gospel**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

**June 23**  
**You Are Not Alone: The Emotional Journey of Suicide Loss Survivors (virtual only, via Zoom)**, 6:30-8 p.m., sponsored by Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House,

for adults, teens ages 15-19 and older may attend with parent or guardian, licensed therapist Christine Turo-Shields presenting, free, registration required. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

**June 25-29**  
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., Mount St. Francis. **In the Quiet, God Speaks**, 6 p.m. Wed.-noon Sun., personal retreat guided by spiritual directors Anny Behymer and Peggy Holthaus, includes meals and private room, \$550. Information, registration: 812 923-8817, [mountsaintfrancis.org/four-day-directed-retreat](http://mountsaintfrancis.org/four-day-directed-retreat).

**July 18-20**  
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Honoring the Elderly and Grandparenting in Scripture**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Joachim Mudd, facilitating, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$368 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com). †

# Simple Soup and Bread fundraiser benefitting archdiocesan Crisis Office set for April 17

The annual Simple Soup and Bread Luncheon to support the archdiocesan Crisis Office will take place in Assembly Hall at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, from 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. on April 17. Doors open at 11:30 a.m., a short prayer service will take place at 11:45 a.m., and lunch will be served at 11:55 a.m.

The Crisis Office offers assistance to low-income persons residing in Marion County unable to provide for basic necessities such as shelter, food and clothing. Services include linking clients with existing community resources, access to a food pantry and clothing room, bus tickets for job transportation, medication prescription assistance and limited rental assistance.

With the number of people seeking assistance from the Crisis Office increasing in the past year, the goal for the luncheon is to raise \$15,000 to support those in need.

Those who donate \$50 or more prior to or at the event will receive an item made by students of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis as follows: a handmade ceramic cross for a donation of \$50-\$99, and a handcrafted medallion for a donation of \$100 or more.

The cost for the lunch is \$10. Registration is preferred by April 15; however, walk-ups will be accepted. Registration is available online at [tinyurl.com/soupbread25](http://tinyurl.com/soupbread25).

For more information, contact Cheri Bush at 317-236-1411 or [cbush@archindy.org](mailto:cbush@archindy.org). †

## Submit your event or retreat to The Criterion’s listings

Events and retreats can be submitted to The Criterion by logging on to [www.archindy.org/events/submission](http://www.archindy.org/events/submission), or by mailing

us at 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202, ATTN: Ann Lewis, or by fax at 317-236-1593. †





# The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



## During Lent, Easter and beyond, let us journey together as pilgrims of hope

In his annual Lenten message, Pope Francis offers some reflections on what it means “to journey together in hope” and on “the summons to conversion” that our merciful God has addressed to us as individuals and as a community of faith.

First of all, the pope explains that the Jubilee motto “Pilgrims of Hope” evokes the Book of Exodus’ account of the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land. “This arduous path from slavery to freedom was willed and guided by the Lord, who loves his people and remains ever faithful to them,” the Holy Father says. “It is hard to think of the biblical exodus without also thinking of those of our brothers and sisters who in our own day are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones.”

Lent challenges us to change our thinking and to recognize that all of us are pilgrims, people who are “on the way” from one place, or one situation in life, to another. Pope Francis asks us to consider these fundamental questions:

*Am I really on a journey, or am I standing still, not moving, either*

*immobilized by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of my comfort zone? Am I seeking ways to leave behind the occasions of sin and situations that degrade my dignity?*

He says that it would be a good Lenten exercise (an examination of conscience) for us to compare our daily life with that of someone else—perhaps a migrant or exile—and to sympathize with their experiences “and in this way discover what God is asking of us so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father.”

We are all on a journey. But what does it mean “to journey together,” to be fellow travelers on a pilgrimage of hope?

“The Church is called to walk together, to be synodal,” Pope Francis says. “Christians are called to walk at the side of others, and never as lone travelers. The Holy Spirit impels us not to remain self-absorbed, but to leave ourselves behind and keep walking toward God and our brothers and sisters.”

Quoting St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, the pope explains that journeying together means “consolidating the unity grounded in our common dignity

as children of God” (Gal 3:26-28). It also means “walking side-by-side, without shoving or stepping on others, without envy or hypocrisy, without letting anyone be left behind or excluded.”

Some question Pope Francis’ consistent (and insistent) emphasis on synodality as a way of exercising leadership in the Church. But Pope Francis is adamant.

“Let us all walk in the same direction,” he says, “tending toward the same goal, attentive to one another in love and patience.” He firmly believes that this Lent, especially, “God is asking us to examine whether in our lives, in our families, in the places where we work and spend our time, we are capable of walking together with others, listening to them, resisting the temptation to become self-absorbed and to think only of our own needs.”

Pope Francis identifies synodality as a call to conversion that asks us to cooperate with others, to show ourselves welcoming, with concrete gestures, to those both near and far, and to make others feel a part of the

pilgrim community without keeping them at a distance. He invites us to journey together in a hope that does not disappoint (Rom 5:5), which is the central message of the 2025 Jubilee, and which should be the focus of our Lenten journey towards the victory of Easter.

According to the Holy Father: *This, then, is the third call to conversion: a call to hope, to trust in God and his great promise of eternal life. Let us ask ourselves: Am I convinced that the Lord forgives my sins? Or do I act as if I can save myself? Do I long for salvation and call upon God’s help to attain it? Do I concretely experience the hope that enables me to interpret the events of history and inspires in me a commitment to justice and fraternity, to care for our common home and in such a way that no one feels excluded?*

All of us are pilgrims. The question is whether we walk alone as isolated individuals or whether we journey together as pilgrims of hope.

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

“Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.”  
—Pope Francis, “*Misericordiae Vultus*” (“The Face of Mercy”)

“Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios.”  
—Papa Francisco, “*Misericordiae Vultus*” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

## Durante Cuaresma, Pascua y más allá, caminemos juntos como peregrinos de la esperanza

En su mensaje anual de Cuaresma, el papa Francisco ofrece algunas reflexiones sobre lo que significa “caminar juntos en la Esperanza” y sobre “las llamadas a la conversión” que nuestro Dios misericordioso nos ha hecho como individuos y como comunidad de fe.

En primer lugar, el Papa explica que el lema del jubileo, “Peregrinos de Esperanza,” evoca el relato del Libro del Éxodo sobre el largo viaje del pueblo de Israel a la Tierra Prometida. “El difícil camino desde la esclavitud a la libertad, querido y guiado por el Señor, que ama a su pueblo y siempre le permanece fiel. No podemos recordar el éxodo bíblico sin pensar en tantos hermanos y hermanas que hoy huyen de situaciones de miseria y de violencia, buscando una vida mejor para ellos y sus seres queridos.”

La Cuaresma nos desafía a cambiar nuestra forma de pensar y a reconocer que todos somos peregrinos, personas que están “en camino” de un lugar, o una situación en la vida, a otra. El papa Francisco nos pide que consideremos estas tres cuestiones fundamentales:

*¿Estoy realmente en camino o paralizado, estático, ya sea inmovilizado*

*por el miedo y la desesperanza, o negado a salirme de mi zona de confort? ¿Busco formas para salirme de las situaciones de pecado y aquellas que degradan mi dignidad?*

Dice que sería un buen ejercicio cuaresmal (un examen de conciencia) que comparáramos nuestra vida cotidiana con la de otra persona—quizá un emigrante o un exiliado—y nos compadeciéramos de sus experiencias “para descubrir lo que Dios nos pide, para ser mejores caminantes hacia la casa del Padre.”

Todos estamos de viaje. Pero, ¿qué significa “viajar juntos,” ser compañeros de viaje en una peregrinación de esperanza?

“La vocación de la Iglesia es caminar juntos, ser sinodales. Los cristianos están llamados a hacer camino juntos, nunca como viajeros solitarios. El Espíritu Santo nos impulsa a salir de nosotros mismos para ir hacia Dios y hacia los hermanos, y nunca a encerrarnos en nosotros mismos,” nos dice el Santo Padre.

Citando la carta de san Pablo a los Gálatas, el Papa explica que caminar juntos significa “caminar juntos significa ser artesanos de unidad, partiendo de

la dignidad común de hijos de Dios” (Gal 3:26-28). También significa “caminar codo a codo, sin pisotear o dominar al otro, sin albergar envidia o hipocresía, sin dejar que nadie se quede atrás o se sienta excluido.”

Algunos cuestionan el énfasis constante (e insistente) del papa Francisco en la sinodalidad como forma de ejercer el liderazgo en la Iglesia, pero él se muestra inflexible en este sentido:

“Vamos en la misma dirección, hacia la misma meta, escuchándonos los unos a los otros con amor y paciencia.” Cree firmemente que, especialmente en esta Cuaresma, “Dios nos pide que comprobemos si en nuestra vida, en nuestras familias, en los lugares donde trabajamos, en las comunidades parroquiales o religiosas, somos capaces de caminar con los demás, de escuchar, de vencer la tentación de encerrarnos en nuestra autorreferencialidad, ocupándonos solamente de nuestras necesidades.”

El papa Francisco identifica la sinodalidad como una llamada a la conversión que nos pide cooperar con los demás, mostrarnos receptivos, con gestos concretos, tanto con los que están cerca como con los que están lejos, y hacer

que los demás se sientan parte de la comunidad de peregrinos sin mantenerlos a distancia. Nos invita a caminar juntos en una esperanza que no desilusiona (Rom 5:5), que es el mensaje central del Jubileo de 2025, y que debería ser el centro de nuestro camino cuaresmal hacia la victoria de la Pascua.

Según el Santo Padre: *Esta es, por tanto, la tercera llamada a la conversión: la de la esperanza, la de la confianza en Dios y en su gran promesa, la vida eterna. Debemos preguntarnos: ¿poseo la convicción de que Dios perdona mis pecados, o me comporto como si pudiera salvarme solo? ¿Anhele la salvación e invoco la ayuda de Dios para recibirla? ¿Vivo concretamente la esperanza que me ayuda a leer los acontecimientos de la historia y me impulsa al compromiso por la justicia, la fraternidad y el cuidado de la casa común, actuando de manera que nadie quede atrás?*

Todos somos peregrinos; la cuestión es si caminamos solos como individuos aislados o si caminamos juntos como peregrinos de la esperanza.

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †



# BOOKS

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A senior accountant, Soto was among a group of people from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who was invited to share a favorite book that has helped them in their faith and into a deeper relationship with Christ. Here are some other faith-related books that have touched people’s lives.

‘Letting go of the daily worries’

*Uniformity with God’s Will* by St. Alphonsus Ligouri  
“By far my favorite spiritual book,” says Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference. “It is only 30 pages long, so more of a short story.  
“Reading this book helped me with letting go of the daily worries and frustrations that come up. This book helps you realize that everything that happens, except for sin, is God’s will, and we can let go of taking all responsibility for everything onto ourselves. Instead, we can surrender and lovingly accept that all things that happen are as God designed and his will is always the greatest good for us and those we love.”

‘The depth of God’s love for me’

*Beloved* by Henri Nowen  
“Nowen is such an inspirational writer and speaks in a voice that is approachable for everyone,” says Kimberly Pohovey, director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese. “I read this book many years ago as part of a

## Recommended faith-based books

Here is a convenient list of the faith-related books that have been shared in this story, in alphabetical order:

- *A Song for Nagasaki* by Marist Father Paul Glynn
- *Beloved* by Henri Nowen
- *Interior Castle* by St. Teresa of Avila
- *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* by Augustinian Father Martin Laird
- *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah* by Brant Pitre
- *Surprised by Truth: 11 Converts Give the Biblical and Historical Reasons for Becoming Catholic* by Patrick Madrid
- *Travel the Highways of Advent* by Stan Purdum
- *Uniformity with God’s Will* by St. Alphonsus Ligouri

book study. I’ve always felt loved by God, but this book helped me to better understand the depth of the love God has for me.

“Also, I was surprised to learn how many of the women in the study did not feel worthy of God’s love and therefore avoided a deeply personal encounter with Jesus. This book crashed through those pre-conceived notions to help them see that God loves us, all of us, no matter what.”

‘A deeper devotion to Our Lady’

*Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah* by Brant Pitre  
“This book was really transformative for me in my understanding of the Blessed Mother and the deeper history of the queen mother and the way that all ties into the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies of Jesus as Christ and King,” says Megan Lauritsen, coordinator of youth ministry for the archdiocese.  
“This book breaks open Marian apologetics in a way that is understandable and calls the reader to a deeper understanding of the role of Mary in our faith, which then in my experience led me to a deeper devotion to Our Lady and the ways that we can call on her for her intercession to her Son.”

A deeper level of prayer’

*Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* by Augustinian Father Martin Laird  
“One of the most impactful books I’ve read, particularly related to my spiritual/prayer life,” says Jim Maslar, a Catholic philanthropic adviser in planned giving for the archdiocese. “This book helped unlock, in an accessible way, a deeper layer of prayer that I had not yet known or been able to articulate.  
“Father Laird utilizes Scripture and Catholic spiritual masters to invite the novice into a deeper awareness of God’s presence through practical tools and wisdom.  
“What has stuck with me the most seems obvious but has been transformative: taking time in prayer of simply being aware of God’s constant and intimate awareness of me, of my individual soul, and allowing my heart/soul to rest in that.”

A choice of forgiveness

*A Song for Nagasaki: The Story of Takashi Nagai* by Marist Father Paul Glynn  
“*A Song for Nagasaki* tells the amazing story of the author’s conversion to Christianity, his work as a medical doctor, and his life before and after August 9, 1945,” says Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools for the archdiocese.  
On that fateful day in history, an American bomber dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan, during World War II, killing tens of thousands of people instantly and impacting the lives of countless survivors, including Nagai.  
“I learned about the historical roots of Catholicism in Nagasaki and the faith of the underground Church for 250 years when Christianity was forbidden in Japan,” Disney notes. “I was humbled by Nagai’s humility, faith and trust in God.

“I cried when I read how Nagai thanked God for choosing Nagasaki for the second nuclear bomb as a sacrifice which saved millions of lives and brought peace to the world at war. Rather than bitterness, anger and hate, Nagai chose mercy and forgiveness. I can only pray for faith like his, so that I can be more like Jesus.”

‘The soul’s ascent to holiness’

*Interior Castle* by St. Teresa of Avila  
“I originally read this in high school and through it, I found my confirmation saint,” says Lucy Wahnsiedler, special events coordinator for the archdiocese. “This book completely changed my perspective on the interior life and spiritual growth.  
“It gives the reader rich [Teresian] imagery of the soul’s ascent to holiness through the maturation of one’s prayer, as well as practical ways to ascertain which ‘mansion’ you are currently in and how to persevere in prayer to move toward the next ‘mansion.’ I love the use of this imagery in prayer, and I appreciate being able to gauge my progress [or, admittedly, sometimes my regression] through the ‘mansions.’ ”

On the road to joy with God

*Travel the Highways of Advent*, by Stan Purdum  
“This was a perfect study for me during the Advent seasons and beyond,” says Anita Bardo, coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese. “The



Anito Bardo

title, *Travel the Highways*, sets the tone for knowing God’s plan for us. How we handle our days, whether good or bad. Our struggles and challenges.  
“The book is broken down into the different ways we see God’s highway. Is it a level or straight highway, meaning, ‘Are we preparing our minds and emotions to be in tune with what God is about to do for us?’ Are we facing obstacles to get around the highway, through or beneath it? How do we see our relationship with God through our struggles?  
“The questions after the chapters gave me direction on many occasions, especially being in a space of disappointments and seeing no other way out. The different reflections at the end of the chapters were a breath of fresh air. This book has continued to allow myself to think first and take it one day at time to sort through those ‘highways’ in my life. It’s a short book filled with good study, prayer, mediation and positive joys.”

(If you have a favorite book that has led you to a deeper relationship with God, we’d love for you to share it with us. Please send the title, the author and the reasons why the book has had an impact on your faith to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at [jshaughnessy@archindy.org](mailto: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.) †

# BILLS

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“We are very hopeful that universal school choice will make it into the final version of the state budget this year,” said Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.  
As is the case during every legislative session, the ICC supports or opposes bills based on centuries of Catholic social teaching. One measure that has posed concern for the ICC is a bill that brings the ongoing national debate over immigration close to home.



Roarke LaCoursiere

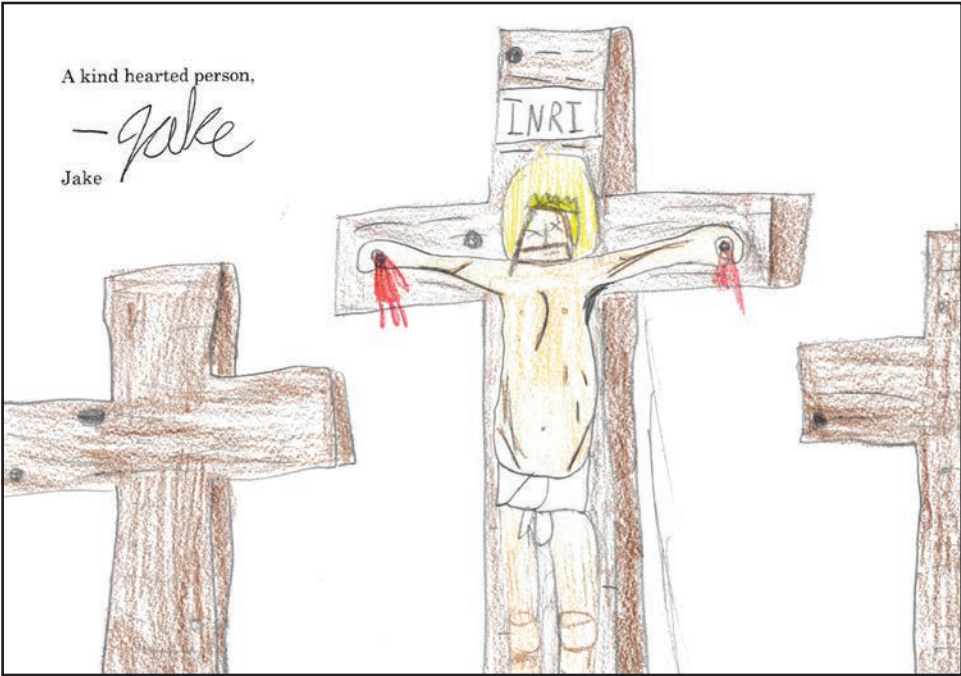
In its original form, House Bill 1393 called for requiring local police to notify federal authorities if they have probable cause that a person they arrested for a felony or misdemeanor is an undocumented immigrant. While recognizing every nation’s right to protect its citizens and its borders, Archbishop C. Thompson of Indianapolis issued a statement early in the legislative session calling for “the just and dignified treatment of migrants” as well as for national immigration reform and a pathway to citizenship for longtime residents who are undocumented.

House Bill 1393 has passed both chambers of the General Assembly after undergoing numerous amendments. The Senate version took the burden away from police officers on the street, instead requiring a local sheriff or jail staff members to notify federal authorities if they have probable cause that someone arrested on a misdemeanor or felony is in the state illegally.  
As final deliberations on the bill are underway, the ICC continues to call for Indiana to recognize the human dignity of undocumented residents.  
“They, too, are beloved sons and daughters of Christ, and he sees their suffering and their struggles,” LaCoursiere said. “We are going to continue to advocate for more well-rounded immigration legislation in the future that acknowledges the needs of these people in our community and upholds them as our neighbors and our brothers and sisters in Christ.”  
The Church’s concern for human dignity also forms the basis for its opposition to two measures that could pose economic harm to the most financially vulnerable Hoosiers.  
House Bill 1125, the Indiana Earned Wage Access (EWA) Act, proposes a new financial service that would allow employees to access their already-earned wages between pay cycles. Sponsors of the bill argue that this would be a lifeline for people living paycheck to paycheck who may face an unexpected medical expense or other financial hardship before their next payday.

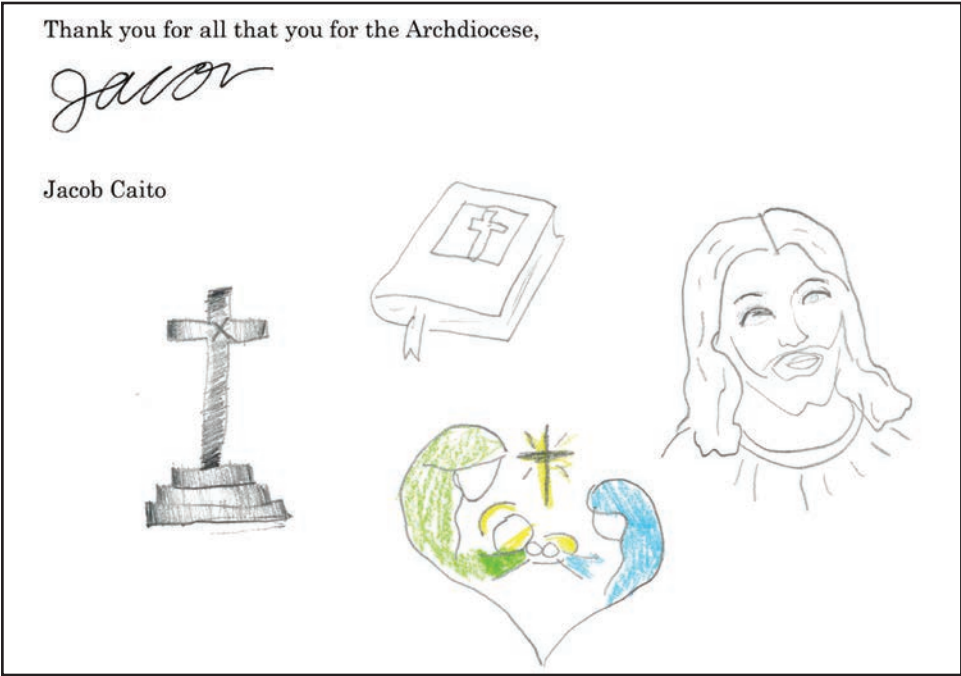
The measure would establish a regulatory framework in Indiana for EWA, also known as on-demand pay, which is currently offered in seven states. Authors of the bill, which passed the House on a 70-18 vote and is now under consideration in the Senate, point out that a no-fee option would be included for those choosing the service.  
But the ICC and other advocates have raised concerns about fees associated with other elements of the program, particularly for consumers in dire financial straits who need expedited access to their pre-earned wages.  
Erin Macey, director of the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute, recently told lawmakers that EWA could potentially trap the most economically challenged Hoosiers in a serious cycle of debt.  
During an April 2 hearing on the bill, Macey raised red flags on certain elements of the program, including high fees for expedited delivery of pre-earned wages and voluntary tipping for the service.  
Macey shared an example of an app-based EWA product that charged \$12 for a \$50 advance for a seven-day period.  
“This is almost double what a payday lender would charge for a \$50 advance,” she told members of the Senate Committee on Insurance and Financial Institutions. “And by statute, a payday lender would be required to give someone 14 days as a minimum repayment term.  
“While the current bill proposes to regulate this industry, it places Earned

Wage Access products outside of the scope of Indiana’s lending laws, and as such they’re not subject to any rate caps, fee limits, or our criminal loansharking statute.”  
A vote on House Bill 1125 was scheduled at press time in the Senate Committee on Insurance and Financial Institutions, which was also set to hear testimony on a payday lending bill posing serious concerns for the ICC and other advocates.  
House Bill 1174 would expand predatory lending in Indiana, creating new loan products with triple-digit annual percentage rates (APRs)—well above the 72 percent APR that the state currently considers criminal loansharking.  
The ICC has issued action alerts on both bills, urging the Catholic faithful to contact their lawmakers to oppose the measures.  
“Both bills, without further amendments and guardrails, will exploit the poor in our communities who need to take out loans or advances,” LaCoursiere said. “In these crucial final weeks of the General Assembly, we ask everyone to reach out to their legislators on these and other issues that will have an impact on the most vulnerable people in our state.”  
To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit [www.indianacc.org](http://www.indianacc.org).  
(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus [Little Flower] Parish in Indianapolis, is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †





Students from Holy Name of Jesus School in Beech Grove wrote letters and shared their artwork with adults who attended a retreat led by the students’ teacher, Benedictine Sister Nicolette Etienne, at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis on April 1.



# Hoping to draw closer to Christ? Take a tip from a child

By John Shaughnessy

As a religion teacher at Holy Name of Jesus School in Beech Grove, Benedictine Sister Nicolette Etienne thrives on the joyous and faith-filled interaction she has with the children.

So she wanted to share their joyful approach to faith as she was leading a retreat for adults at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis on April 1.

After all, Sister Nicolette knew well the direct challenge that Christ gave to adults when he said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3).

So, as Sister Nicolette prepared retreat packets for the adults, the first page she put into each of them were the individual messages that her sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students had written for the adults, starting their notes with greetings that ranged from “Happy Retreat Day!” to “You are amazing!”

In their messages, the children shared how their faith life has grown, hoping it would inspire the adults to do the same. Here are 10 of the perspectives that some of the children shared:

## Going to confession

“This touches my heart because in this sacrament we are being forgiven from our sins, mortal or venial, and this brings me closer to God,” Kendall wrote. “I don’t

have to feel bad for offending him in any way anymore.”

**Tapping into *lectio divina* (a way of developing a closer relationship with God by reflecting on Scripture)**

“I remember the first day when we started doing *lectio*. It feels like a discovery prayer,” Lillian wrote. “*Lectio* really allows us to focus on who God truly is. Reading a verse from Scripture and then explaining what our favorite word or verse from it was, that was truly amazing. It allowed me to really think deep down.”

**Viewing videos focused on Jesus**

“Things that get me closer to Jesus at Holy Name School are watching videos by Father Mike Schmitz,” wrote Brandon. “I love when he just tells us to do the right thing that Jesus would want us to do. If you want to get closer to Jesus and you don’t know how, just google Father Mike and listen to him talk. I love how he talks about Jesus and makes it funny. I’m grateful for learning more about Jesus.”

**Taking part in Stations of the Cross**

“They remind me how big and important Jesus’ sacrifice to us was,” Jayden wrote. “The Bible tells us that the night before his crucifixion, when he was in the garden, he was sweating blood. He was so anxious and nervous that he was sacrificing himself. He knew that what

God wanted him to do was right and that he had to save us from our sins.”

**“Studying and looking deeper into Scripture”**

“This has really impacted me because for the last year I have been questioning getting confirmed,” wrote Max. “This is why I chose St. Peter as my saint’s name. I chose him because he too was uneasy about his faith and dedication toward Jesus.

“For instance, when Jesus called Peter out onto a stormy ocean of waves, Peter was unsure. When he eventually got enough courage to walk out onto the water, he began to sink, but Jesus pulled him up out from under the choppy waves and asked Peter, ‘Why did you not believe?’ [Mt 14:31] This has kind of been how my faith has been through the last couple of years. Now since confirmation is right around the corner, I have really gotten deeper into my faith.

“In a way, I’m like Peter. I have been lost, but my shepherd has found me and has saved me from the wolves ... and the choppy waves!”

**Going to Mass**

“When the Gospel is proclaimed, sometimes it really touches my heart because of how powerful the message is to me. And sometimes it reminds me that God is good in everything he does for us even though we are not perfect like him,” Henry wrote. “During the consecration of the bread and wine, I feel Jesus’ power

and warmth around me. This is because he sacrificed himself for me and for everyone from our sins.”

**Walking in prayer**

“We have the opportunity to go on prayer walks through a trail we have about five minutes from our school,” Greta wrote. “During prayer walks, we like to pray the rosary as a class and just realize Mother Nature was made by God.”

**Studying the saints**

“Studying the saints has helped me understand what a life with Jesus really is, by showing how many holy things these people have done,” Miles noted.

**Praying the rosary**

“Praying the rosary touches my heart because you can say it anywhere—at home, at school, in the car, during a test, during a sporting event,” Joseph noted. “It makes me closer to God because whenever I pray the rosary all my problems go away. Like during a big test, I may be stressing out. I start praying the rosary, and I can feel God helping me with every question.”

**Taking part in eucharistic adoration**

“Adoration helps me get closer to Jesus because it’s a time where I can pray and talk to Jesus privately,” Avery wrote. “Also, during adoration, I pray for all of my loved ones and those who need help in life. Praying for others makes me feel really good.” †

# TEACHER

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In contrast, Nolan recalls about his early days at the school, “When I came to Holy Name in fifth grade, I wasn’t Catholic in the slightest bit. I was getting in trouble for messing around in Church because I thought it was a joke. I was trying to disprove any and everything about the religion at every turn.”

Fast forward to the present, two years later. Now an eighth-grade student who has been in Sister Nicolette’s religion class for three years, Nolan received the sacrament of confirmation on April 9—the latest landmark on what he describes as “a crazy journey.”

This is the story of that journey, a journey made by a teacher and a student, a journey guided by God.

## ‘Why not give it a try?’

When he first entered Sister Nicolette’s religion class in sixth grade, Nolan says, “I still wasn’t scared to voice my opinions, and she was fine with that. So, whenever I was still trying to disprove everything, she talked to me about it.”

Sister Nicolette took Nolan’s opinions and doubts in stride. “I’m never surprised when a student questions their faith,” she says. “In fact, I welcome these questions. It makes me happy when students are actually thinking about their faith. When Nolan was struggling with what he believed and didn’t believe, I let him talk. I listened with an open heart. I gently challenged his questions with other discerning questions. I wasn’t even aware that I was doing anything other than loving my students where they are in life.”

Her acceptance and her questions had an impact on

Nolan, opening him to consider some of the approaches that Sister Nicolette uses to try to deepen her students’ faith.

“I decided, ‘Why not give it a try?’ and I started to pay attention,” he says.

He tried *lectio divina*, a way of developing a closer relationship with God by reflecting prayerfully on Bible passages—reading the passage slowly, meditating upon it, and then talking to God about it.

“Another thing that helped me was morning prayer,” he says. “It helped me get exposed to daily prayer and to even know what the prayers are and what was being said in the prayers.”

Taking part in eucharistic adoration also left its mark—“being in the silence to just think about what it all meant and how to intertwine religion with my everyday life.”

Visits to see the Benedictine sisters at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove have been another part of the transformation for Nolan.

“Being able to see people that devoted their entire life to Jesus also showed me that it’s real, that it had such a huge impact in these people’s lives—that just intrigued me even more.”

All these elements helped lead Nolan to a commitment in the seventh grade to be baptized. He wanted Sister Nicolette to be there. She wouldn’t miss it.

“The day Nolan told me he was getting baptized, I was so happy,” she says. “It’s my prayer that one day everyone will come to the faith and live the life they are meant to live. Knowing that I was a small part of Nolan’s spiritual journey makes me love my teaching vocation even more.”

**‘It means the world to me’**

As an eighth-grade student, Nolan gets to take part in Mass three times a week at school—a gift he embraces. He also enjoys the times of interaction with Holy Name’s

pastor, Father Robert Robeson, and transitional Deacon Isaac Siefker, who is ministering at the parish before his priestly ordination on June 7.

“During the Lenten season, we get to have reconciliation with Father Bob, who will walk around the school and just hang out and talk with us. That means the world to us,” Nolan says. “Deacon Issac will even come play in our gym period. It’s the fact that they’re interactive with the students that really helps make kids listen more. They are more of a friend than just someone we only see at Mass.”

As his confirmation neared on April 9, Nolan said, “This milestone has been building up my excitement for the past few months.” It’s also been a time when he’s looked back on his journey of faith.

“My faith in God is stronger than ever. He has blessed me with a good life, and I’m truly grateful for it. However, as a typical teenager, I’ve sometimes struggled to prioritize him. Still, I believe my relationship with God is in a good place, and it means the world to me.”

Sister Nicolette has the same exuberance for Nolan’s embrace of God in his life.

“I was deeply touched,” she says. “I’m not one that chokes up easily, but that child of God had me practically sobbing.”

Nolan remembers a moment from fifth grade involving Sister Nicolette, a time when he questioned and challenged everything about faith.

“Sister makes rosaries,” he says. “Every Friday, the principal draws a name and announces the rosary winner of the week. When I won in fifth grade, I honestly thought it was a necklace until she explained what it was and how to pray it.

“I still have that rosary to this day.

“Thank you, Sister Nicolette.” †



# Archbishop Casey: ‘With a deep breath,’ rise to the call of Christ

(OSV News)—The new shepherd of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati on April 3 tied a story of learning to swim as a boy, “attempting to float but sinking like a rock,” to embracing the journey into the “deep water” of faith.

Archbishop Robert G. Casey, 57, recalled that boyhood challenge in the homily during his installation Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter in Chains, succeeding Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr, 76.

Led by a contingent of Knights of Columbus, more than 30 bishops (including Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson) and about 250 priests, deacons and seminarians processed into the cathedral for the two-hour liturgy, with Archbishop Casey as the principal celebrant and Archbishop Schnurr, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago and Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the U.S., as concelebrants.

A congregation of about 1,000 filled the cathedral and included family and friends of the new archbishop, as well as civic, interfaith and ecumenical leaders, local college presidents, men and women religious, representatives of ministries of the archdiocese, Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver and members of the Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great.

Attendees also included more than 350 parishioners representing the 199 parishes of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

In his homily, the archbishop recalled that he was 10 and his younger brother was 8 when their parents decided it would be a good idea for them to take swimming lessons at the local high school.

While he struggled to even float in the shallow end, “there in the deep end of the pool was my younger brother. Having

already advanced through all the levels of training, he was now leaping off the high dive to the thunderous applause of every man, woman and child in that pool,” the archbishop recalled. “Would I ever get there? Could I find my way and learn to swim, not only to float but to swim confidently into those deep waters?

“I finally did find my way to that deep end of the pool, and I believe this is the challenge of our discipleship—how do we go from being rocks that sink to living stones rising to our call?” he asked.

“Our journey in these days of Lent is another attempt for us to learn to swim,” he continued.

“Through our prayer, our fasting and our abstinence, we unburden ourselves from that which weighs us down, and we follow Christ into deep water, journeying from sin to grace from death to resurrection. We seek to arrive at Easter renewed, rising up with Christ so that we may boldly proclaim the good news and build up the kingdom of God. This was the journey of St. Peter, in whose cathedral basilica we gather today.”

In declaring that Peter would be the rock upon which he would build the Church, Jesus had total confidence that Peter “would have the strength and the stamina, the resolution, the resolve to bear the weight of the Church,” Archbishop Casey said.

“Yet we know Peter’s story. We know how he sank like a stone and could not walk on water. We know how he denied Jesus three times rather than face the fear of the cross,” he continued. “We know how he would find himself imprisoned and in chains. How did St. Peter find his way from being a rock that sinks to becoming a living stone rising to his call? St. Peter learned how to breathe. The journey into deep water would no longer scare him. With a deep breath, he could



Archbishop Robert G. Casey displays the papal bull from Pope Francis appointing him to head the Archdiocese of Cincinnati during his installation Mass on April 3 at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter in Chains in Cincinnati. Archbishop Casey, previously an auxiliary bishop for the Chicago Archdiocese, became the 10th archbishop of Cincinnati, succeeding Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr, 76. (OSV News photo/courtesy Archdiocese of Cincinnati)

face his fears, center himself in Christ, take in the strength of the Spirit.

“With a deep breath, we too can find the way forward,” he said.

As he has embraced “the call of Christ in my life,” beginning with his ordination to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Chicago 31 years ago, in 1994, “I’ve had to learn to breathe deep, not chained by my fears and uncertainties but centering myself in Christ, taking in the strength of the Spirit, the spirit of Pentecost first shared with Peter and the others so long ago that is now shared with me and all of us in baptism.”

Archbishop Casey, who had been a Chicago auxiliary bishop since 2018

when he was appointed to Cincinnati on Feb. 12, said he is “humbled and grateful” as he answers the call of Pope Francis “to serve as shepherd of this local Church in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

“I find myself encouraged on this day, excited for the journey ahead, knowing that together we will find the way to be unburdened by the chains that bind us. We will find ourselves centered in Christ and sustained by the Spirit,” he said, urging the faithful to “take a deep breath.

“Together may we confidently make our way into deep water, discovering together how Christ can and will transform us—transform us from rocks that sink to living stones rising to our call.” †




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# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Adoration of the cross on Good Friday is rooted in Church history

By D.D. Emmons

(OSV News)—If you’ve been Catholic for at least a few years, you will be familiar with a tradition celebrated on Good Friday in churches around the world—the adoration of the cross. But how did this tradition begin, and what does it signify for us Christians?

Before diving into the history and tradition of this important part of the Good Friday liturgy, it is important to note that there are many Catholic documents that refer to this ritual as the “veneration of the holy cross” as opposed to the “adoration of the holy cross.” The description that follows reflects the terminology in the *Roman Missal* as well as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which both use the word “adoration” of the holy cross. In a like manner, when reference to the cross is made herein, the term crucifix is also implied.

The ritual of adoring the holy cross can be traced to St. Helena who, in the early fourth century, traveled from Constantinople to Jerusalem seeking to uncover the sites of Christ’s passion, especially the cross used for his crucifixion.

The places where Jesus was tried, sentenced and crucified had been covered over by the Romans, even with pagan structures built on the sites. In her quest for the location where Christ was hung on a tree, Helena consulted with many locals.

They told her that the key to finding the cross was to find the spot where Christ was buried because the Jews typically dug a pit nearby and then buried everything that belonged to the criminal, including the instrument of execution. Following this advice, Helena had many local sites excavated and pagan statues and buildings removed.

Eventually three crosses were found. In order to identify which of the three was the true cross of Christ, the crosses were taken to a holy woman who was ill and near death. First, they prayed for the woman, then they touched her with a part of each of the crosses. One of the crosses caused her complete healing—the true cross. Helena sent part of the cross to Constantinople and left part in Jerusalem. She would later take pieces of the cross to Rome where it was enshrined in the church which became known as the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem.

By the seventh century, the Good Friday adoration of the wood of the true cross was being carried out in Rome. The pope and others walked in procession from the Basilica of St. John Lateran to the Holy Cross Church and then, in total humility without cap or shoes, adored the wood of the cross.

As the Church grew and with only a few parishes possessing fragments of the true cross, either a bare cross or a crucifix was used for the faithful to adore on Good Friday. Today, a cross without a figure of Jesus crucified is not common in our churches. In fact, the “General Instruction of the *Roman Missal*” (GIRM) reads: “There is also to be a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, where it is clearly visible to the assembled congregation. It is appropriate that such a cross, which calls to mind for the faithful the saving passion of the Lord, remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations” (#308). Certainly, the somber and sacredness of adoring the holy cross on Good Friday calls to mind the saving passion of the Lord.

In the Middle Ages, for a time, the habit of “creeping to the cross” became popular; that is, people crawled on their knees to the cross. The highly revered St. Louis IX, who ruled France as its king from 1226-70, is said to have crept on his knees to the cross on Good Friday—barefoot, without his crown, dressed in a hair shirt. His children

would do the same.

In 16th-century England, King Henry VIII (who ruled from 1509-47) issued a proclamation that included veneration of the cross: “creeping to the cross, and humbling ourselves to Christ on Good Friday before the cross, and there offering unto Christ before the same, and kissing of it in memory of our redemption by Christ made upon the cross.” The practice was off again and on again in England until the reign of Elizabeth I (who ruled from 1558-1603) when it was suppressed.

Good Friday is the only day of the year when the Church does not celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass. On this day, the faithful are meant to focus on the passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is the most sorrowful day known to man, the day our Savior died for us on the cross. Some 2,000 years later, Christians still gather every Good Friday afternoon around 3 p.m. to remember in a special way what happened at the Place of the Skull all those centuries ago—how Christ, suffering and innocent, was executed by hanging on a tree.

Although churches are often packed on this feast, Good Friday is not a holy day of obligation. It is a divine service known as the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord and made up of three parts. In the first part, Christ’s passion from the Gospel according to St. John is proclaimed and special, solemn intercessions are prayed. Next, worshippers adore the cross. Finally, they receive holy Communion. The most dramatic part is the adoration of the cross.

Following the proclamation of the passion and the praying of the 10 intercessions, the rite of the Adoration of the Holy Cross begins with the showing of the cross. There are two forms used in showing the cross. In one form, a veiled cross is brought in procession through the church to the sanctuary where the priest removes the veil in three stages, in between chanting: “Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the Savior of the world.” Those gathered respond, “Come let us adore,” then kneel and adore in silence. Three times the chanting, response and kneeling is repeated.

When unveiled, the cross is brought to a spot visible and accessible to all present, typically the entrance to the sanctuary. It may be held by two ministers. Adoration begins with each person coming forward and adoring the cross by a genuflection or other act appropriate to the local area or region.

A common method of adoration is to genuflect and then kiss the cross or crucifix. A genuflection is “reserved for the most Blessed Sacrament, as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil” (GIRM #274).

In his book, *A Sense of the Sacred*, James Monti references William Durandus, a 13th-century bishop in France, who believed the cross was unveiled in three stages representing the three times Christ was mocked during his trial, his sentencing and his crucifixion. “The first unveiling, revealing one arm of the cross while keeping the face of the crucifix veiled, symbolizes the mockery and blows to the face that Christ received while blindfolded in the court of the chief priest. The second unveiling, revealing the face of the crucifix, represents the mockery he received when he was crowned with thorns in the Praetorium. The third and final unveiling, completely uncovering the crucifix, symbolizes the mockery he received from passersby



During a Good Friday Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion on April 7, 2023, at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican, Pope Francis kisses a crucifix as he takes part in the liturgy’s traditional adoration of the cross, a practice deeply rooted in Church history. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

who, wagging their heads, blasphemed him as he hung stripped of his clothes on the Cross.”

An alternative form for showing the cross is for the priest or deacon to go to the door of the church, receive the unveiled cross and carry it in procession to the sanctuary. At the door, in the middle of the church and at the sanctuary the priest or deacon raises the cross chanting, “Behold the wood of the Cross,” and the community responds with, “Come let us adore.” At the raising of the cross, all kneel and adore. The cross is placed at the entrance of the sanctuary for the faithful to adore.

Each person in attendance on Good Friday is given the opportunity to adore the cross. In a letter issued by the Vatican’s Congregation of Divine Worship in 1988 says “the personal veneration [adoration] of the cross is a most important feature in this celebration” (#69). This letter also states, “let a cross be used that is of appropriate size and beauty. ... The rite should be carried out with the splendor worthy of the mystery of our salvation” (#68). Although we are encouraged to adore individually, there are some places where a large cross is used and more than one person adores simultaneously. The *Roman Missal* permits the priest, in the event of an extensive number of adorers, to stand in front of the altar and raise the cross allowing all those present the opportunity to silently adore it without processing forward to the cross.

Few events are more emotional for a Catholic than assembling with hundreds of others and in procession adoring our crucified Jesus on the cross, to see individuals genuflect, kiss his feet, watch as parents lift up their children to do the same. Despite our grief, we know that without the crucifixion, without the instrument of salvation there is no resurrection—which means no eternal life for us. Every blessing, every grace, every sacrament we have results from Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary.

Indeed, we humbly come in adoration before the one who gave himself for us. We stand where Mary stood, see his wounds, the nails, his pain, and we tremble as we kiss his feet trying to find a way to express our love. The mournful words of the “*Stabat Mater*” cross our minds: “Let me share with thee his pain,/Who for all our sins was slain,/Who for me in torments died.”

The Good Friday liturgy, which began with the reading of the passion of Christ, ends with holy Communion. The Eucharist distributed on Good Friday is consecrated the night before during the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday and then moved to an altar of repose. Following the adoration of the cross on Good Friday, the consecrated hosts are returned for holy Communion. After Communion, the Blessed Sacrament is reverently taken out of the church to a suitable place where it remains until the Easter Vigil.

The priest then offers the final blessing; all in attendance genuflect to the cross and depart in silence, promising in their hearts never again to bring such pain to Jesus. The cross remains but the altar is stripped and the whole church takes on the starkness we noted as the service began.

(D.D. Emmons writes from Pennsylvania.) †



Worshippers venerate a crucifix during a Good Friday liturgy on March 25, 2016, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. (CNS photo/Victor Aleman, Vida Nueva)



Joyful Witness/
Kimberly Pohovey

# Our Catholic faith teaches us that immigration is a respect life issue

I just started having my nails done at a local salon about a year ago. Luckily, I found a nail technician there who does a fantastic job, and I also enjoy chatting with her. She is originally from Venezuela, and I love learning about her culture, traditions and family.



When I went to my last appointment, she informed me that she would be leaving in about a month. I started to ask if she was moving to another salon to which I could follow her, when all of a sudden, I realized she meant she was leaving the country.

“Is this due to the immigration situation unfolding in America?” I asked. “Yes,” she answered, “I’m scared of what might happen to me.”

I’ll call her “Maria” for the purposes of this column. Maria came to the United States 11 years ago, fleeing the turbulence and tyranny of the Venezuelan government. She immediately filed for asylum and obtained a green card to legally work in the United States. She found a job and dutifully paid taxes on her earnings, knowing full well that she wouldn’t benefit from Social Security. She explained to me that she knew how important it was for her to pay taxes to be a contributing member of our society.

Maria waited 10 years for her asylum hearing, which finally occurred last summer. She had been waiting a decision ever since. Her attorney led her to believe that hers was an open-and-shut case because she followed all the right and legal steps. In the meantime, the Trump

administration took over the executive branch of the government in January. A month ago, she received word that her asylum case was denied.

Now, she’s scared. While she doesn’t want to return to her homeland, she feels it might be safer than remaining here and risk being deported to another country—or worse. She is already unraveling her American life: giving notice at her job, and selling her house, car and other belongings.

I will miss our chats, but I said I couldn’t blame her for deciding to leave.

While I understand immigration is a complicated subject for many, I have to believe there is a better way to treat people.

Our country was founded on immigration. Our melting pot has brought together a variety of cultures, which has enriched the traditions of our nation. For generations, hard-working people sought refuge in the United States and seized the opportunities afforded them to prosper and safeguard their families.

I have listened to some Catholics denounce immigrants from one side of their mouth while claiming to respect life from the other. I believe immigration, like trying to end abortion in society, is a respect life issue.

Do I think our country has an immigration problem? Of course. But I think a more thoughtful and thorough approach would help preserve the dignity of the person. Instead of rounding up large swaths of immigrants for deportation, I wish the current administration would take the time to be sure of *who* they are deporting. I am distressed to hear accounts of persons being deported who have legal status in

this country. I am equally distressed to hear some Catholics speak of immigrants as if they are less than the rest of us.

In my work at the archdiocese, I have had the privilege of interacting with immigrants who are living and working in our community. We serve many of them and their needs through Catholic Charities, ministries, parishes and schools. Personally, I have only met hard-working individuals who simply want a better life for their children and themselves. I wonder how many of us would pursue immigration, legally or illegally, if our families were threatened with violence?

It’s easy in this day and age to demonize whole groups of people through careless social media posts. You know what’s hard? Sitting face to face with an immigrant—hearing their story, understanding their plight, and really “seeing” that person as a child of God.

I remember the first time I listened to an immigrant describe for me the night his family fled the gang violence and bombing which besieged his town. They left literally with the clothes on their backs and no shoes. In my middle-class suburban American life, I cannot even fathom their fear or their journey.

As Pope Francis has reminded us, Jesus, Mary and Joseph were refugees escaping King Herod’s wrath. Can you imagine treating them with disdain simply because they were fleeing for their lives?

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

Our Works of Charity/
David Bethuram

# Forgiveness transforms relationships, fosters a deeper sense of trust

Forgiveness is a cornerstone of the Catholic faith, reflecting God’s boundless love and mercy.

It is essential for healing and reconciliation, both with God and others, and is a fundamental requirement for receiving God’s forgiveness.



Catholic Charities, as an extension of the Church’s mission, emphasizes the power of forgiveness through its teachings and actions, offering services that help individuals heal from trauma and mend broken relationships. Through these efforts, the organization embodies God’s compassion and love.

Spiritually, forgiveness deepens our connection with God. By mirroring his mercy, we strengthen our relationship with him and fulfill his command. In forgiving others, we open ourselves to receiving God’s grace, experiencing the profound peace that comes with letting go of resentment.

In addition to its spiritual significance, forgiveness is a powerful act that frees us from the burden of negative emotions. By letting go of grudges and resentment, we create space for healing, growth and inner peace. Forgiveness allows us to move forward, fostering emotional well-being and improving the quality of our relationships.

Forgiveness promotes healing. Holding onto anger and resentment can weigh heavily on our emotional and physical health, contributing to stress, anxiety and other ailments. Forgiveness provides relief from these burdens, offering a path toward healing. When we release negative emotions, we cultivate a sense of peace and closure, helping us to focus on the present and embrace life with renewed positivity.

Forgiveness can foster growth. Choosing to forgive requires deep reflection, self-awareness and personal growth. It challenges us to confront our emotions, learn from our past experiences, and develop greater empathy. By putting ourselves in another’s shoes, we gain a deeper understanding of their perspective, fostering compassion and strengthening our relationships.

Forgiveness can break the cycle of negativity that we find ourselves in. Unresolved anger and resentment can trap us in a cycle of negativity, making it difficult to move forward. Forgiveness disrupts this cycle, allowing us to find closure and rebuild trust. It provides an opportunity to focus on the future rather than being weighed down by the past, enabling us to live more fully in the present moment.

Forgiveness is vital in maintaining healthy relationships as it facilitates conflict resolution and restores harmony. Letting go of hurt and resentment prevents negativity from poisoning our interactions, paving the way for healing and reconciliation. It also encourages open and honest communication, allowing individuals to express their feelings in a supportive environment.

In conflicts, forgiveness acts as a bridge to understanding. Holding onto anger creates barriers, making resolution difficult. By embracing forgiveness, we open ourselves to empathy, accountability and meaningful dialogue, strengthening our connections with others.

Ultimately, forgiveness is not just about moving past a wrong—it is about transforming relationships and fostering a deeper sense of trust and mutual growth.

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

Media Mindfulness/
Sr. Nancy Usselmann, F.S.P.

# Season five of ‘The Chosen’ sets the table for the events of Holy Week

While it began as an independent crowd-funded series, “The Chosen” has now become a global phenomenon as the most watched series in the world.



At the season five premiere in North Texas, 5&2 Studios put on the largest season opening event yet, with a significant Catholic presence. Numerous Catholic journalists, bloggers and social media influencers gathered with hundreds of other supporters, media professionals and fans to usher in the eight episodes that present the start of the dramatic events of Holy Week.

Red carpet premieres are often full of glitz and glamor with a focus on the presence of the show’s stars. For “The Chosen,” however, the focus was on the people—fans who were physically present and thousands virtually present through a global livestream. Many of the actors and producers spent less time interviewing on the red carpet and more time with the fans—a characteristic of the series since it went viral, not through big Hollywood studio distribution, but by crowdfunding. The fans made it what it is today.

They will not be disappointed with this season that covers the emotionally charged Last Supper with flashbacks to Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem and other events that lay the groundwork for the Lord’s paschal mystery.

Dallas Jenkins—creator, writer, director and producer—says premieres are not what he considers when working on the series. He instead focuses on the content that he hopes will touch hearts and souls.

Of season five, Jenkins says, “We’ve been writing toward these moments the whole time. When we first sat

down to plot the shows, we said, alright, we know where we’re going, how do we set it up so when we get there it’s more emotionally impactful and not just a stained-glass window or a painting. We want to make sure you don’t look at it [the show] like it’s a painting. These were human beings. ...We’re going to give you the personal, intimate, relational, human aspects of the story.”

And with more than 250 million views, the show proves that its relatability has touched audiences all over the world.

Life is a mix of suffering and joy, as the opening events of Holy Week convey with the jubilant entry into Jerusalem. George Xanthis, who plays the Apostle John, reflects on how the audience knows what’s going to happen, but the disciples have no idea. He comments, “They think the Messiah is coming who is going to be this soldier on a horse going to defeat the Romans, but he’s actually going to surrender himself for our sins. And it’s never what you expect. And that’s what surrender is all about—not knowing.” The audience feels the insecurities of the Apostles while understanding Jesus’ pensive and somber moods.

Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus in the series, presents a depth of emotion in the episodes of season five that surpasses any in the show up until now. When asked what his interior feelings were as he portrayed Jesus knowing his passion was imminent, he said, “It felt as profound to film as I hope it is being received ... and continues to be received by people throughout the entire season.” He continues, “For me, it was extremely sacred to approach it.”

Roumie said his spiritual director was on set as he filmed these scenes, offering the sacraments and covering him with prayer. Without that prayer, he says, “If I had to think about what I was doing and the magnitude of it, I probably would have collapsed under the weight thinking

that I was on my own.” Prayer helps us rely on God alone, and Roumie intimately believes in the power of God when he says, “I tried to bring the fullness of my experience as a Catholic to the role, to those scenes specifically.”

An impressive aspect of “The Chosen” is the spirituality that exudes from everyone involved, regardless of whether they are Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish or agnostic. Each person believes this is an other-worldly story to tell. For writer Tyler Thompson, the reality of bringing the Bible to life through the series tops all other jobs. He says, “At the end of the day, a lot of the work is very solitary, so when we get to share it with the group of people here in person it is really remarkable.” He continues, “There really are no words. We fumble through it, but even as writers, we sort of lack the language for how remarkable this all is.”

The premiere showcased how astonishingly the series has touched people like no other. People shared freely with strangers that their lives were changed as a result of the show.

Jenkins believes that both filmmakers and audience are given a spiritual task. He says, “Christ has something specific for you that he might not have for me even though the message of salvation is for both of us. And that’s what I’m learning more than ever. ... It has impacted my personal life, but it’s also impacted the show.”

With millions of followers on social media, season five will surely ignite a spiritual revolution that brings the world to its knees during this holiest of seasons.

*(Sister Nancy Usselmann, a Daughter of St. Paul, is director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies in Los Angeles and a media literacy education specialist.) †*



Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 13, 2025

- Luke 19:28-40 (procession)
- Isaiah 50:4-7
- Philippians 2:6-11
- Luke 22:14-23:56

The Church this weekend leads us to the climax of Lent—the observance of Holy Week—by offering the impressive liturgy of Palm Sunday.

It recalls the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. For St. Luke, this was the utter apex of the entire ministry of the Lord since it was there that the crucifixion and resurrection would occur. The readings for this Mass bring us to the heart of the Church’s teaching regarding salvation. Jesus is eternal Lord and Savior.

When the palms are blessed, and the solemn procession (ideally of all in the congregation) forms, the Church offers us a reading from Luke that recalls the plans for the arrival of Jesus in the Holy City as well as the arrival itself.

An element of inevitability, of providence, surrounds the event. Some Pharisees objected to the acclamation that Jesus received from his disciples. Jesus responded that, even if the disciples were silent, the very stones would shout the good news of salvation in him. God wills that we have, in Christ, everlasting life.

For the first reading, the Church gives us the third of the four “songs of the suffering servant” from the third section of Isaiah. Scholars debate the identity of this servant. Was he a prophet? A collective symbol for the people of Israel? In any case, Christians have always seen in these songs the image of the innocent, constantly loyal servant of God, the Lord Jesus.

The second reading is from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. These verses are thought to have been an ancient Christian hymn, used in early liturgies, eloquent in declaring intense faith.

As its last reading, the Church dramatically offers a passage from Luke’s passion narrative. The rubrics of the liturgy provide for the congregation to be involved.

Each Gospel contains a highly detailed and lengthy account of the trial and execution of Jesus. Each evangelist was an individual person who had his own insights into what happened on the first Good Friday.

In general, Luke’s Gospel sees Jesus as the embodiment of God’s mercy, literally God in human flesh, the son of Mary, a woman, not an angel or a goddess. Jesus bears eternal life. He makes all things right. He seeks out the wayward and the despondent. He reconciles sinners with God. All this is completed in the Lord’s sacrificial death on Calvary, so everything so far has been a prelude to those final days in Jerusalem.

Jesus had his enemies. People are obtuse, at times devious and even vicious. Still, the love of God will not be thwarted. Salvation will come. It is God’s will for us.

### Reflection

Few sections of the Scriptures are as powerful as the four passion narratives presented to us in the Gospels. Luke’s account of Christ’s suffering and death teaches us and calls us to Christ.

The readings from Isaiah and Philippians brilliantly focus our minds upon Jesus. He is Lord!

On Palm Sunday, the crown of the Liturgy of the Word is the awesome proclamation of the passion of Jesus as presented by St. Luke. The Church takes us most movingly to the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem. He is destined to redeem the world. Salvation had to come. He was promised. He is king. Some people responded. Some did not, burdened by their ignorance, sin or pride.

Finally, magnificently, the passion narrative reveals the depth of the Lord’s giving of self despite the intrigue of the trial and the awfulness of the crucifixion.

Figuratively, hard to admit, because of our sins, we stand with the enemies of Christ. God nevertheless loves us with a perfect, uncompromising, unending love. He forgives us, offering us eternal salvation if simply we turn to him with love and repentance. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, April 14

Monday of Holy Week  
Isaiah 42:1-7  
Psalm 27:1-3, 13-14  
John 12:1-11

### Tuesday, April 15

Tuesday of Holy Week  
Isaiah 49:1-6  
Psalm 71:1-4a, 5-6ab, 15, 17  
John 13:21-33, 36-38

Chrism Mass  
Isaiah 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9  
Psalm 89:21-22, 25, 27  
Revelation 1:5-8  
Luke 4:16-21

### Wednesday, April 16

Wednesday of Holy Week  
Isaiah 50:4-9a  
Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34  
Matthew 26:14-25

### Thursday, April 17

Holy Thursday  
Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper  
Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14  
Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16c, 17-18  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
John 13:1-15

### Friday, April 18

Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord  
Celebration of the Lord’s Passion  
Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25  
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9  
John 18:1-19:42

See READINGS, page 14

## Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

# Discernment is needed in deciding whether or not to attend certain weddings

Recently my cousin got engaged and is in the planning process of her wedding. She is a baptized Catholic and



has received both first Communion and confirmation. Through time, my cousin slowly fell away from the faith. The man she is marrying is a great guy—however, he is not Catholic. From the looks of it, the

wedding is not going to be in a Catholic church and more along the lines of a beach wedding or at a fancy hotel.

The wedding will be presided over by what looks to be a friend. I am worried now about the rift that might happen in my family if we decline to go to my cousin’s wedding. I also do not want to go against my Catholic beliefs. I guess after all that my question is: What are the “rules” around attending a non-Catholic wedding of a Catholic and a non-Catholic? (New Hampshire)

Strictly speaking, the Church does not have the kind of formal “rules” you are looking for on this issue. But the choice of whether to attend a problematic wedding requires serious personal discernment.

For some background, Catholics and only Catholics are required to marry “according to canonical form,” which, for the most part, means marrying in a Catholic ceremony.

If a Catholic neglects to observe canonical form in their wedding, this is not only illicit (i.e., something we’re not supposed to do) but also leads to an invalid marriage (i.e., the wedding will not have “worked” and no real marriage will have taken place). And for the purposes of marriage, a person is considered Catholic if he

or she were ever baptized Catholic or formally entered the Church at any point, even if they are now no longer practicing.

It is possible, however, for a Catholic who is marrying a non-Catholic to obtain a “dispensation from canonical form,” which is special permission from the local bishop to marry in a non-Catholic ceremony. These dispensations are granted on a case-by-case basis for serious pastoral reasons. They allow for a Catholic to contract a valid marriage even in a non-Catholic context.

If your cousin has been granted a dispensation from canonical form, then, as long as the officiant was qualified to witness a civilly valid marriage, there is nothing problematic about the wedding from a Catholic perspective, and there would be no issue with you attending such a wedding.

It could be that your cousin actually did request this kind of dispensation—or if not, perhaps you might suggest she meet with a priest from the closest parish to ask about this as a possibility.

Things are more complicated if your cousin has no intention of requesting a dispensation from canonical form. In that case, the marriage would be straightforwardly invalid.

The Church does not have any stated clear prohibition on attending a wedding you know to be invalid, but there are good reasons why Catholics may decide in conscience that they could not be present at such a wedding.

One such reason is a basic sense of truthfulness. If a Catholic attends a clearly invalid wedding in the normal festive spirit, they are celebrating something which is, at least objectively, a falsehood.

Another issue is the potential for scandal. Technically, “scandal” doesn’t mean something “shocking”; it means causing others to stumble. If a Catholic—especially one with a ministerial or teaching role, like clergy or catechists—were to attend an obviously invalid wedding, this could send the message that it’s not a big deal to ignore the Church’s marriage laws.

At the end of the day, you personally need to weigh the need to avoid causing scandal with potential concerns about family unity, keeping in mind what is truly best for the souls of those involved. I would suggest discussing your situation with a good priest who knows you well in real life.

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

## My Journey to God

# Are we the crowd?

By John DeSantis

The crowd yelled at Jesus as the convicted man was led out. They were jeering and taunting him and shouting out loud. Some of the people in the crowd were also Jesus’ disciples. But they remained silent because they feared their survival. The sight of Jesus being scourged was very tragic and painful. And the guilt for abandoning him made them feel shameful. Some of the faithful were with Mary walking near Jesus’ side. But they were fearful too and they kept feelings hidden inside. Along the way Jesus stopped to talk to some weeping women. He said don’t weep for him but themselves and their children. Jesus fell three times carrying his cross on the way up the hill. Where he was crucified and died and the crowd remained still. Jesus, are we some of the people who hid in fear and shame? Or do we proudly proclaim: “Jesus, Blest be your holy name”?

(John DeSantis is a member of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield. Photo: In this photo from the Shrine of Christ’s Passion in St. John, Ind., a life-size bronze sculpture depicts the second Station of the Cross in which Christ takes up the cross. The Shrine of Christ’s Passion in northwestern Indiana features 40 such sculptures of the Lord’s passion, crucifixion and resurrection on a half-mile, paved trail with audio recordings at each stop.) (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)









# St. Michael the Archangel Parish: Active, diverse and welcoming

By Natalie Hoefer

There was good cause for Archbishop Paul C. Schulte to create St. Michael the Archangel Parish on the west side of Indianapolis in 1948—the population of the township where it resides increased 45% between 1940 and 1950.

In its 77 years, the faith community has had some trials by fire—literally. The original church was destroyed by fire in 1967, and fire severely damaged the second church’s sacristy in 1989. And the current steeple was installed in 2016 after a storm toppled the former one in 2015.

But the parishioners’ faith prevailed. Father John Kamwendo, the current pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish, uses three words to describe the faith community now: active, diverse and welcoming.

### Active in faith and charity

The Divine Mercy Chapel, located in a convent next to the parish rectory, used to offer perpetual adoration and also Benediction once a month. But the COVID-19 pandemic took its toll. The chapel reduced its hours, limited exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and no longer offers Benediction.

Father Kamwendo began to see “a hunger of people wanting to do Benediction more.”

He began to offer adoration with simultaneous confession and ending with Benediction prior to the parish’s 6 p.m. Mass on Tuesdays and Fridays. And time for praying the rosary was added after the 8:30 a.m. Saturday Mass.

“We have daily Mass in the morning on Wednesday and Thursday, too,” he says. “But those evening Masses on Tuesday and Friday and the Saturday morning Mass, there are so many people who come. It’s 50, 100 people sometimes.”

Parishioners also have a spirit of charity, says Father Kamwendo, expressed most visibly through the parish’s St. Vincent de Paul Society conference.

“They serve a number of people, most who are non-parishioners,” he says. “I’m just

humbled by how strong and how positive that ministry is, and I’m just amazed by the participation of the parishioners and their commitment” to the parish’s monthly second collection for its St. Vincent de Paul conference.

Father Kamwendo also notes St. Michael-St. Gabriel Elementary School’s outreach through its Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) athletics ministry.

“They don’t say, ‘If you don’t go to our school, you are not part of our teams,’ ” he says. “They involve not only the school kids, but kids from the neighborhood who are not even Catholic.”

There are many other ministries as well. Last year’s St. Michael Festival—held each year in October—included a ministry fair.

“It was eye-opening to see how many ministries there are and how many parishioners are involved,” Father Kamwendo says. “You could feel their spirit.”

### ‘We are very diverse’

The parish began with 106 families in 1948. Now, more than 600 families call St. Michael the Archangel their faith home.

“We are very diverse,” says Father Kamwendo. Among the parish’s Anglo and Black members are many “longtime parishioners, some who have been here since the beginning.”

St. Michael the Archangel has also become home to African, Filipino and Hispanic members in recent years, reflecting the changing demographics of the area.

Among the Hispanic community are those involved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, he says. Twice a year, they organize a charismatic retreat in Spanish attended by Hispanics from other parishes and states.

For the Filipino members—and all who wish to join—the parish has occasionally hosted *Simbang Gabi*, a Filipino tradition of a novena of Masses leading up to Christmas.

Father Kamwendo categorizes the parish’s African members in two groups: those from Eritrea and Ethiopia in East Africa, and those from countries in West and Sub-Saharan Africa.

“The Eritrean and Ethiopian members are very active and involved,” says Father Kamwendo. “But what’s unique



about them is they have their own Catholic rite called the Ge’ez Rite,” also known as the Alexandrian Rite.

Three times a year, a priest is invited to offer Mass at the parish “in the Ge’ez Rite and in their language,” he says. “Catholics of that descent and that rite from Indianapolis and in the neighboring areas join them. So, it’s a large community in that sense.”

Among the parish’s other African members are those from Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast) and the Benin Republic, says Father Kamwendo.

“We also have a large number of people from Congo, and these people went through [refugee] camps in Rwanda, Tanzania and other places.”

Those who lived in Tanzania and eastern Congo speak Kiswahili—as does Father Kamwendo, a native of Tanzania.

“So, once a month I offer Mass in Kiswahili,” he says. “People travel from Greenwood, Bloomington, from Shelbyville and Columbus for that Mass.”

### ‘It’s our job to show them to Jesus’

The parish’s embrace of those from other countries speaks to the sense of welcome offered by St. Michael the Archangel members.

“Many people have complimented the parish to me personally or written letters saying that when they come to

St. Michael, they feel welcomed, they feel at home because of that diversity,” says Father Kamwendo.

With the parish’s proximity to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, many of those comments come from Europeans and Catholics from other parts of the globe in town for races—especially the Indianapolis 500 in May.

“There are a lot of people who are involved in the racing teams and things like that who are here for that whole month,” he says. “There are racing team members who come every year, wearing their team jackets. And they say, ‘Father, we are back!’ ”

Whether it’s international travelers or those who have settled in the area, ministering to those who speak another language can be challenging, says Father Kamwendo.

But they feel welcomed at St. Michael the Archangel because its members “speak the language of love,” he says.

Members of the faith community “treat them as human beings. [They] respect their identity and who they are. It starts with the ushers and the people sitting next to you, and then everybody is welcoming, respectful and loving.

“At the end of the day, it’s our job to show them to Jesus. That’s why they keep on coming to St. Michael the Archangel.”

*(Mass Excursions is a periodic feature highlighting archdiocesan parishes.) †*



## Kansas parish holds vigil for beloved priest tragically killed by gunman

SENECA, Kan. (OSV News)—On the evening of April 3, hundreds of people packed SS. Peter and Paul Church in Seneca, a small rural community of about 2,100, to pray for and mourn their beloved pastor and friend, Father Arul Carasala, 57, who was shot earlier that day between 2 and 3 p.m. at the parish rectory.



Father Arul Carasala

Transported to a local hospital, he died there as a result of his wounds.

Gary Hermes, 66, of Tulsa, Okla., was arrested and charged with first-degree murder in connection with the priest’s death, according to a statement released by

the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.

People from the parish and nearby communities of Corning, Kelly, Centralia, Wetmore, Sabetha, Wetmore, Blue Rapids and other towns came together for a prayer vigil consisting of a rosary, the chaplet of Divine Mercy and an evening Mass celebrated by Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City. The liturgy was concelebrated by eight priests from throughout the deanery.

During his brief remarks after leading

the rosary and chaplet of Divine Mercy, Father Joel Haug—pastor of Sacred Heart in Sabetha, St. James in Wetmore and St. Augustine parishes in Fidelity—told those gathered, “These are the moments we really need to be there for each other.”

Giving the congregation “permission to cry,” he also instructed everyone to check on one another in the coming days, weeks and months and to “hug each other” as the parish and northeast Kansas mourn the loss. Father Haug also reminded everyone that Christians are “distinguished by our love for our enemies,” that no one should let “anger, bitterness, or resentment grow in our hearts” and that everyone should practice forgiveness and love.

Of Father Carasala, Father Haug said to the congregation, “He loves you all. He will continue to love you.”

In his homily, Archbishop Naumann said, “There really are no words for an occasion like this. I was just admiring the beauty of this church, which Father Arul loved and rallied you to renew it ... and restore it to its original beauty and beyond.

“But the real beauty is what’s in the pews tonight,” he continued. “This is what the church building is for. It’s to help us to come and encounter God here.

“It takes a lot to be a priest today,” the

archbishop continued. “It requires heroic love. And it’s beautiful to see so many of our priests here on a moment’s notice. It shows how important Father Arul was. Because he wasn’t just the pastor here. He was the dean of this deanery. I used to kid him that he was the ‘bishop of Seneca.’ ”

It was important, the archbishop added, not to lose sight of Father Arul’s life.

“We don’t want this senseless act of violence to rob us of this knowledge of God’s love for us,” said Archbishop Naumann. “And that it’s the Gospel that we proclaim today from St. Luke which captures that paschal mystery—the death of Jesus and the rising of Jesus. And it’s because of this as Christians we’re never without hope. That this world we know, we’re just passing through it. It’s not our final destination. And this was the truth of the Gospel of Jesus that Father Arul proclaimed, that he gave his life for.

“We ask the Lord tonight to console

our hearts, to give us renewed love for him and the gift of our Catholic faith,” the archbishop continued, “and let us pray that we can respond to this terrible tragedy as an invitation to grow deeper in following Jesus our Lord. He forgave from the cross those who crucified him. He prayed for them to his Father and said, ‘Forgive them, they know not what they do’ (Lk 23:34).

“So, we pray tonight. We pray for all of you. We pray for all those that mourn Father Arul in India and here, for all whose hearts are hurting, that the Lord will bring consolation.”

Prayers for the perpetrator, Archbishop Naumann said, were important “that the Lord will touch his heart as well.”

He added, “We pray that we respond to this tragedy not with violence for violence but let us respond in the way that Jesus has revealed to us—with love and with mercy.” †

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# United in the Eucharist

## Be the Answer to Someone's Prayer

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

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

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

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

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