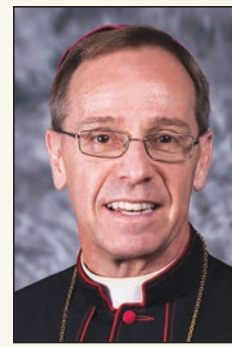




The

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Christ the Cornerstone

Synodality, solidarity and justice tempered with mercy, page 5.

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September 26, 2025

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Kathy and John Bannister of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis sip from a Coke together during his rehabilitation earlier this year at Craig Hospital near Denver, after his horrifying accident while skiing in Colorado. (Submitted photo)

After asking God twice to take his life, man finds joy in a deeper faith in him

(One in a continuing series of stories about “Pilgrims of Hope” in the archdiocese)

By John Shaughnessy

On that beautiful day, while savoring his favorite joy, John Bannister never expected to be begging God for help, even pleading to end his life.

That January morning of this year had begun perfectly in so many ways. Sunshine beamed down on the mountain in Vail, Colo., the ski slope covered with fresh powdered snow. And

Bannister was there with three of his closest friends from high school, friends who had continued their bond through the 51 years after their graduation.

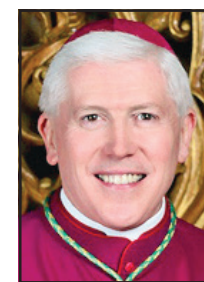
As he looked down the mountain, Bannister smiled at the thought of making a run along the snow-covered slope in what he considers God’s country, a joy that had marked his life ever since he had begun skiing out west with friends for the past 39 years.

On this morning, because one of the friends was still relatively new to skiing, their group had decided to begin on

See FAITH, page 8

Respect Life Month takes on new meaning during Jubilee Year, says bishop

(OSV News)—The upcoming annual observance of Respect Life Month by the nation’s Catholics in October takes on new meaning amid the Jubilee Year of



Bishop Daniel E. Thomas

Hope, said the chair of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee.

“The gift of human life exists as a sign of hope to our world today, defying the powers of darkness and the culture of death,” said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in a statement included in a press release.

Since 1973—the year in which the Supreme Court rulings in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* legalized abortion nationwide—the Catholic Church in the U.S. has designated October as Respect Life Month, with the first Sunday of October as Respect Life Sunday.

The USCCB’s Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities provides a range of resources to help further an understanding of Catholic teaching, which holds that all human life is sacred from conception to natural death, and therefore must be respected and protected absolutely.

Since the first century, the Catholic Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. Catholic teaching also states that “intentional euthanasia, whatever its forms or motives, is murder,” with the Second Vatican Council condemning “euthanasia or willful self-destruction” among the moral “infamies” that “poison human society” and are a “supreme dishonor to the Creator.”

In his full statement—which was dated October 2025 and posted to the USCCB’s website—Bishop Thomas stressed that “the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord

See RESPECT LIFE, page 3

At Red Mass, Catholic legal professionals rededicate themselves to respecting human dignity

By Sean Gallagher

For centuries, Catholic attorneys, judges and other legal professionals have gathered to worship in the fall at the start of a court’s term, which traditionally began at that time of year.

In such Masses, they seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit

See RED MASS, page 9

Wearing their courtroom robes, judges who serve in central Indiana worship together on Sept. 15 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral at the start of the annual Red Mass organized by the St. Thomas More Society of Central Indiana. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)





A detail is seen of “Angels Unawares,” a sculpture by Canadian Timothy Schmalz in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on June 3, 2024. The sculpture depicts a boat with 140 figures of migrants from various historical periods and various nations. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Migrants, refugees bravely embody the belief that joy is possible, Pope Leo says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—With their courage and tenacity in the pursuit of happiness, migrants and refugees are “messengers of hope,” Pope Leo XIV said. “Their courage and tenacity bear heroic testimony to a faith that sees beyond what our eyes can see and gives them the strength to defy death on the various contemporary migration routes,” the pope wrote in his message for the celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on Oct. 4-5, which will coincide with the Jubilee of Migrants. The Catholic Church in the United States celebrates National Migration Week on Sept. 22-28. Migrants and refugees also remind the Church that she, too, is on a journey, and true citizenship is in heaven, he wrote.

“Each time the Church gives in to the temptation of ‘sedentarization’ and ceases to be a ‘civitas peregrine,’ God’s people journeying toward the heavenly homeland, she ceases to be ‘in the world’ and becomes ‘of the world,’” the pope wrote, citing the founder of his religious order, St. Augustine.

Pope Leo’s message, which focused on the theme “Migrants, missionaries of hope,” was released at the Vatican on July 25, the feast of St. James the Apostle.

“The current global context is sadly marked by wars, violence, injustice and extreme weather events, which force millions of people to leave their homelands in search of refuge elsewhere,” his message said.

“The widespread tendency to look after the interests of limited communities poses a serious threat to the sharing of responsibility, multilateral cooperation, the pursuit of the common good and global solidarity for the benefit of our entire human family,” it said.

“The prospect of a renewed arms race and the development of new armaments, including nuclear weapons, the lack of consideration for the harmful effects of the ongoing climate crisis, and the impact of profound economic inequalities make the challenges of the present and the future increasingly demanding,” the pope wrote.

“Faced with frightening scenarios and the possibility of global devastation,”

he wrote, more people must yearn for a future of peace and respect for the dignity of everyone. “Such a future is essential to God’s plan for humanity and the rest of creation.”

God has placed the desire for happiness in the heart of every human being, he wrote.

In fact, he wrote, “the search for happiness, and the prospect of finding it beyond one’s place of origin, is certainly one of the main motivations for the movement of people today.

“Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope,” he wrote. “Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible.

“In a world darkened by war and injustice, even when all seems lost, migrants and refugees stand as messengers of hope,” he wrote.

“In a special way, Catholic migrants and refugees can become missionaries of hope in the countries that welcome them,” Pope Leo wrote.

“With their spiritual enthusiasm and vitality, they can help revitalize ecclesial communities that have become rigid and weighed down, where spiritual desertification is advancing at an alarming rate,” he wrote.

The presence of Catholic migrants and refugees “should be recognized and appreciated as a true divine blessing,” he wrote. Quoting from the New Testament’s Letter to the Hebrews, he reminded the faithful not to neglect showing hospitality to strangers since, “through it, some have unknowingly entertained angels” (Heb 13:2).

Looking ahead to the jubilee celebrations and day of prayer in October, Pope Leo wrote he was entrusting all those who are on the move, as well as those who accompany them, “to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, comfort of migrants, so that she may keep hope alive in their hearts and sustain them in their commitment to building a world that increasingly resembles the kingdom of God, the true homeland that awaits us at the end of our journey.” †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 23–October 10, 2025

Sept. 23 – Oct. 10
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Pilgrimage, Italy, and European travel

True justice promotes dignity, equality, forgiveness, pope tells judges

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Christians committed to the exercise of justice on behalf of a nation or the Catholic Church, must strive to fully respect the law, the dignity of the person and the need for reconciliation and forgiveness, Pope Leo XIV said.



Pope Leo XIV

Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. and judges, lawyers, court officials, canon lawyers and law professors from about 100 countries attended the event.

Pope Leo focused his remarks on the beatitude, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness [or justice] for they will be satisfied” (Mt 5:6).

“To ‘hunger and thirst’ for justice means being aware that it demands personal effort to interpret the law in the most humane way possible,” the pope said. “But more importantly, it calls us to long for a ‘satisfaction’ that can only be fulfilled in a greater justice—one that transcends particular situations.”

A nation cannot be said to be just only because laws are applied and procedures followed, he said. And upholding the maxim, “to give each their due,” is not enough either.

In fact, Pope Leo said, true justice unites the dignity of the person, his or her relationship with others, and the shared structures and rules that aim to promote the common good, including of the offender.

The biblical stories of the persistent widow, the prodigal son and the laborers who are paid the same although they work a different amount of time, he said, demonstrate that “it is the power of forgiveness—inherent in the commandment of love—that emerges as a constitutive element of a form of justice capable of uniting the supernatural with the human.”

“Evangelical justice, therefore, does not turn away from human justice, but challenges and reshapes it. It provokes it to go further, because it pushes toward the search for reconciliation,” the pope said.

“Evil, in fact, must not only be punished, but repaired—and for this, a deep gaze toward the good of individuals and the common good is necessary,” Pope Leo said. “It is a demanding task, but not impossible for those who, aware that they perform a service more demanding than others, commit themselves to living an irreproachable life.”

Justice, he said, does not only assume the equal dignity of the person brought before a court, for example. Rather it strives to promote that equal dignity.

“Effective equality is not simply formal equality before the law,” the pope said. “This formal equality, though indispensable for the proper exercise of justice, does not eliminate the reality of growing inequalities, whose primary effect is often lack of access to justice.”

Pope Leo asked the judges and lawyers “to reflect on an aspect of justice that is often not sufficiently emphasized: the reality of so many countries and peoples who ‘hunger and thirst for justice’ because their living conditions are so unjust and inhumane that they become intolerable.” †

What is your favorite memory of walking the Camino?

In recent years, it has become increasingly popular for people from around the world to walk all or a part of the Camino de Santiago, or “Way of St. James,” a pilgrimage path that leads to the tomb of St. James at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain.

The Criterion is inviting people who have made all or part of that pilgrimage to share one memorable moment from that journey, a moment that has led them into a deeper relationship with God and a deeper appreciation of their faith.

Comments and insights about the overall experience of that journey and how it has continued to influence your life and your faith are also welcome.

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



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In interview, pope talks about abuse crisis, Trump, following Pope Francis

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Clerical sexual abuse continues to be “a real crisis,” one that the Catholic Church still must learn to deal with, particularly in improving the way it helps survivors



Pope Leo XIV

while also ensuring the rights of the accused are respected, Pope Leo XIV said.

“It would be naive for myself or for anyone” to think that dismissing the offender and giving the victim a financial settlement completely solves a case, “as if those wounds are just going to go away because of that,” the pope said in an interview for a book by Elise Allen, a journalist.

For Allen’s biography, *Leo XIV: Citizen of the World, Missionary of the XXI Century*, Pope Leo spoke about a range of issues, including the abuse crisis, U.S. President Donald J. Trump, the war in Gaza, Vatican policy toward China, the Church’s openness to LGBTQ Catholics, and the role of women in the Church.

Excerpts of Allen’s July 30 interview, her second interview with the pope, were published on Sept. 14, but the full transcript was released on Sept. 18 in conjunction with the publication of the Spanish edition of the book by Penguin Peru.

Pope Leo said that while the Church has enacted tougher laws and policies to prevent and punish abuse, it cannot say that the crisis is over.

“This will continue to take time because victims must be treated with great respect and with an understanding that those who have suffered very deep wounds because of abuse sometimes carry those wounds for their entire life,” he said.

At the same time, he said, there is the “complicating factor” of ensuring that the rights of the accused are respected.

“Statistics show that well over 90% of people who come forward and make accusations, they are authentically victims. They are telling the truth. They are not making this up,” he said. “But there have also been proven cases of some kind of false accusation. There have been priests whose lives have been destroyed because of that.”

And even when the accusation is well founded, the pope said, the accused has a right to a presumption of innocence and due process.

“But even saying that at times is cause of greater pain for the victims,” Pope Leo acknowledged.

On the topic of President Trump, Pope Leo said he had not met the president nor spoken to him, although his brother Louis has and “has been very outspoken about his political views.”

Trump “at times has made clear” his concern about questions of human dignity and promoting peace, the pope said. “In those efforts, I would want to support him.”

“The United States is a power player on the world level, we have to recognize that,” he said, but “sometimes decisions are made more based on economics than on human dignity,” such as the current immigration policy, and the Church will continue to challenge that approach.

Pope Leo declined to get into “some of the things that have been said about the episcopacy in the United States and the relationship between Church and politics.” However, he said, “the fact that I am American means, among other things, people can’t say, like they did about Francis, ‘He doesn’t understand the United States; he just doesn’t see what’s going on.’ ”

Regarding the war in Gaza, Pope Leo told Allen that “the word genocide is being thrown around more and

more. Officially, the Holy See does not believe that we can make any declaration at this time about that. There’s a very technical definition about what genocide might be, but more and more people are raising the issue, including two human rights groups in Israel.”

On China, and most of the other issues the pope discussed in the interview, he said he would follow the basic path laid out by Pope Francis.

“I in no way pretend to be wiser or more experienced than all those who have come before me,” Pope Leo said.

However, before becoming pope he made several visits to China, and Pope Leo said he is “in ongoing dialogue with a number of people, Chinese, on both sides of some of the issues,” particularly concerning cooperating with the government so the Church can operate openly while showing respect for Chinese Catholics who have undergone oppression for their refusal to join the government-controlled Church.

The pope said he also intends to continue Pope Francis’ welcoming approach to LGBTQ Catholics while not changing Church teaching, especially the Catholic vision of marriage as being between one man and one woman committed to each other for life and open to having children.

“What I’m trying to say is what Francis said very clearly when he would say, ‘*todos, todos, todos.*’ Everyone’s invited in, but I don’t invite a person in because they are or are not of any specific identity. I invite a person in because they are a son or daughter of God,” he said.

He said he also would “continue in the footsteps of [Pope] Francis” by appointing women to leadership roles in the Church, “recognizing the gifts that women have that can contribute to the life of the Church.” †

RESPECT LIFE

continued from page 1

Jesus Christ is the foundation of our hope.”

“Through Christ, our sins are forgiven, death is overcome, and life is victorious,” he said.

However, he noted, “the daily headlines remind us of how desperately our world is thirsting for the hope that only God can provide.”

Bishop Thomas lamented that “every day we witness the overwhelming disregard for human life,” noting among other indicators “rising rates of abortion and assisted suicide.”

According to data from the Guttmacher Institute, which supports legalized abortion, the nation saw a surge in abortions during the 1970s and 1980s, with the latter decade seeing annual averages around 1.6 million.

Abortion rates steadily declined since 1990, but have increased slightly in recent years, even after the Supreme Court reversed its *Roe* and *Doe* rulings in 2022. In 2024, there were 15.4 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15-44, down 1% from 2023, but still a 7% increase from 2020. Guttmacher said the count “includes medication abortions provided via telemedicine” by U.S. clinicians, with mifepristone and misoprostol pills mailed to patients in states without total

bans or bans on telemedicine.

Currently, assisted suicide is legal in 11 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, with a number of other states considering legalization.

Bishop Thomas also pointed to other recent examples of disregard for the sanctity of life, such as “the killing of innocent school children, even at prayer”—an apparent reference to the Aug. 27 mass shooting at a Minnesota Catholic school liturgy—“the mistreatment of our immigrant sisters and brothers as they endure an environment of aggression; and political and ideological violence inflicted against unsuspecting victims.”

“These attacks threaten life precisely when it is most vulnerable and in need of protection,” he said.

For that reason, he said, “it is of the utmost importance that we work to ensure that every life, in every stage and circumstance, is protected in law.”

Those efforts have already achieved some success, said Bishop Thomas.

“Earlier this year, history was made when Planned Parenthood and other big abortion businesses were banned from receiving federal Medicaid dollars for one year,” he said. “I thank Catholics across the country who have embraced a nationwide call to prayer for the end of all taxpayer funding of abortion centers, and I ask that we continue those prayers

throughout the month of October.”

Respect Life Month dovetails perfectly, Bishop Thomas said, with the call of the Jubilee Year, in which “we are challenged to be agents of hope to those whose hearts are burdened by trial, difficulty, or suffering, offering them the hope that comes from Christ Jesus alone.”

He highlighted two examples of such outreach: Walking with Moms in Need, a

USCCB-led initiative that helps parishes and communities to befriend and support pregnant and newly parenting women; and the Project Rachel Ministry, which provides post-abortion healing.

Both ministries “are just two examples of how the Church continuously reaches out with love, compassion, and mercy to those most in need of a message of hope,” said Bishop Thomas. †



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Pope Leo’s prayer intention for October

- **For collaboration between different religious traditions**—Let us pray that believers in different religious traditions might work together to defend and promote peace, justice, and human fraternity.

See Pope Leo’s monthly intentions at archindy.org/popesintentions.



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OPINION



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Editorial



St. Teresa of Calcutta is seen in this 1995 file photo. Her mission of unconditional love for humanity included supporting all life from conception to natural death. (CNS file photo/Joanne Keane)

Inspired by St. Teresa, let us do all we can to build a culture of life

“The life of every human being is sacred as the creation of God, and is of infinite value because he created each person, including the unborn child.”—St. Teresa of Calcutta

We begin our observation of Respect Life Month next week, and we hope that our prayers and actions in October—and beyond—help more in society understand the necessity to respect all human life, from conception to natural death.

The fall 40 Days for Life campaign, which began on Sept. 24 and continues until Nov. 2, offers each of us the opportunity of converting minds and hearts from a culture of death to a culture of life. Through our witness, we especially offer prayers for an end to abortion.

Earlier this month, we observed the feast day of St. Teresa of Calcutta on Sept. 5. And we believe it is providential that a few weeks later each year, our Church marks Respect Life Month—including observing the first Sunday of October as Respect Life Sunday. There are few people in their lifetime who had a stronger commitment to life than St. Teresa.

From the lonely, abandoned, homeless, disease-ravaged, dying and “poorest of the poor” on Calcutta’s streets to the unborn child in the womb, St. Teresa made it her life’s mission to deliver a simple message: that love and caring are the most important things in the world.

Like the Church, Mother Teresa’s respect for life was based on the principle that every person, no matter what his or her status might be, is equal because every person carries the image of Christ.

She was an advocate for children and was outspoken against abortion. In a 1981 visit to New York, she proposed a characteristically direct and simple solution to the problem of unwanted pregnancy: “If you know anyone who does not want the child, who is afraid of the child, then tell them to give that child to me.”

St. Teresa also condemned abortion as the world’s greatest destroyer of people. “To me, the nations who have legalized abortion are the poorest nations,” she said. “They are afraid of the unborn child, and the child must die.”

And she noted, “Abortion is profoundly anti-woman. Three-quarters of its victims are women: Half the babies and all the mothers.”

In living out the words, “Do small things with great love,” St. Teresa

became a universal icon of someone who “walked the walk” while “talking the talk” when it came to assisting and loving our brothers and sisters in need around the world.

While most of us will never have the global impact of a saint, we, too, are called to pray for all humanity, including the unborn.

One way to do so in the next several weeks is to take part in a 40 Days for Life campaign.

In the archdiocese, there are opportunities in Indianapolis and North Vernon.

The North Vernon campaign will take place at 143 E. Walnut St. outside of the city government office. To sign up for one or more hours, go to www.40daysforlife.com/en/northvernon.

In Indianapolis, the campaign will take place in front of the Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road. Parking is available along Georgetown Road. Do not park in the Women’s Care Center parking lot or at the industrial complex across from the Planned Parenthood facility.

To sign up for one or more hours during the Indianapolis campaign, go to www.40daysforlife.com/en/indianapolis. The Knights of Columbus will hold an overnight prayer vigil at this location from 7 p.m. on Oct. 10 through 7 a.m. on Oct. 11. All are invited to join.

Catholics throughout central and southern Indiana are invited to attend the archdiocesan annual Respect Life Sunday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, at 10 a.m. on Oct. 5.

Life Chain events will also take place throughout the archdiocese on Oct. 5. They are peaceful, public witnesses of individuals standing for 60-90 minutes praying for our nation and for an end to abortion. The gatherings are a visual statement of solidarity by the Christian community that human life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death. Visit tinyurl.com/LifeChain2025 to see where Life Chain events are taking place.

As we mark Respect Life Month, may our prayers and witness overcome all darkness in society, including the scourge of abortion, and shine Christ’s light where it is so desperately needed.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the unborn, pray for us.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Archbishop William E. Lori

Will it ever end?

Recently, there has been a spate of political violence in our country. The slaying of two Minnesota legislators.



Killing innocent children gathered for a school Mass in Minneapolis. The slaying of Charlie Kirk. The list goes on. It is endless and depressing. We ask: Will it ever end?

As these tragedies unfold, the responses are predictable. Calls for prayer are met with public ridicule. Politicians decry the extreme rhetoric for a few days, but return to it as surely as night follows day. As calls for an end to violence multiply, in that same proportion it seems, do incidents of violence multiply. Will it ever end?

What are we, as Catholics, to make of this? Do we have some magic formula, a wand to wave, that will calm the stormy waters of our culture, restore civility and minimize political violence to what are deemed “acceptable” levels?

Any faithful Catholic knows how to distinguish between faith and magic, prayer and wishful thinking, empty rhetoric and constructive action. There are approximately 62 million Catholics in the United States and nearly 540,000 Catholics in my Archdiocese of Baltimore. What if, as a community of faith, we united in making a difference?

An immediate objection comes to mind: Catholics, some say, are as politically divided as other groups. Some studies also show that many Catholics don’t vote on the basis of their religious faith, which is regrettable, but not paralyzing. Despite our political differences, there are things we can and should do together.

First is to pray for unity and peace, both foreign and domestic. Writing these words, I can almost hear the chant of the Greek chorus, “What good does that do?” Prayer, after all, doesn’t usually result in God’s direct intervention in human affairs. Isn’t it ineffectual?

No, it isn’t. We pray not to change

God’s mind, but to have God change ours. We pray so that God’s grace will enlarge our hearts in love, including love of enemies. The Lord could not have been more clear. If we want his forgiveness we need to forgive others. Prayer changes hearts, and there are a lot of hearts that need to be changed, including mine.

Second, as a Church we can demonstrate something fundamental to democracy: how to hash out disagreements without resorting to violence. How sad when we Catholics attack one another, aping the language of our ideologically divided culture. If the Church is itself the sacrament of unity and charity, then we need to curb our speech, and more.

The “more” is something called “synodality”—conversation in the Holy Spirit. Synodality is not about changing the Church’s teaching but about learning to listen to one another. It’s not easy. I spent a month in Rome in October 2024 as a delegate to the Synod on Synodality. Daily conversation in the Holy Spirit was hard work. By the middle of the month, all the delegates were exhausted and begging for a break. But healing wounds of sin and division is never easy. As a synodal Church, we can demonstrate a better way.

Third is constructive action. For all our problems, the Church everywhere remains an engine of charity and a champion of justice. Consider, for example, two initiatives in the Baltimore Archdiocese: First, our local efforts to promote mental health, to recognize the signs of mental illness and to help link those in need to resources. Second, consider our annual gun-buyback initiative. More than 1,000 guns have been removed from our streets. Much more is underway, but you get the idea. Prayer leads to action.

When will it end? The reign of sin will not be fully vanquished until the end of time. In the meantime, with God’s grace, we can make a critical difference.

(Archbishop William E. Lori, a native of New Albany, is the 16th archbishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.) †

Letter to the Editor

Living the faith in love will lead to challenges in life, reader says

The deeper you live your faith in love, the greater the world will hate you.

The deeper faith is lived—not as mere words, but as love in action—the more it becomes a light that exposes the shadows around it. And light, though it gives life, often provokes resistance, misunderstanding and even hatred.

This doesn’t mean faith is meant to make us combative or bitter; rather, it means that authentic love will always be countercultural. Love unmasks selfishness. Love resists injustice. Love forgives when vengeance is expected. Love surrenders when pride demands to dominate.

In that sense, the world’s hatred becomes a strange confirmation that you’re living close to the way of Christ.

When a soul begins to live faith in love—not as doctrine alone, but as burning reality—it enters into what St. Paul calls “the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil 3:10). The closer one draws to Christ, the more the soul shares in the paradox of his life: loved by the Father, hated by the world.

Mystical union always carries within it the mark of the cross. For the soul, this means being misunderstood, rejected or even despised, precisely because love has become its essence. Love strips away illusions, and people often resist being unmasked.

The greater your faith is embodied in

love, the more you disturb the false peace of a world that prefers comfort over truth.

Therefore, the world’s hatred becomes a purifying fire: it detaches the soul from needing recognition, and anchors it in God’s hidden embrace.

The mystical paradox is this: the deeper you go into love, the more you enter into Christ’s humiliation; yet the more you are humiliated, the more you are raised into his glory. The cross is not the end, but the threshold to resurrection.

Kirth N. Roach
Order of Carmelite Discalced Secular Indianapolis

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informed, relevant, well-expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful. The editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content. Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld. Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Synodality, solidarity and justice tempered with mercy

“Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection” addresses principles of Catholic social teaching that are essential to the achievement of peace and unity.

The desire for peace and the call to unity are basic tenets of all religions.

Whether we read the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian Bible, or the Islamic Quran, we find that God’s desire for the human family is that we be united with him and at peace with one another. Similar sentiments are expressed in other world religions. Yet, we know from bitter experience that every religion is subject to manipulation by perpetrators of violence and injustice for purposes of doing evil. What is demonic is divisive, but what unites us is of the Spirit.

“Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection” observes that in recent years, our Church has emphasized the concept of “synodality”—cultivating the art of dialogue, listening, understanding, accompaniment, discernment and mutual respect, with the Holy Spirit as the protagonist. The late Pope Francis frequently reminded us that synodality is not about changing Church teaching. It is, first and foremost, a way of living the Gospel.

Synodality is a style of pastoral leadership that is open and responsive to the needs of people today. Synodal leadership affirms the fact that every baptized person has the right and the responsibility to participate in the Church’s life and ministry. It recognizes that we are all members of the one Body of Christ, and that every one of us is called to conversion and to missionary discipleship in Jesus’ name.

Synodality also affirms the importance of cultivating a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as revealed in Sacred Scripture. This is the best way to resist the divisive influences of

worldly or cultural images of Jesus—yet another form of manipulating religion.

Yet, as my reflection says, “Each person can only bring to the table, conversation, or process, what he/she has cultivated in his/her own being.” Synodality is not an end in itself. It is a means to achieving the oneness and harmony that make up the common good of all.

Authentic peace involves more than the mere absence of war, and authentic unity must be given more than mere lip service. For there to be authentic peace and unity, we must rise above fear, suspicion, self-centeredness, intimidation, scapegoating and pride to recognize one another as members of the human family—sisters and brothers to be embraced rather than avoided or excluded as strangers or enemies.

One of the fundamental tenets of Catholic social teaching is that every person has been made in the image and likeness of God. To illustrate this truth, I write:

Migrants and refugees, for example, should not be mistrusted or feared but embraced and welcomed. It’s true that every nation has the right and responsibility to protect its people and secure its borders from perpetrators of violence, human trafficking, gangs, illegal drugs, terrorism and other forms of criminal activity. But if we are to work toward true peace and authentic unity, we must rise above the ever-increasing poison and grandstanding of polarization and partisanship to find the proper balance between protecting the innocent while preventing criminals from doing harm.

Thus, we must avoid oversimplification of two extremes: On the one hand, the indiscriminate casting of a wide net on men, women

and children, regardless of their status or reasons for migrating from their countries of origin. On the other hand, we should not allow for open borders without proper oversight and resources. To ensure that we do not lose our awareness of the inherent dignity of persons and sacredness of life, whether dealing with migrants, refugees, law enforcement or those living on the borders, we should keep in mind two key principles of Catholic social teaching. First, “solidarity,” which can be defined as an awareness of shared interests, objectives, standards and sympathies, and second, justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy.

“Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection” notes that “Pope Leo XIV has affirmed that the implementation phase of the synodal process will proceed as previously announced. What better way for us as Church,

People of God, to overcome entrenched differences than through Christ-centered prayer, dialogue, trust, mutual respect and discernment of the Holy Spirit, all rooted in Scripture, Sacrament, Service and Tradition! If such witness does not come from us as Catholics, where can the world hope to experience authentic peace and unity to overcome wars, prejudice, genocide and the many forms of injustice that are ravaging humanity?”

As we continue to observe this Jubilee Year of Hope, let’s pray for the grace to implement Catholic social teaching by establishing true peace and maintaining lasting unity through solidarity and justice tempered with mercy.

(To read Archbishop Thompson’s pastoral reflection in English and Spanish, go to archindy.org/pastoral2025.) †

Study questions connected to archbishop’s pastoral reflection can help you grow deeper in your faith

As you read Archbishop Charles C. Thompson’s column, we invite you to take your spiritual journey a step further.

Beginning this week, we will share two questions on the archdiocese’s Facebook page—one introspective and one focused on serving your community. They are designed to help you reflect more deeply on your faith and live it out in meaningful ways.

If you’re not already following us on Facebook, now is a great time to start. You’ll find resources, inspiration and practical ways to implement the

week’s theme in your daily life.

Follow us today and join the conversation. For easy access, go to facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis or scan the QR code below with your smartphone camera. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Sinodalidad, solidaridad y justicia templadas por la misericordia

La carta que publiqué recientemente, titulada “Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral” aborda los principios de la doctrina social católica que son esenciales para alcanzar estas metas.

La búsqueda de la paz y el llamamiento a la unidad son principios básicos de todas las religiones.

Tanto si leemos las Escrituras hebreas como la Biblia cristiana o el Corán islámico, descubrimos que el deseo de Dios para la familia humana es que estemos unidos a Él y en paz unos con otros, deseo que también se manifiesta en otras religiones del mundo. Lamentablemente, la experiencia nos ha enseñado que todas las doctrinas de fe están sujetas a la

tergiversación por parte de aquellos que cometen actos de violencia e injusticia con el fin de hacer el mal. A menudo se señala que lo demoníaco divide, pero lo que nos une es del Espíritu.

“Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral” destaca que en años recientes nuestra Iglesia ha hecho énfasis en el concepto de “sinodalidad”: cultivar el arte del diálogo, la escucha, la comprensión, el acompañamiento, el discernimiento y el respeto mutuo, con el Espíritu Santo como protagonista. El difunto papa Francisco a menudo nos recordaba que la sinodalidad no consiste en cambiar la doctrina de la Iglesia, sino que es, ante todo, una forma de vivir el Evangelio.

La sinodalidad es un estilo de

liderazgo pastoral abierto y sensible a las necesidades de la gente de hoy. El liderazgo sinodal afirma el hecho de que toda persona bautizada tiene el derecho y la responsabilidad de participar en la vida y el ministerio de la Iglesia. Reconoce que todos somos miembros del único Cuerpo de Cristo, y que cada uno de nosotros está llamado a la conversión y al discipulado misionero en nombre de Jesús.

La sinodalidad afirma también la importancia de cultivar el encuentro personal con Jesucristo tal como se revela en las Sagradas Escrituras. Esta es la mejor manera de resistir las influencias divisorias de las imágenes mundanas o culturales de Jesús, que

no son más que otra forma de religión manipuladora.

No obstante, como menciono en mi reflexión, cada persona solo puede contribuir a la mesa, conversación o proceso, lo que ha cultivado en su propio ser. La sinodalidad no es un fin en sí mismo sino un medio para alcanzar la unidad y la armonía que constituyen el bien común de todos.

La auténtica paz implica algo más que la mera ausencia de guerra, y la auténtica unidad debe ser algo más que simple palabrería. Para que haya paz y unidad genuinas, debemos superar el miedo, la desconfianza, el egocentrismo, la intimidación,

Events Calendar

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

September 30

St. Paul the Apostle Parish, 202 E. Washington St., Greencastle. **Blood Drive**, 2:30-6:15 p.m., conducted by Versiti Blood Center of Indiana, walk-ins welcome, free. Information: 800-485-6594, stpauloffice202@gmail.com.

October 1

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

October 1-8

National Shrine of the Little Flower Basilica, 2100 W. 12 Mile Road, Royal Oak, Mich. **The Relics of St. Thérèse of Lisieux**, several opportunities throughout the week for Mass and veneration of relics, free. Information: stthereseusa2025.com, SfThereseUSA2025@gmail.com.

October 3

Immaculate Conception Church, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **St. Mother Theodore**

Guérin Feast Day Mass, 11 a.m. Information: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952, pvctr@spsmw.org.

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

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

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

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **IndyCatholic Young Adults First Friday Adoration**, 7-7:15 p.m. and 8:30-9 p.m. fellowship in rectory, 7:15-7:30 p.m. reflection in chapel, 7:30-8:30 p.m. adoration

and confession in chapel. Information: indycatholic.org.

October 3-4

St. Bartholomew Parish, 1306 27th St., Columbus. **St. B Fest**, Fri. 6-11 p.m., Sat. 4-10 p.m., live music, multicultural food, drinks, kids’ carnival, free admission. Information: 812-379-9353, stbfest@stbparish.net.

October 4

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

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

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 5692 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Fun Run**, 9 a.m., 5K or 1 mile, \$10 per child, \$20 per adult, \$50 for three or more, register by Sept. 30 for T-shirt. Information, registration: 317-257-2266, tinyurl.com/IHMOktoberfest25.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 5692 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Oktoberfest**, 4-11 p.m., food, Old Major Market sausages, drinks, kids’ games, cake walk, live music, beer from Sun King, pumpkin decorating, face painting, pretzel necklaces, bounce houses, free admission. Information: 317-257-2266, tinyurl.com/IHMOktoberfest25.

St. Paul the Apostle Parish, 202 E. Washington St., Greencastle. **Oktoberfest**, 6-10 p.m., craft and domestic beer, wine, bingo, number wheel, blackjack, pull tabs, kids’ activities 3-8 p.m., raffle drawing, prizes, live music by Joe Wright Acoustic, free admission. Information: 765-653-5678, stpauloffice202@gmail.com.

October 5

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Respect Life Mass**, 10 a.m., archdiocesan pro-life awards presented at end of Mass. Information: bvarick@archindy.org, 317-236-1521.

Holy Family Parish, 3027 Pearl St., Oldenburg. **Parish Festival**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., fried chicken and roast beef dinners, turtle soup, money

raffle, quilt raffle, basket raffle, silent auction, craft booths, free admission. Information: 812-934-3013, holyfamilycheryl@gmail.com. St. John Paul II Parish, 2253 St. Joe Road West, Sellersburg. **Chicken Dinner and Fall Festival**, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., chicken dinner with homemade dumplings, raffles, booths and country store, free admission. Information: 812-246-2512, bsmith@stjohnpaulparish.org.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Holy Family Campus, 815 West Main St., Richmond. **Fall Festival**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., fried chicken dinner, silent auction, gaming, craft tent, kids’ games, music, beer tent, free admission. Information: 765-962-3902, lmiller@setoncatholics.org.

October 10-11

Planned Parenthood, 8590 Georgetown Road, Indianapolis. **Knights of Columbus 40 Days for Life Overnight Vigil**, Fri. 6 p.m.-Sat. 6 a.m., join the Knights in silent prayer for any length of time. Information: life@indianakofc.org.

October 11

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 State Road 48, Bloomington. **Confraternity**

of Christian Mothers Annual Retreat, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., breakfast and lunch included, \$25, optional Fri. overnight stays available for \$50-\$115 depending on room occupancy. Information: call or text 317-752-5172, CCMofOLG@gmail.com.

Nexus Park, entrance 2, 2252 25th St., Columbus. **Corrections Ministry Re-entry Conference**, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., presentations and panel discussions on challenges faced by those re-entering society from incarceration, update on archdiocese’s new re-entry program; speakers and panelists include local experts, Indiana Department of Corrections staff and those who have experienced re-entry; free, lunch included, registration required by Oct. 1. Information, registration: Deacon John Cord, jcord@archindy.org, 317-432-6604.

St. Christopher Parish parking lot, 5301 W. 16th St., Indianapolis. **St. Vincent de Paul Stuff-A-Truck**, 9-11 a.m., accepting clothing, household goods and linens (in closed bags), furniture, bicycles, bicycle helmets and locks, backpacks. Information: bsisk@svdpindy.org. †

Archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry to offer series of events in October

The archdiocese’s Black Catholic Ministry is launching a new, dynamic series called “Faith, Fellowship, Flow,” designed to unite both young adults and working professionals. The initiative creates space for Black Catholics and the broader Black Christian community to connect, celebrate faith and uplift one another. Anyone who champions the flourishing of the extended family across the African diaspora is welcome. The October events are below.

Oct. 9: Lecrae-Reconstruction World Tour

- 5 p.m.—fellowship dinner in the parlor of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral rectory, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis.
- 6:30 p.m.—carpool/rideshare to Old National Centre, 502 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis, for 7 p.m. Lecrae Concert: A celebration of faith, culture and music.
- Limited sponsorships available for dinner and concert tickets. Register online at: tinyurl.com/bclecrae25.

Oct. 12: Morning Mass and Comedy Club Night

- 11a.m.—Mass at St. Rita Church,

1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis, followed by novena for mental health.

- 6:30 p.m.—meet at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center parking lot, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, for carpool/rideshare to Helium Comedy Club, 10 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis, for 7 p.m. clean, uplifting comedy with Christian Johnson.
- Limited sponsorships available for Helium tickets. Register online at: tinyurl.com/bchelium25.

Oct. 18: Mass and Fellowship at Holy Angels Parish

- 4 p.m.—Mass at Holy Angels Church, 740 W. 28th St., Indianapolis, followed by food and fellowship. Register online at: tinyurl.com/bc-10-18-25.

For more information about Black Catholic Ministry or “Faith, Fellowship, Flow,” contact Black Catholic Ministry coordinator Irorobeje Crystal Owroso-Maddox at iowhosomaddox@archindy.org or 317- 261-3381. †

Gabriel Project and 1st Choice for Women fundraising dinner to be held on Nov. 4

A dinner fundraiser benefiting Gabriel Project and 1st Choice for Women pregnancy care center will take place at the Knights of Columbus McGowan Hall, 1305 N. Delaware St., in Indianapolis, from 6-9 p.m. on Nov. 4. Doors open at 5 p.m. for a social hour.

Gabriel Project serves any pregnant woman in crisis, helping them find the physical, emotional and spiritual help they need and saving the lives of their unborn babies. 1st Choice for Women pregnancy care center aids expectant mothers with their medical needs and serves as a special outreach to women considering abortion.

Dr. Casey Delcoco, medical director for 1st Choice for Women and founder/CEO of Magnificat Family Medicine, will deliver a keynote address about her history of collaboration with the Gabriel Project and her success with abortion pill reversal.

There is no cost to attend the dinner; however, donations will be accepted.

To attend the event, RSVP by Oct. 12 online at tinyurl.com/gabrielsignup25 or via e-mail at barbwinningham@gmail.com. Include the name, address, phone number and e-mail address of each attendee.

For more information, call Barb Winningham at 317-432-6357. †

Wedding Anniversaries

PHILIP IV AND BRIGITT (RENO) CAITO, members of Holy Spirit Parish in Geist in Fishers, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Oct. 2.

The couple was married in St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis on Oct. 2, 1965.

They have four children: Amanda Wagner, Melissa, Matthew and P. Robert Caito.

The couple also has 17 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



GERARD AND SHIRLEY (MANUEL) KARN, members of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 20.

The couple was married in St. Edward Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, on Sept. 20, 1975.

They have two children: Sarah Chapin and Joyce Harris.

The couple also has five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



GREG AND ROSEMARY (NAPIER) STANLEY, members of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on July 5.

The couple was married on July 5, 1975.

They have three children: Jade, Jay and Jessey Stanley.

The couple also has seven grandchildren.



CHARLES AND PATRICIA (BERESFORD) WITTE, members of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 26.

The couple was married in St. Antoninus Church in Cincinnati on Sept. 26, 1975.

They have two children: Becky McClain and Kurtis Witte.

The couple also has eight grandchildren.



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

In illo uno unum (In the One Christ we are one)

One in Christ/Daniel Conway

Pope Leo reminds us the poor can be witnesses of hope

In his message for the Ninth Day of Prayer for the Poor on Nov. 16, Pope Leo XIV writes, “The poor can be witnesses to a strong and steadfast hope, precisely because they embody it in the midst of uncertainty, poverty, instability and marginalization. They cannot rely on the security of power and possessions; on the contrary, they are at their mercy and often victims of them. Their hope must necessarily be sought elsewhere.”

If we pay attention to our sisters and brothers who are poor, and if we actually listen to what they have to say to us, we can learn from them.

“By recognizing that God is our first and only hope,” the Holy Father says, “we too pass from fleeting *hopes* to a lasting *hope*. Once we desire that God accompany us on the journey of life, material wealth becomes relativized, for we discover the real treasure that we need.”

No one was more responsive to the situation of the poor than Jesus. No one cared for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs more completely than our Lord did. What’s more, he warned his disciples (all of us) not to rely on material wealth or possessions. Happiness, the fullness of life, is not found in what we have; it is discovered in what we give away, sharing generously with others, especially the poor and vulnerable.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth,” Jesus said, “where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Mt 6:19-20).

As St. Teresa of Calcutta frequently reminded us, the gravest form of poverty is not to know God. Pope Leo quotes his predecessor Pope Francis from his apostolic exhortation “*Evangelií Gaudium*” (“The Joy of the Gospel”):

“The worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith” (#200). Here we see a basic

and essential awareness of how we can find our treasure in God. As the Apostle John insists: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

Pope Leo insists that “all this Earth’s goods, material realities, worldly pleasures, economic prosperity, however important, cannot bring happiness to our hearts.” He points out what everyone who is paying attention, and not giving in to self-delusion, must admit: “Wealth often disappoints and can lead to tragic situations of poverty—above all the poverty born of the failure to recognize our need for God and of the attempt to live without him.”

As a faithful son of St. Augustine, the pope quotes his patron, saying, “Let all your hope be in God: feel your need for him and let him fill that need. Without him, whatever you possess will only make you all the more empty” (*Enarr. in Ps.*, 85:3). This, of course, is the crisis of our times—just as it was in the final days of the Roman empire. The more wealth and power we amass, the more scientific and technological knowledge we gain, the emptier life seems.

And yet we have hope, a hope that does not disappoint (Rom 5:5). For those of us who follow Jesus and embrace his radical form of selflessness, happiness is found not in what we *have*, but in who we *are* and how we *live*. This is the spirituality of stewardship—a radical form of self-giving that acknowledges all that we have (material possessions) and all that we are (spiritual gifts) as unmerited and undeserved bounty from our generous and loving God. Happiness is found not in possessing these gifts, and certainly not in hoarding them in newer and bigger barns “where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal” (Mt 6:20), but in sharing them generously with others out of gratitude and love.

The poor can be witnesses to hope. If we share with them, we can learn from them.

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

Uno en Cristo/Daniel Conway

El papa León nos recuerda que los pobres pueden ser testigos de esperanza

En su mensaje para la IX Jornada Mundial de los Pobres, celebrada el 16 de noviembre, el papa León XIV escribe: “El pobre puede convertirse en testigo de una esperanza fuerte y fiable, precisamente porque la profesa en una condición de vida precaria, marcada por privaciones, fragilidad y marginación. No confía en las seguridades del poder o del tener; al contrario, las sufre y con frecuencia es víctima de ellas. Su esperanza sólo puede reposar en otro lugar.”

Si prestamos atención a nuestros hermanos y hermanas pobres y escuchamos lo que nos dicen, podemos aprender de ellos.

“Reconociendo que Dios es nuestra primera y única esperanza”—dice el Santo Padre—, “nosotros también realizamos el paso de las esperanzas efímeras a la esperanza duradera. Frente al deseo de tener a Dios como compañero de camino, las riquezas se relativizan, porque se descubre el verdadero tesoro del que realmente tenemos necesidad.”

Nadie fue más sensible a la situación de los pobres que Jesús; nadie se ocupó de sus necesidades físicas, emocionales y espirituales de forma más completa que nuestro Señor. Es más, advirtió a

sus discípulos (a todos nosotros) que no confiaran en la riqueza material ni en las posesiones. La felicidad, la plenitud de la vida, no se encuentra en lo que tenemos; se descubre en lo que damos, en lo que compartimos generosamente con los demás, especialmente con los pobres y vulnerables.

“No acumulen tesoros en la tierra”—afirmó Jesús—, “donde la polilla y la herrumbre los consumen, y los ladrones perforan las paredes y los roban. Acumulen, en cambio, tesoros en el cielo, donde no hay polilla ni herrumbre que los consuma, ni ladrones que perforen y roben” (Mt 6:19-20).

Como a menudo nos recordaba santa Teresa de Calcuta, la forma más grave de pobreza es no conocer a Dios. El papa León cita un pasaje de la exhortación apostólica “*Evangelií Gaudium*” (“La alegría del Evangelio”) de su predecesor, el papa Francisco:

“La peor discriminación que sufren los pobres es la falta de atención espiritual. La inmensa mayoría de los pobres tiene una especial apertura a la fe; necesitan a Dios y no podemos dejar de ofrecerles su amistad, su bendición, su Palabra, la celebración de los Sacramentos y la propuesta de un camino de crecimiento

y de maduración en la fe” (#200). Aquí vemos una conciencia básica y esencial de cómo podemos encontrar nuestro tesoro en Dios. Tal como insiste el apóstol Juan: “El que dice: ‘Amo a Dios,’ y no ama a su hermano, es un mentiroso. ¿Cómo puede amar a Dios, a quien no ve, el que no ama a su hermano, a quien ve?” (1 Jn 4:20).

El papa León reitera que “todos los bienes de esta tierra, las realidades materiales, los placeres del mundo, el bienestar económico, aunque importantes, no bastan para hacer feliz al corazón.” Señala algo que deben admitir todos los que están atentos y no ceden al autoengaño: “Las riquezas muchas veces engañan y conducen a situaciones dramáticas de pobreza, la más grave de todas es pensar que no necesitamos a Dios y que podemos llevar adelante la propia vida independientemente de Él.”

Como fiel hijo de san Agustín, el papa cita a su patrono, diciendo, “Sea Dios toda tu presunción: siéntete indigente de Él, y así serás de Él colmado. Todo lo que poseas sin Él, te causará un mayor vacío” (Enarr. in Ps. 85:3). Esta es, por supuesto, la crisis de nuestro tiempo, al igual que en los últimos días del imperio romano. Cuanta más riqueza y poder

amasamos, cuantos más conocimientos científicos y tecnológicos adquirimos, más vacía parece la vida.

Y, sin embargo, tenemos esperanza, una esperanza que no defrauda (Rom 5:5). Para quienes seguimos a Jesús y acogemos su forma radical de entrega desinteresada, la felicidad no se encuentra en lo que *tenemos*, sino en lo que *somos* y en cómo *vivimos*. Esta es la espiritualidad de la corresponsabilidad, una forma radical de entrega que reconoce todo lo que tenemos (posesiones materiales) y todo lo que somos (dones espirituales) como una recompensa inmerecida de nuestro generoso y amoroso Dios. La felicidad no consiste en poseer esos dones, ni mucho menos en acumularlos en graneros cada vez más grandes “donde la polilla y la herrumbre los consumen, y los ladrones perforan las paredes y los roban” (Mt 6:20), sino en compartirlos generosamente con los demás por agradecimiento y amor.

Los pobres pueden ser testigos de la esperanza; si compartimos con ellos, podemos aprender de ellos.

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

In illo uno unum (En el único Cristo somos uno)

FAITH

continued from page 1

a “blue” or moderately difficult slope instead of the most challenging ‘black” slopes that Bannister normally skied. As he sped down the mountain, Bannister felt the wind on his face. Even more, this member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis felt the sensation of doing what he loved. He never expected that seconds later he would lose the feeling in his body from his neck down.

‘I asked the good Lord twice to take me’

His speed increasing, Bannister felt his left ski boot coming out of its binding as he made a turn. His left foot came off the ski, dug into the snow and sent him spinning. A second later, the top of his head crashed into the ground. “I never lost consciousness, but it was a big hit. I knew I was hurt,” Bannister recalls. “When I came to a stop, I was looking up to the sky. I couldn’t feel anything beneath my neck. As you can imagine, it was terrifying. “I could picture myself on a ventilator for the rest of my life, in a wheelchair. And I just didn’t want to be that kind of burden to my family. I didn’t want to live that way. I asked the good Lord twice to take me. And he didn’t. After the second time, I asked him, ‘If you’re not going to take me, I need to feel you right here by my side.’ ” Bannister takes a big breath before he continues, “I was just in total despair, and all of a sudden this great calm came over me, and my fear was gone. In that moment, I knew I was going to be OK. I asked the good Lord to be by my side, and there he was.”

While the calm came, the concern for him grew. When a rescue medical team reached him, they stabilized him. Then he was airlifted off the mountain by a medical helicopter. “I still didn’t know the extent of the injury, but I knew it was bad,” Bannister says. He learned just how devastating it was when he was taken to Swedish Medical Center in Denver. “They did CAT-scans and X-rays, and they were going to do an MRI,” he says. “Right before I went in for the MRI, they said, ‘You have three or four people in front of you for surgery. We hope to get to you later tonight.’ Then when I came out of the MRI, they said, ‘Change of plans. You’re going now.’ ” Bannister was rushed into surgery. When it ended, he was stunned by something the doctor said while he was recovering.

‘Look at what I’m fighting for’

“While I was in recovery, I heard the doctor say, ‘full recovery’ twice,” Bannister recalls. “When I saw him the next day, I said, ‘I heard you say full recovery.’ He said, ‘I think you’ll be able

to do everything you used to do. Full recovery.’ ” That expectation gave hope to Bannister and his family. After getting a phone call about the accident, his wife of 45 years, Kathy, rushed from Indianapolis to be with him. Before long, their three grown sons were there too. While there was hope, there was also a long road ahead to any kind of recovery. “I was in the intensive care unit for nine days,” he says. “Then a regular hospital room for five days while waiting for a rehabilitation hospital. There’s one that’s right there in Denver called Craig Hospital. It’s internationally renowned. It’s right next door to Swedish. I was there for six weeks. Kathy never left my side.” During those six weeks, Bannister had physical therapy and occupational therapy four to six hours a day, five days a week, which left him exhausted by the weekend. There were daily visits with a doctor and also a weekly visit from a psychiatrist, which led to a memorable exchange between Bannister and the woman. “The very first time she comes into my room, I’m in a wheelchair,” he says. “My wife had put all these pictures of our family on the wall above the desk that’s in there. The psychiatrist comes in and asks me, ‘How do you feel?’ I say, ‘Grateful.’ And she says, ‘Grateful?! I wasn’t expecting that. Why are you grateful?’ “I told her, ‘First of all, look what I’m fighting for, all the pictures up there. And look at me—and look at everybody else in here. I’m already on my feet. And I’ve been told it’s going to be a full recovery. I’m grateful.’ ” The psychiatrist kept probing. “She broke me down later,” he says. “She said, ‘Something tells me you’re the caregiver of your family.’ I said, ‘That’s right.’ She said, ‘What’s the worst thing about this?’ I said, ‘People are going to have to care for me, and that’s hard. That’s real hard to accept.’ “At the end of my session, my wife walks in. The psychiatrist asks Kathy, ‘How do you feel?’ And Kathy says, ‘Grateful.’ Totally unrehearsed. The psychiatrist said, ‘What is it with you people?!’ ” Bannister gave her the best answer he could. “I told her my story—that the good Lord was with me, and he says I’m going to be OK, and I believe him.”

‘You’re a miracle. Let me show you.’

Eight months after the skiing accident, Bannister describes his condition as “improving.” “I’m walking. And I have full use of my hands. But they’re spongy. I’ve got pins and needles. My right arm and right shoulder are coming back slower. My neurosurgeon told me I’m so far ahead of the game, but I have to remember it’s a marathon.” Bannister gets impatient at times. Then he remembers, “I’ve been told I’m a miracle by two neurosurgeons.”



Eight months after a horrifying skiing accident that had John Bannister asking God to take his life, he continues his journey of recovery at NeuroHope in the DRIVEN NeuroRecovery Center in Indianapolis. (Photos by John Shaughnessy)

Other medical personnel have shared that belief. “A therapist at Craig was the first one to say, ‘It’s a miracle.’ I said, ‘What?’ She said, ‘You’re a miracle. Let me show you.’ She shows me on a life-sized model what’s broken and everything. She said, ‘There’s only one explanation for you being here.’ I said, ‘What’s that?’ She said, ‘Divine intervention.’ ” The doctor who saw him throughout his six weeks at Craig also was amazed when she saw the damage to his C1 and C2 vertebrae, which connect a person’s skull and spinal cord. Serious injuries to these vertebrae can lead to paralysis and death. “They did further CAT scans at the end of my stay to see how everything was healing,” he says. “She had a top-down view, and she showed me all the C1 that was broken apart and the C2. She showed me the before and after pictures. I said, ‘How am I alive?’ She said, ‘Well, John, I don’t have anyone to compare you to.’ ” These reactions have left Bannister with more than a feeling of gratitude. “In terms of reconciling this, it’s a ton of bricks. Why me?” he says. “I’ve been told I’m a miracle. It’s an unbelievable weight on my shoulders. I told the Lord I’m going to be a witness. I want to honor him and our Father by being an inspiration to others and being a messenger for him.” His witness began during his time at Craig as he reached out to other patients.

‘You can’t do this alone’

“It was real common when you met somebody to ask, ‘What happened to you?’ ” Bannister says. “First of all, everybody who was in there never expected to be there. And everyone who was there, their lives were changed in an instant. I told a lot of people my story. I asked them if they believed in the Lord. They’d say yes, and I’d say, ‘Let me tell you my story.’ ” One interaction especially had a powerful impact on him. “There was a young man, his name was Joseph,” Bannister recalls. “He was in his chair, leaning to his right, and he was real despondent. He was in his early 30s. His dad was behind him. I asked him, ‘Joseph, what happened to you?’ He said, ‘I got broadsided in an accident.’ He had a broken back, but it was healing. And his right side was busted up. And he also had a traumatic brain injury. “I asked if he was walking. He said no. Then I asked, ‘Are they telling you you’re going to be able to walk?’ He said they don’t know. I told him my story. And I asked him if he had a goal. He said, ‘My brother is getting married at the end of April, and I want to walk up the aisle.’ I said, ‘Do you think you can?’ He said, ‘I don’t know.’ I said, ‘Yeah, you can do it. But here’s the first thing. Ask the Lord. You can’t do this alone. Ask him, just ask him. And fight like hell.’ ”

“Later, his dad said, ‘John, I can’t thank you enough. He’s already a different person.’ ” Since the young man and Bannister were in different buildings at Craig, they didn’t see each other again until Bannister neared the end of his time there. “I saw him right before I left,” Bannister says. “He was in a wheelchair and ready to get into a car. And I’m coming across with my walker. He said, ‘John!’ I said, ‘Joseph, how are you doing?’ He said, ‘Guess what? They had me up walking!’ “My God, I had tears in my eyes. I said, ‘You keep fighting. You keep asking the Lord. I know you can do this. You’re going to make your own way, Joseph. Keep asking, keep fighting.’ “He said, ‘You know I will.’ ”

‘God has given me this great gift’

Back home in Indianapolis, Bannister has continued to tap into that same passion and spirit as he follows his own road to recovery. He does therapy five times a week at NeuroHope, a non-profit, outpatient, physical rehabilitation clinic and wellness center for people living with and recovering from paralysis and other spinal cord trauma. “I’m fighting hard,” he says. “People say, ‘You’re so strong. Look at what you’re doing.’ I say, ‘No, what I’m doing is by the grace of God, not me.’ “Yeah, I’m working hard, but God has given me this great gift, and it’s my responsibility to work hard.” He’s also especially grateful for another gift—his wife.

“When Kathy and I said our vows 45 years ago, little did we know that they’d be tested like this,” he says. “She has been by my side every day in the past eight months supporting me in my recovery. I would not have progressed like I have without her love and support in this journey.” The journey has also led his faith to reach a breathtaking dimension. “In my prayers at night, I’m thanking Christ for this chapter in my life. I’m no longer a believer, I’m a knower. I know Christ exists. I don’t believe he exists anymore. I know he exists. “That’s why I share my story.”

(In this Jubilee Year for the Church with the theme, ‘Pilgrims of Hope,’ The Criterion invites you, our readers, to share your stories of hope—how embracing hope has helped you in the toughest moments of your life, how others have given you hope for your future, how your faith in God has sustained you and uplifted you. If you have a story of hope to share, please send it to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.) †



John Bannister endures a strength-increasing exercise at NeuroHope in the DRIVEN NeuroRecovery Center in Indianapolis, with the help of his exercise trainer, Hamilton Spidle.

RED MASS

continued from page 1

in their work of representing their clients and carrying out the rule of law. That is why the vestments worn at such liturgies were red in color, and why this gathering of legal professionals is traditionally called a “Red Mass.”

Members of the St. Thomas More Society of Central Indiana, a professional organization for Catholics in that region of the state working in the legal field, gathered on Sept. 15 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis for its annual Red Mass. A dinner followed afterward at the adjacent Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, a canon lawyer himself, was the principal celebrant of the liturgy.

Julie Armstrong, the executive director since 1996 of the Indianapolis Bar Association was honored at the dinner with the St. Thomas More Society’s Woman of All Seasons Award.

And the speaker was Joseph Donnelly, a previous U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, Indiana senator and former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Indiana.

‘Occasions of transforming grace’

With judges from across central Indiana sitting in their black robes at the front of the cathedral, Archbishop Thompson in his homily reminded his listeners that they have “an awesome task of responsibility to both God and neighbor” and the “precious opportunity to impact lives, families and even communities in very profound ways.”

“You do that day in and day out,” Archbishop Thompson continued. “The proper balancing of opportunities and responsibilities can be occasions of transforming grace for all persons involved, on all sides of the law, victim as well as perpetrator.”

He noted that legal professionals have a duty to respect the dignity of all who come before courts or seek assistance in law.

“However we might define the rule of law, and any aspect or discipline of law, everything should begin and end with the human person,” Archbishop Thompson said. “It is for this reason that the late Pope Francis spoke of the art of accompaniment, namely, meeting persons where they are, healing wounds and then teaching them. While accompaniment implies movement—even when challenge or correction is necessary—it should never be at the expense of a person’s dignity and well-being.”

He acknowledged the difficulty of respecting human dignity in today’s cultural climate.

“There are great challenges in our society—you know these better than I do—which demand judicial persons of great integrity, courage, understanding, and wisdom,” Archbishop Thompson said. “Acts of violence, racism, scapegoating, abuse, and robbery are regular occurrences in a culture that prizes radical individualism above all else while seeming being indifferent to the growing chaos and tragedy. In such a society, it is the poor and vulnerable who suffer the most.”

He went on to note that maintaining a firm adherence to the rule of law is a crucial means for legal professionals to consistently show respect for all people.

“Apart from the rule of law, humanity would be mired in chaos, marked by distrust and injustice,” Archbishop Thompson said. “For that reason, we readily celebrate those among us who serve as instruments of justice by means of arbitration, mediation, and rendering judgments for the sake of the individual and community—the common good.”

In concluding his homily, Archbishop Thompson reminded his listeners to remember that they will all eventually stand before Jesus Christ, “the ultimate judge.”

“For this reason, it is good to examine one’s conscience on a regular basis,” he said, “keeping before oneself the principles, values and virtues that define the character of the person wearing sacred robes, vestments or court regalia.”

Even in the face of contemplating such a final judgment, Archbishop Thompson encouraged those at the Red Mass to be “pilgrims of hope” in this jubilee year as they “strive to exercise the rule of law in a way fitting for the dignity of persons and the sake of the common good.”

“All is possible when we set aside egos, ideologies and agendas,” he continued, “so as to be Christ-centered in seeking the will of God above all else.”

Relying on faith to work well in law

One of those in black robes sitting before Archbishop Thompson at the Red Mass was Judge Tonya Walton-Pratt, the federal district court judge for the Southern District of Indiana and a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis.

In an interview with *The Criterion* after the Red Mass, she noted the importance of judges to “rely on our faith” in the midst “of all the things that are happening in the world and in our country.”

Doing that, she said, helps her to respect all who come before her in the federal courthouse in Indianapolis.

“We treat everyone with dignity and respect, no matter who they are, what they’re accused of or what they’re charged with,” Walton-Pratt said.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, left, and Judge David Certo, right, pose on Sept. 15 with Julie Armstrong, the recipient of the Woman for All Seasons Award of the St. Thomas More Society of Central Indiana at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis. The award was presented during a dinner that followed the society’s annual Red Mass for Catholic legal professionals. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)

about power, but about service, something that Christ exemplified. That mindset keeps me centered and motivated.”

‘Don’t do what’s easy, do what’s right’

In his remarks during the dinner, Donnelly told his listeners that he learned early on in life the important lesson to “don’t do what’s easy, do what’s right.”

He learned that lesson, he said, from his father who raised him and his four siblings on his own after his wife died of breast cancer when Donnelly was 10, and from Holy Cross Father Theodore Hesburgh, who was president of the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana when Donnelly was a student there.

He told his listeners that he sees them carrying out this lesson in their work.

“That’s what all of you do every day in this profession,” Donnelly said. “You stand up and fight fiercely for your client. You bring character. You bring wisdom. You bring logic. And you bring hope to clients who may have lost everything. But because of you, they have the chance.

“For our judges, you fight fiercely for the law. It doesn’t matter how powerful a person is or how little that person has. You do what’s right each and every day for all of them.”

Donnelly began his work as U.S. ambassador to the Holy See in 2022, three weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine. He recalled how he assisted Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi in his diplomatic work on behalf of the Holy See to seek the repatriation of 30,000 Ukrainian children taken by Russian forces into Russia.

Although the archbishop of Bologna, Italy, has so far been able to bring only 1,000 children back to Ukraine, Donnelly is still proud of that work.

“Our job was to try to get as many of them home as we could,” he said. “That was the Church that I saw every single day. ... For every one of those that Cardinal Zuppi brought home, there’s a family who had their family back together.”

Donnelly saw the “spirit of Jesus Christ” as the foundation of Cardinal Zuppi’s work. He also heard it in the “clarion voice” of Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, now of Newark, N.J., when, in 2015 as archbishop of Indianapolis, he welcomed a family of Syrian refugees to the state at a time when then-Gov. Mike Pence suspended the resettlement of refugees to Indiana from the war-torn Middle Eastern country.

“It was Cardinal Tobin who said that we are bringing them through Catholic Charities,” Donnelly said. “We will stand with them. We will meet them in the airport. We will take care of them. And they will be exemplary citizens of this wonderful city.

“That’s who we are. We reach out to everybody with compassion and with hope and with care.”

Donnelly ended his remarks with a reference to the troubles facing the country today, but also with hope for its future.

“Our country is in a trouble zone,” Donnelly said. “But you are the answer. I’m a 100% on this. You are the answer. Kindness, compassion.

“If you seek division, you will cause destruction. If you seek unity, you will bring us together. And that’s what our country needs—your leadership every day.” †



Joseph Donnelly, a former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See and former U.S. senator from Indiana, gives remarks on Sept. 15 at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis during a dinner sponsored by the St. Thomas More Society of Central Indiana following the society’s annual Red Mass.

St. Paul Catholic Center invites IU students ‘to encounter Jesus’

By Natalie Hoefer

At first, the statement made by Dominican Father Patrick Hyde seems a bit haughty: “The future of every parish in the archdiocese and beyond is impacted by the ministry we do at St. Paul Catholic Center.”

But the words are not his own. “Priests of the archdiocese told me this when I first got here, and I’ve found it to be true,” says Father Patrick, who in 2016 began ministering at the parish, located on the campus of Indiana University (IU) in Bloomington. He was named pastor in 2019.

“Our job is to launch and form our students for life in parishes other than our own. It’s an awesome responsibility, and we take our mission very seriously.”

‘Inviting them to encounter Jesus’

St. Paul Catholic Center was founded in 1969, but its roots trace back several decades prior.

Newman Clubs for Catholic higher education students began appearing on U.S. college campuses in 1893. Indiana’s first Newman Club was founded by St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington in 1928, serving about 200 Catholic students at IU.

As the university grew, so did the number of Catholic students. When the parish moved from its location on the edge of the IU campus, its former site became a dedicated Newman Center in the early 1950s.

In 1967, Father James Higgins was named administrative director for

IU Catholic students. He helped establish St. Paul Catholic Center, a combined Newman Center and Catholic parish and served as its first pastor.

Archdiocesan priests headed the faith community until 2005, when friars from the Chicago-based Dominican Province of St. Albert the Great began ministering there.

The parish has 400-500 families registered—most either newly married or retired couples, notes Father Patrick.

“But pretty much all we do is campus ministry for IU,” he says. “We’re here for all 50,000 students, but we focus primarily on serving the 8,000-plus Catholic students on campus—from freshmen through doctoral students—encountering each and every one of them where they are with the Gospel of Jesus and inviting them to encounter Jesus and change their life.”

In church, on campus, around town

There is no greater means of encountering Christ than through the sacraments. Every week during the school year, the four Dominican priests on staff at St. Paul offer Mass 17 times and confession 16 times.

“At Mass on Sunday during the school year, two-thirds [of the congregation] will be IU students, depending on which Mass—and almost entirely at the Sunday evening Mass,” says Father Patrick.

The parish also partners in ministry with the Fellow of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). Currently, about 440 students participate in FOCUS Bible studies, and about 120 of those are “in formation”—learning how to be missionary disciples.

As “one of—if not the—largest Christian ministries on campus,”



says Father Patrick, St. Paul connects Catholic students “with a lot of things going on in the community, helping with things on campus, helping with St. Vincent de Paul [Society]—we have volunteers all over the place.”

The four Dominican priests on staff get out and about, too.

“We think creatively about how we can be present and available on campus,” says Father Patrick.

For example, Father Simon Felix Michalski is present on different parts of campus several hours each week for conversation and prayer. And Father Ben Keller, who played college baseball, makes himself available to athletes, teams and even coaches.

“In addition to those specific efforts, the friars regularly spend time with students in and around town and on

campus at various events and social gatherings,” Father Patrick adds.

Proof of that out-and-about presence made national news—in what ultimately was a case of mistaken identity.

As reported in an April 5, 2016, article on *The Tab* news site, a tweet the night prior warned IU students of someone on campus wearing KKK gear and “armed with a whip.”

As it turned out, that “someone” was one of St. Paul’s friars wearing the Dominicans’ traditional white, hooded habit and the “whip” was a large rosary hanging from his belt.

‘The most formative years of their life’

The availability of sacraments, the Bible studies and the presence on campus are yielding fruit.

See ST. PAUL, page 15

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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Faith and reason work together to help the mind contemplate truth

By Br. Guy Consolmagno, S.J.

(OSV News)—St. John Paul II once wrote that faith and reason are “two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”

The idea that faith and reason work together can sound startling to people who think that the two are somehow opposed to each other. But when you look more closely at how faith works, and how reason works, then you can see that the pope had it right. Neither faith nor reason can operate alone. Each requires the other.

Consider how this argument plays out in the common assertion that somehow science and religion are at war. Many people see religion and science as two competing sets of truths: two big books of facts. And they worry, what should happen if the facts in one book contradict the facts in the other?

But faith is not based on rigid certainties that can fit in a book. Indeed, it is just the opposite. The writer Anne Lamott (echoing the theologian Paul Tillich) put it nicely: “the opposite of faith is not doubt; the opposite of faith is certainty.”

If we had certain knowledge, stuff in a book, then we wouldn’t need faith. In the same way, science doesn’t consist of just the formulae and answers in the back of the book—even if sometimes that’s how it is taught in school. If science is just a big book of unchangeable facts, then why is it that science textbooks go out of date so quickly?

We sometimes hear the phrase “blind faith” and think that faith means accepting something as certain only on authority, because somebody says so, without looking further—closing your eyes to the facts and proceeding on emotion. But that’s not faith at all. To the contrary, remember what Moses said to his people after giving them the Ten Commandments: “Be very careful not to forget the things your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your heart as long as you live, but make them known to your children and to your children’s children” (Dt 4:9).

He doesn’t say, “close your eyes,” but rather, “make [what you have seen] known to your children.”

Blind faith is not walking with blindfolds, ignoring the truth. It’s proceeding after we’ve done everything we can do to see the truth but still can’t see everything.

After all, it is on the basis of both reason and gut feeling that we make all the big decisions of our life. Whom should we marry? What career should we pursue? Where should we live? We never have enough “data” to know with absolute certainty the right thing to do. All of life is making crucial decisions on the basis of incomplete information.

But even though we don’t have full knowledge of the truth, we still have to choose. If we knew the answer perfectly and without doubt, we wouldn’t need faith. Faith is what we rely on when we don’t have certainty.

And how do we make these decisions? What do we base our faith on? We look at all the information we can get. We also listen to all the authorities we can trust: our family, friends, local clergy. Then we apply our imagination to see what it might be like to be in one situation or another, and we decide which choice makes



Pope Leo XIV looks through the main telescope of the Vatican Observatory in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, on July 20 alongside U.S. Jesuit Father David A. Brown, an astronomer. The pope visited the observatory to mark the anniversary of the first crewed mission to land on the moon in 1969. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

us feel right in the long run. It’s data, reason, authority and gut instinct—all rolled together.

Indeed, like what happened with Moses on the mountain, every religious experience begins with—well—an experience. An act of faith often begins with a new and startling thing that has happened to us: hearing the voice of God on a mountaintop, or a still small voice within us that calls us to some new and unexpected action. We use faith to move forward when we are confronted with an experience that demands we make a choice.

We find the same situation in science. It seeks to find a deeper understanding of nature that goes beyond the textbooks. Our goal in science is not just to come up with the most accurate equation to match the data.

After all, a computer can arbitrarily fit an equation—more than one equation!—to any set of data points. But if our goal is to find a description of nature that not only matches the data, but also gives us insights as to what’s going on, then we need to judge all the different solutions that a computer might give us and ask our intuition to help us decide which answer deserves our faith, which one seems most likely to lead us to understand the bigger puzzle we’re trying to solve. And that’s why, as we learn more and understand more, we let our ideas grow and change.

For example, ancient astrologers could predict eclipses and the positions of the planets using Aristotle’s physics, the best science available for 1,500 years. But Copernicus, Kepler and Newton (all devoutly religious men) worked out a new description of the motions of planets that not only gave good predictions, it also led to a new understanding of how nature itself works, including a force we now call gravity.

Notice two things here: First, no matter how well established a bit of science may appear to be, we can never predict how our explanations might change in a hundred or a thousand years’ time. Or even next week!

And second, good science is not just getting the right answer, it’s getting an answer that leads to new insights. But since our criteria for what makes a good explanation depends on our very human instincts about whether or not an insight is useful, likely to lead to a deeper understanding of the truth, then that judgment of what is good is not one that can be determined by reason alone.

It can take years of work before we know if a particular insight bears fruit. When we have to choose which insights to pursue, we are in the same position as the person who tries to

decide where to live or whom to marry. There’s no way to know ahead of time if we’ve made the right choice.

Science, of course, is based on both collecting data and then reasoning about it. It’s no surprise that our scientific ideas might change as we get more data. Yet the principle that reason needs faith is found even in a field like mathematics.

Unlike science, math actually does attempt to come up with eternal proofs. The geometry that Euclid came up with in ancient Greece is still true, even while the physics that Aristotle taught is now completely discarded.

But even Euclid’s geometry is not the last word. To do geometry (or any other kind of logic) you have to start with assumptions, called “axioms.” These are assumptions that seem so self-evident that you can assert they are true, without proof. Only then, based on those assumptions, can you use reason to arrive at firm conclusions about things that are not as obvious as those axioms.

The choice of axioms, choosing your assumptions, is key. Through the centuries, mathematicians have learned that you can relax one or another of Euclid’s axioms and invent whole new mathematics, like the geometry on the surface of a sphere instead of a flat plane.

We must accept “axioms” on faith. Before we can reason, we must have faith in our ability to judge what is reasonable. That is why no mathematical “proof” of the existence (or nonexistence) of God can ever be valid. God is not something that we arrive at by following some chain of reasoning. Rather, God is one of the key assumptions that we start with (or don’t) when we begin to try to use reason to understand the universe.

It is possible to declare that one does not believe in God and then construct a logically self-consistent system that explains the universe in terms of, say, accident or rigid necessity. (It’s tougher to explain where those laws of chance or rigid necessity came from, of course.) But one can also assume the truth of a God—indeed the personal God of love as found in Scripture, who has willed this universe into being—and, with that assumption, also derive a logically self-consistent universe.

How do you choose between these two possibilities? Study the universe. Listen to the authorities who have proved trustworthy to you in the past. And, at the end of the day, ask yourself which explanation, the one with God or the one without, satisfies both the data of science and the instinct of the human heart.

Faith and reason do not compete. Faith is the foundation on which we can build our systems of reason. But just as reason is built on faith, so our faith is pointless if we do not build upon it with reason. We cannot reason without faith, nor claim faith without engaging our reason, any more than a bird can soar with only one wing.

As St. John Paul II reminds us, neither faith nor reason are ends in themselves. Rather, they are wings to bring us to our ultimate goal: the contemplation of truth.

(Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno is a staff astronomer at the Vatican Observatory and the president of the Vatican Observatory Foundation in Tucson, Ariz. He served as director of the Vatican Observatory from 2015-25.) †



Jesuit Brother Robert Macke presents a device to study the porosity and density of specimens retrieved from the asteroid Bennu by the Osiris-Rex space mission at the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory in Tucson as seen in a YouTube video he posted on his channel on Aug 12. (CNS photo/YouTube video screenshot)

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Learning is a lifelong project for both parents and children in families

Catholic schools across central and southern Indiana are now well into their new academic year.

My wife Cindy and I are now old enough as parents that we only have our two youngest sons still in school. But although Catholic schools may not play as large a role in our family’s life as it did when all five of our boys were students at the same time, our appreciation of the help they offer us as parents has only increased through the years.

At the same time, as our boys have gotten older, Cindy and I have also grown in our appreciation and awareness of just how much teaching and learning goes on in our home.

And it extends beyond our home on Indianapolis’ east side. Two of our sons now live on their own. But moments of teaching and learning continue to pop up with them regularly.

As our boys have gotten older, the lessons to be taught and learned have changed. The dos and don’ts of filing tax returns, for example, aren’t something you have to think about when parenting a 5-year-old. The constant

flow of change in parenting keeps Cindy and me on our toes. It can be pretty tiring, too.

Paradoxically, while change is a constant in parenting, other things remain the same, no matter how young or old your children are.

In some respects, the aspects of parenting that are constant can be the most important. Forming and teaching children by example and word how to be virtuous and to grow in their relationship with Christ and the Church are lifelong projects.

Because it continues on into adulthood, the flow of learning in the home goes back and forth. It’s not just parents teaching children. Parents are always in need of learning how to grow in virtue and in a faithful living out of their divine calling and their faith in Christ.

I know well that this is the case for myself every day. And there have been many moments through the years when my sons have given me examples of virtuous and holy living that stop me in my tracks, both in gratitude to God for the blessing he’s given me in my sons, and also as an examination of conscience for myself.

When we as parents step back and consider the mission we’ve been given in forming the children given

to us by God, we might be tempted to view it from 30,000 feet. After all, it is a task that is both at the very heart of what it means to be a parent and a duty that is never really completely fulfilled.

And while it is good for parents at times to gaze at the big picture of their vocation, we should always remember that it is carried out in the little moments of everyday life.

That reality can be scary, though, given how often all of us as humans—parents or not—fail in our daily lives to give the good example of virtue and faith we’re called and empowered by grace to give.

God, though, wants to sweep that fear away for us parents through his gift of mercy. Yes, we fall in lots of little ways in daily life to form our children in virtue and faith. But our heavenly Father is always there to forgive us.

And the more that all of us in families—parents and children alike—are aware of his mercy, the more that we’ll become channels of his mercy to each other.

Such mercy, such divine mercy, is surely the lifeblood and water flowing from Christ’s pierced side that help parents and children together grow in virtue and faith. †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

The Church is the universal instrument, the sacrament of salvation

Last month, we focused upon polarization and polarized thinking. As promised, this month we are focusing upon teachings of the Church: no salvation outside the Church, and the necessity of baptism.

These can be perceived as polarizing. But are they?

The Church is the universal instrument, “sacrament” of salvation. She is the visible presence of Christ on Earth. It is for her to spread the good news of salvation in and through Christ. He gave her this mission (Mt 28:16-20).

The Church “is the visible plan of God’s love for humanity,” because God desires “that the whole human race may become one people of God, form one body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit.” (Pope Paul VI, June 22, 1973; “*Ad Gentes*” 7, #2; “*Lumen Gentium*,” #17).

The Church is the “sign and instrument” of the full realization of the unity yet to come (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], #775).

Without the Church and its mission, salvation in Christ would not be known.

The affirmation “there is no salvation outside the Church,” often repeated by the Church Fathers in the first centuries of the Church, has a somewhat negative tone.

Reformulated positively, it means that “... all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body” (CCC, #846).

In keeping with the Church’s continued focus on ecumenism (relations with other Christians, cf. “*Unitatis Redentigratio*”), such a positive reformulation comes across less harshly.

The catechism states: “Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament” (CCC, #1257).

This paragraph concludes: “God has bound salvation to the sacrament of baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments” (CCC, #1257).

This last statement leads to the following paragraphs. They lay out that “... those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ” (CCC, #1258).

It continues, “For catechumens who die before their baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (CCC, #1259).

“Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the paschal mystery” (CCC, #1260).

“Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired baptism. explicitly if they had known its necessity” (CCC, #1260).

Lastly, “as regards children who have died without baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them” (CCC, #1261).

Together, these statements affirm both the necessity of baptism and, in its absence, divine mercy for salvation of all.

As noted in the conclusion of paragraph 1257 above, God himself is not bound by the sacraments. Thus, the gift of salvation is open to people of other religions.

Seeking truth, doing the will of God as they are able to grasp it, and living lives of charity (Mt 25:31-46) may lead them to this divine gift.

We are on mission to reveal Christ. We are the Church, the sacrament of salvation. In our hearts, then, charity toward our brothers and sisters, Christians and others who sincerely seek God, is essential.

Such hearts are antithetical to polarization.

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. He is retired from full-time pastoral ministry but is still active as a priest of the archdiocese.) †

Called to Holiness/Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

Where is God? He is there, present in every circumstance in our lives

Bad things happen. And when they do—especially when they happen to good people—one question seems to lurk beneath all the others: Where is God?

There have been many reasons to ask that question of late. And whether we’re trying to process violence on a Utah college campus, a light rail train in Charlotte or at a school Mass in Minneapolis, “Where is God?” is a question we’ve been hearing a lot.

Senseless violence, like what we’ve been witnessing, causes us all to question. But “Where is God?” is the question of the unbeliever—the taunting refrain that amplifies doubt and mocks whoever believed in the first place. “My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, ‘Where is your God?’ ... As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, ‘Where is your God?’ ” (Ps 42).

Trauma distorts how we see the world. It paints a picture of reality in which the stakes couldn’t be higher and survival is anything but certain. In this context, it’s tempting to believe that God is far from us at best, and, at worst, uncaring or cruel. In that dark place, some lose their faith entirely. And when they do, it’s because they find it easier to reject the existence of God than to assume the burden of having to make excuses for him. It’s easier to say there is no God than to keep looking for him amid the rubble and in the dark.

Suffering—even when it isn’t ours—dislodges us. It moves us from where we’ve settled, either closer to God or further away from him. But when suffering is close to us, when the pain is ours, it is the silver platter on which a very clear choice is presented to us: to believe in God—and trust him—or not to.

That choice was tangible at an interfaith prayer service recently organized to reflect on the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Two decades later, the emotions remain raw, and the overwhelming losses are still keenly felt. But those who ultimately responded to the damage they sustained with faith, aren’t wondering where God was in the storm. They know he was right there with them, and that he still is.

“We may have lost things,” thundered Brandon Boutin, senior pastor of United Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church in New Orleans. “We may even have lost people. But we did not lose the presence of God.” Our faith teaches us that God is present in every circumstance, in every place and time—without exception. God is never absent, not even in the darkest, most horrific circumstances we struggle to imagine.

If all that is true, we should be able to see evidence of it even in a Nazi concentration camp. Anyone who thinks that’s stretching it should see the new film *Bau, Artist at War*, opening in theaters on Sept. 26.

Holocaust romance isn’t exactly a well-developed genre, but that is what Joseph and Rebecca Bau’s compelling real-life story is. I won’t risk any spoilers. But

shortly before his death in 2002, Bau was asked, “How did you find the strength to get through the holocaust?” His answer turned the question on its head. “It isn’t about strength,” Joseph Bau replied. “It’s about love.”

Faith doesn’t just change the answers to our questions; it changes the questions we ask. To be clear, believers still have questions—plenty of them. But instead of wondering where God is, or if he is, the person of faith responds to tragic circumstances with an entirely different line of inquiry. “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” (Ps 139). The answer the psalmist reveals in the verses that follow is simple: nowhere.

God is present in today’s news, in trauma we would rather not remember, and in events long relegated to history. God can be found amid shards of bullet-shattered stained glass. He can be encountered on a rooftop surrounded by water stretching as far as the eye can see, and he lives in the crevices between concrete and barbed wire.

Because God is love, the setting does not matter. Every story can be a love story. We don’t need strength or resilience to get through the worst circumstances imaginable. We only need love. And no matter where life leads us, love is already there waiting to meet us.

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

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, September 28, 2025

- Amos 6:1a, 4-7
- 1 Timothy 6:11-16
- Luke 16:19-31

The Book of Amos provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. The book itself states that it was written during the



reign of King Uzziah of Judah, which occurred between 783 and 742 BC. It was a time of tranquility and prosperity. No wars troubled the kingdom.

Still, Amos spoke strongly against laxity in religion

and morally careless living. It was not necessarily a denunciation of utter vice, but rather it condemned lukewarmness.

To be precise, chief among his concerns was the sluggishness with which people practiced their religion. All in all, Amos insisted, the situation was a sure recipe for problems and even disaster.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy supplies the second reading for this weekend’s liturgy. Last weekend’s second reading also came from First Timothy.

Timothy was an early convert to Christianity. The epistles written to him, and now contained in the New Testament, assured his place in the tradition of the Church. As his life unfolded, he became a disciple of Paul and then a Christian leader in his own right, destined to be one of the major figures in the development of Christianity. Paul in this passage calls Timothy to genuine virtue by being diligent and dedicated in following Jesus and in leading the community committed to Timothy’s pastoral care.

It was easy to be distracted from such faithfulness in the face of the glory, power and excesses in the mighty Roman Empire, to say nothing of the peril Christians faced since their religion was outlawed. To encourage Timothy, Paul cited the example of Jesus in the Lord’s trial before Pontius Pilate.

Despite the overbearing power of Rome, Paul insists that God’s justice will endure and that Jesus will come again in triumph and vindication.

St. Luke’s Gospel furnishes the last reading, a parable, rather straightforward in its message.

A rich man is enjoying all the benefits of financial success and well-being. By contrast, Lazarus is desperately poor, yearning to have just the scraps that fall from the rich man’s table.

In time, Lazarus died. Then the rich man died. As the rich man reached the hereafter, he realized that he himself was then in great need, whereas Lazarus was being held close to Abraham, the holy father of the Hebrew people.

By this time, the once rich man is desperate. He pleads with Abraham for just a drop of water to quench his thirst. The once rich man implores Abraham to send Lazarus back to Earth to warn the rich man’s brothers that they too will be punished unless they turn to God and forsake greed.

Abraham replies that messengers already have been sent, namely Moses and the prophets, and Moses and the prophets were ignored.

Reflection

At first glance, the readings, and especially that from Luke’s Gospel, seem to present a clear message. But beneath the obvious is another, stronger lesson. It is more than a question of avoiding greed or being unjust in commercial dealings.

It is instead the lesson that Christians must judge earthly life by a standard that not often is embraced by humans, as human judgments always are impaired and often unreliable. Count the ways how often human reasoning is wrong.

Only the things and ways of God are worthy of attention.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is more than merely a coincidence about a person who has succeeded in the world versus a person who has not succeeded.

At the time of Jesus, many thought that earthly riches showed that God blessed the rich, whereas poverty and want indicated that a great sin somehow lay in the background of a poor person.

Jesus totally debunked this notion by offering a different perspective of life and its rewards, a trustworthy standard for living. †

Daily Readings

Monday, September 29

St. Gabriel, archangel
St. Michael, archangel
St. Raphael, archangel
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
or Revelation 12:7-12ab
Psalm 138:1-5
John 1:47-51

Tuesday, September 30

St. Jerome, priest and doctor of the Church
Zechariah 8:20-23
Psalm 87:1b-7
Luke 9:51-56

Wednesday, October 1

St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church
Nehemiah 2:1-8
Psalm 137:1-6
Luke 9:57-62

Thursday, October 2

The Holy Guardian Angels
Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 7b-12
Psalm 19:8-11
Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Friday, October 3

Baruch 1:15-22
Psalm 79:1b-5, 8-9
Luke 10:13-16

Saturday, October 4

St. Francis of Assisi
Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29
Psalm 69:33-37
Luke 10:17-24

Sunday, October 5

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4
Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9
2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14
Luke 17:5-10

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Baptism forgives past sins of new Catholics not previously baptized

Q Does a person’s mortal sin prior to becoming Catholic follow him or her until confession and absolution?



mortal sin and go to confession and seek absolution? (Georgia)

A Regarding the first part of your question, it depends on whether or not the person becoming Catholic was a true convert, in the sense of turning to Jesus from a non-Christian religion; or whether they had been a non-Catholic Christian who was received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

If a person was unbaptized before becoming Catholic, then all their sins would have been forgiven by their baptism. As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “By baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins” (#1263).

As such, strictly speaking newly baptized converts would not need to confess their pre-baptismal sins—although if they have a regular confessor afterward, it could still be devoutly helpful for them to share their personal history in this regard.

However, not everyone who becomes Catholic does so through baptism. Other kinds of Christians, such as most Protestants, have already been validly baptized and only need to receive the other two sacraments of initiation (confirmation and the Eucharist) in order to become a full member of the Catholic Church.

And there are even some non-Catholic Christians, such as the Eastern Orthodox, who have already received

all of their sacraments validly and are welcomed into the Catholic Church after just a simple profession of faith.

Already-baptized Christians would need to confess and receive absolution for any mortal sins they committed after baptism but prior to becoming Catholic, since it is baptism that has the power to forgive sins and not reception into the Catholic Church per se on its own.

Like the catechism further tells us: “Christ instituted the sacrament of penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion” (#1446).

But the specific example you mention in the second part of your question introduces a few nuances.

First, even an objectively serious sin such as facilitating an abortion might not be a mortal sin in every instance. In particular, the catechism explains that “mortal sin requires full knowledge and complete consent. It presupposes knowledge of the sinful character of the act, of its opposition to God’s law” (#1859).

In other words, if a person paid for an abortion because he or she sincerely but mistakenly believed that a fetus was somehow not a human life endowed with intrinsic dignity and the right to live, then this person would not have committed a mortal sin.

Yet depending on what their understanding of abortion actually was (e.g., did they accept the lie that an unborn child was “just a piece of tissue” at face value because this was what was always taught, when they might have asked some more pointed questions about whether this was actually true?) it still may have been venially sinful.

And additionally, the catechism reminds us that actively “feigned ignorance” and “hardness of heart” do not excuse or diminish “but rather increase the voluntary character of a sin” and thus its seriousness (#1859).

On a practical level, my own rule of thumb with respect to questions like this is: When in doubt, bring it up in confession anyway. If a person does bear the guilt of a sin committed in their pre-Catholic life, the priest will be happy to grant absolution. And even if the act was only venially sinful, it never hurts to bring the light of God’s sacramental grace into such a dark episode of one’s history.

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

My Journey to God

GO OUT

By Janine Schorsch

Go out.
Be a Christ Bearer.
Build My Church.

Go out in Trust.
Abandon the preplanned speech,
the pride that fears ridicule.
I will put My words into your mouth.

Go out in Courage.
Leave the comfort of your chosen destination.
Look only for My guidance.
I will lead you.

Go out in Hope.
Let go your desires, your plans.
Just plant the seeds.
I will make them grow.

Go out in Fervor.
Let your light shine;
let the love in your heart warm the world.
I will set your heart aflame.

Go out.
Be a Christ Bearer
Be My presence to our world.



(Janine Schorsch is a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. Photo: A sculpture of St. Carlo Acutis kneeling at the foot of the crucified Christ is seen in Assisi, Italy, on Aug. 21, after a rainstorm. The bronze work titled “St. Carlo at the Cross” is by Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz. It portrays the young saint leaning his head against the cross while holding a laptop depicting the sacred vessels for holy Communion. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Investing with Faith/*James Maslar*

Alphabet soup and maximizing your impact: IRA’s, RMD’s, and QCD’s

Ellen made a \$5,000 annual tithe gift to her parish, \$2,500 to her parish’s endowment, lowered her taxable income, avoided higher Medicare premiums and



satisfied half of her required minimum distribution for the year—all in one fell swoop. And all without having to itemize.

“My late husband had told me about it, and I brought it up with my financial advisor a few years ago” Ellen, 79, shared. “We met to look at my required minimum distribution, review utilizing it for my giving for the year, and to discuss what charities I’d like to benefit with it. We do it every year now. It’s a no-brainer for me.”

Ellen utilized what’s called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from her individual retirement account (IRA), highlighting a powerful tool many Catholics over age 70 ½ can use to give more effectively. She simply filled out her IRA custodian’s QCD form to cut a check of \$7,500 directly to her parish.

She then sent an e-mail to the parish office to inform them of the incoming gift and how she wanted it allocated. She enjoyed a meaningful gift to her parish (which she was wanting to do anyway) and saved thousands on taxes. “I hope other people like me know about this,” Ellen said. “If I can help the Church by sharing my story, I want to do that.”

73 or older? Tax-smart(est) way to give When it comes to charitable giving and including your favorite Catholic parish, school or ministry in your stewardship plans, one method is often the best place to start for those in their 70s, like Ellen—making a QCD from an eligible IRA account.

As you likely know, Uncle Sam comes knocking when a person turns 73 years old, requiring them to begin taking withdrawals from any tax-deferred retirement account (so it can be taxed as ordinary income, even if the person doesn’t need it). This is called someone’s required minimum distribution, or RMD. And while the required withdrawal percentage starts relatively small (4% at 73), it increases

each year as you age. The government, however, does allow a person to direct some or all of the RMD amounts of eligible IRAs directly to a charity tax-free (up to \$108,000 per spouse). That portion of their RMD is then considered satisfied and does not count toward their taxable income. Therefore, even if you take the standard deduction, utilizing QCDs for your annual giving can lower your taxable income and potentially keep it below thresholds that trigger increases to Medicare premiums or Social Security tax.

Know which type of retirement accounts you hold When it comes to retirement accounts, it can feel like alphabet and number soup: IRA, TSP, SEP 401k, 403b, 457b, to name a few—not to mention RMDs and QCDs. It can be a little overwhelming keeping it all straight, especially if you have multiple accounts of different types. On more than a few occasions through the years, I’ve spoken with donors who wanted to utilize this tax-smart way of supporting the

Church, but did not know what type of retirement account or accounts they held, or thought they held one type, say, an IRA, which is QCD-eligible, when really it was another (a 401k, not QCD-eligible). The only accounts eligible for QCDs are: traditional IRAs, inherited IRAs, inactive SEP IRAs, and inactive simple IRAs. The good news, however, is that simply rolling a 401(k), 403(b), 457(b), or TSP into a traditional IRA can then allow QCD-making. If this QCD charitable strategy sounds intriguing to you, check with your retirement account custodian/ advisor or consider a rollover option, if needed. A little effort in sorting through the alphabet soup of retirement plans can translate into a lasting impact for your favorite Catholic ministries and significant tax savings for you.

(James Maslar is a Catholic philanthropic advisor for the archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation (CCF). Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan.) †

ST. PAUL

continued from page 10

When he arrived in 2016, about 40 to 50 students came to the parish’s free supper after its Sunday 5:30 p.m. Mass, says Father Patrick. Now the average number is 200. More importantly, about 30 students a year for the last several years have been welcomed into the full communion of the Church at St. Paul through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, he says, and an average of 15 Catholic students a year have received the sacrament of confirmation. “They may have gone to Catholic school or maybe Mass at Easter and Christmas, but

never got confirmed,” says Father Patrick. “It’s a stark reality that often now, by the age of 13, a lot of kids don’t identify deeply as Catholic. We’re doing outreach to reach those who are lost or seeking but don’t know the beauty of the Church. We’ve seen more and more seeking that [beauty] out in last three to four years.” He calls it “a gift” that so many parents entrust “the spiritual and moral formation of their kids to us during some of the most formative years of their life.” “But we couldn’t do it without their and our alumni’s prayers or financial support,” Father Patrick adds. Along that latter line, St. Paul Catholic Center will launch the public phase of a capital campaign this fall. “The church was built in 1968 and

dedicated in 1969,” he says. “A lot of the infrastructure goes back to then. And the most recent renovation was in the 1990s.” “The scope of the campaign is to address critical infrastructure issues in the church and to enhance the beauty of our worship.” Doing so will “ensure a beautiful sanctuary on IU’s campus for generations to come.” Which in turn supports what Father Patrick calls St. Paul Catholic Center’s

primary mission: “Being a sanctuary on campus, a place where Catholic students can come to study, pray, meet with Jesus, build relationships, and then send that out into the fraternities, sororities, dorms and beyond.” *(Mass Excursions is a periodic feature highlighting archdiocesan parishes. View past features at www.archindy.org/excursions.) †*

Two Franciscan sisters from the archdiocese profess perpetual vows

Franciscan Sister Mary Peter Ruschke and Franciscan Sister Mary Amata Naville professed perpetual vows as members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in Mishawaka, Ind., in the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese, during an Aug. 2 Mass in the chapel of the religious community’s motherhouse. Sister Mary Peter, 33, was previously a teacher at St. Louis School in Batesville from 2014-17. She now serves as a teacher at St. Boniface School in Lafayette, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. Sister Mary Amata, 28, grew up as a

member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton, was a student at Holy Family School in New Albany and now serves as assistant vocations director for her religious community at the motherhouse. Both sisters joined the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in 2017. The Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration were founded in 1863 in Olpe, Germany, by Blessed Maria Theresa Bonzel and have served in Indiana since 1875. They operate several hospitals in the Midwest, including Franciscan Health Indianapolis in Indianapolis. †



Franciscan Sister Mary Peter Ruschke, left, and Franciscan Sister Mary Amata Naville beam with joy on Aug. 2 while receiving the congratulations of those present for their profession of perpetual vows as members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in the community’s motherhouse chapel in Mishawaka, Ind., in the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese. Sister Mary Peter was previously a teacher at St. Louis School in Batesville. Sister Mary Amata grew up as a member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton and was a student at Holy Family School in New Albany. (Submitted photo)

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