



The

Criterion

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Journey to Lourdes

Shrine to Mary offers hope and ‘a foretaste of heaven,’ page 12.

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Members of the football team of Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis show their reverence and solidarity during a pre-game Mass in the school's chapel on Sept. 19. (Photo courtesy of Katie Nelson)

What matters most in Catholic high school sports? Maybe the essence of this tradition

By John Shaughnessy

When all things are considered about high school sports in Catholic schools, what matters most?

Certainly, the pursuit of wins, championships and excellence will always be a defining part of the equation when players and coaches pour their hearts into a season.

And the bonds that connect young people with each other and their coaches can be so deep that they last far beyond a season.

Still, maybe what matters most in the long run is captured in a tradition that has existed for generations within football programs in Catholic high schools across the archdiocese.

It's the tradition of having a pre-game Mass on a Friday afternoon before a football game later that evening—a time of reflecting on the blessing of playing a game with people you have come to count on, a time of being in the presence of God who you can always rely on.

As proof of that tradition's importance, consider the perspective of two head football coaches—and there are more across the archdiocese—who embrace that ritual: Dan Harris, head coach of the varsity football team of Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis, and Daniel McDonald, head coach of the varsity football team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville.

See SPORTS, page 8

The Church must ‘walk poor with the poor’ to serve Christ, says Pope Leo in new exhortation

(OSV News)—In his first apostolic exhortation, Pope Leo XIV has taken up the call of Pope Francis for Christians to see in the poor the very face of Christ—



Pope Leo XIV

and to be a Church that “walks poor with the poor” in order to authentically live out the Gospel (#21).

“*Dilexi Te*” (“I Have Loved You”) was publicly released on Oct. 9, having been signed on Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, whose

radical embrace of poverty and service to the poor is presented as a key example in the exhortation.

The document, which totals more than 21,000 words spanning five chapters, takes its title from Revelation 3:9, in which Christ addresses “a Christian community that, unlike some others, had no influence or resources, and was treated instead with violence and contempt,” wrote Pope Leo (#1).

The exhortation completes one that “Pope Francis was preparing in the last months of his life”—namely, an apostolic exhortation on the Church's care for the poor that built on the late pope's 2024 encyclical letter “*Dilexit Nos*,” said Pope Leo (#3).

“I am happy to make this document my own—adding some reflections—and to issue it at the beginning of my own pontificate, since I share the desire of my beloved predecessor that all Christians come to appreciate the close connection between Christ's love and his summons to care for the poor,” wrote Pope Leo, who retained Pope Francis' planned title for the work (#3).

Pope Leo said he, like his predecessor, considered it “essential to insist on this path to holiness,” since—as Pope Francis

See EXHORTATION, page 7

Cease-fire agreement leads to joy—and hope and caution for peace in the Middle East

(OSV News and CNS) -- Scenes of joy, relief and tearful reunions flooded media across the world on Oct. 13 as the remaining Israeli hostages were freed from Hamas captivity in the Gaza Strip as part of the U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement.

U.S. President Donald Trump said it was the “dawn of a new Middle East” in remarks before the Israeli parliament on Oct. 13 after Hamas freed what are believed to be all of its living hostages and as Israel released

See PEACE, page 2

Women react as people gather at “Hostages Square” in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Oct. 13, the day Hamas released hostages, who had been held in Gaza since the deadly Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Hamas, as part of a prisoner-hostage swap and a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. (OSV News photo/Shir Torem, Reuters)



PEACE
continued from page 1

Palestinian prisoners in a preliminary agreement on the White House’s ceasefire deal.

“This is not only the end of the war, this is the end of an age of terror and death, and the beginning of the age of faith, of hope, and of God,” Trump told Israel’s Knesset.

In advance of the release of the living hostages, Pope Leo XIV on Oct. 12 highlighted the new peace deal, saying “the agreement to begin the peace process has given a spark of hope in the Holy Land.”

“I encourage the parties involved to continue courageously on the path they have chosen, toward a just and lasting peace that respects the legitimate aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples,” the pope said.

“Two years of conflict have caused death and destruction throughout the land, especially in the hearts of those who have brutally lost their children, parents, friends and possessions. With the entire Church, I am close to your immense pain.

“The gentle touch of the Lord is directed especially toward you today, in the certainty that even amidst the deepest darkness, he always remains with us.”

As part of the U.S.-proposed deal, 250 Palestinian prisoners were also released by Israel, with 1,650 more to be freed.

The remains of some of the deceased hostages were transferred to the custody of the Red Cross. Hamas released just four of the deceased, prompting some anger from advocates of the hostages’ families and concern about Hamas following through on their commitment to do so.

Starting his speech to the Knesset, Trump said, “We gather on a day of profound joy, of soaring hope, of renewed faith, and above all, a day to give our deepest thanks to the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

During his remarks, Trump added, “This long and difficult war has now

ended,” although many details of a long-term plan remain subject to negotiation.

“Israel has won all that can be won by force of arms,” he said. “Now, it is time to translate these victories ... into the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity for the entire Middle East.”

Addressing the Knesset before Trump spoke, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking in English and turning to the U.S. leader, said: “Two weeks ago, you succeeded in doing something miraculous. You succeeded in doing something that no one believed was possible.”

“You brought most of the Arab World—most of the world—behind your proposal to free the hostages and end the war,” he said, thanking the U.S. president.

Minutes before Trump addressed the Knesset, Joseph Hazboun of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association-Pontifical Mission (CNEWA) spoke to OSV News and said that, with the deal reached, he was “very happy at long last” but “not optimistic enough to say” it’s “a peace agreement” but “a ceasefire.”

“This is the day that we’ve been waiting for for two years,” said Hazboun, regional director for CNEWA-Pontifical Mission’s Jerusalem office.

“The people that were ordered to evacuate and move all around the Gaza Strip several times are finally going back to their ... areas of residency,” he said. “I’m not sure what they will find there—probably the ruins of their homes, but at least they will be safe. There is no more bombing from air or from the sea or from the land.”

Hazboun, who spoke to OSV News from Jerusalem, said that Trump “deserves the credit for putting an end to the war” as he “basically informed Netanyahu he has to stop. And now Trump is the guarantor of the end of the war.”

He also warned that with earlier attempts to stop the war, the parties “on several occasions shifted position for whatever reason,” therefore in the Holy Land, “we have our hands on our hearts



A freed Palestinian prisoner is greeted by his family member in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Oct. 13, after being released from an Israeli jail as part of a hostages-prisoners swap and a ceasefire deal in Gaza between Hamas and Israel. (OSV News photo/Mohamad Torokman, Reuters)



Public Schedule of

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

October 18–25, 2025

October 18 – 1 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Mary Parish, New Albany, and St. Michael Parish, Charlestown, at St. Mary Church

October 19 – 1 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Jeffersonville; Holy Family Parish, New Albany; St. Joseph Parish, Corydon; St. Mary Parish, Lanesville; and St. Augustine Parish, Jeffersonville, at Holy Family Church

October 19 – 5 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. John Paul II Parish, Sellersburg; Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, New Albany; and St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish, Floyd County, at St. John Paul II Church

October 20 – 5:30 p.m.

75th Anniversary Celebration for Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Northside Events and Social Club, Indianapolis

October 21 – 11 a.m.

Mass and lunch with retired priests at St. Jude Parish, Indianapolis

October 22 – 7 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

October 23 – 10 a.m.

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

October 23 – 7 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, Greenwood, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

October 25 – 10 a.m. CST

Diaconate ordination at Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln followed by lunch at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Meinrad

October 25 – 4 p.m. CST

Wedding Anniversary Mass at St. Paul Church, Tell City

praying that this agreement will last.”

Now, Hazboun said, all eyes are on Gaza, where tens of thousands began to make their way back to their homes, or what’s left of them.

Many Palestinians returned to see only mostly rubble left, with Father Gabriel Romanelli, the pastor of Gaza City’s Catholic parish, saying the entire enclave has experienced a “tsunami” of destruction.

Asked about the Christian community sheltering in the Holy Family Parish and

St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church compound, Hazboun said they will for now “remain in the church compound, because most of them, they lost their homes and their apartments.”

However, Hazboun said, “people will have the freedom now to go and check on their homes,” but “it will take time” to see “who has his home or his apartment intact and can move back, who has minor destruction, who has full destruction.”

What gives people a sense of relief is that “there is no more bombing

around them,” he continued, but at the same time “there is no infrastructure, there is no electricity, there is no water, there is no sewage” and “life is going to be complicated for the coming period.”

Hazboun said CNEWA staff was given instructions “to start asking, inquiring about what are the immediate needs as far as maybe not food, but maybe water, probably medicine, medical aid, medical supplies—all remains to be seen.” †



Released Israeli hostage Evyatar David, who was kidnapped during the deadly Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and taken to Gaza, reacts upon arrival at Rabin Medical Center-Beilinson Hospital, amid a hostages-prisoners swap and a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, in Petah Tikva, Israel, on Oct. 13. (OSV News photo/Stoyan Neno, Reuters)



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New project announced and ‘Dr. Ray’ shares wisdom at Celebrate Life dinner

By Natalie Hoefer

It has been three years since the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* returned the regulation of abortion law to individual states. And it has been two years since laws went into effect making most abortion illegal in Indiana.

“Officially, the number of abortions in Indiana last year was 145,” said Marc Tuttle, president of Right to Life of Indianapolis, during the organization’s Celebrate Life dinner and fundraiser on Sept. 25. “To put that in perspective, the year before the *Dobbs* decision was decided, it was over 8,000 abortions in our state.”

The dramatic drop drew resounding applause from the nearly 750 people—including about 325 students and 15 seminarians from Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis—gathered for the event at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown hotel. The event featured a keynote address by Dr. Ray Guarendi—known by many as “Dr. Ray.” The clinical psychologist, parenting and family expert, author, speaker and national radio and television host is known for his humor. He is also a Catholic and the father of 10 adopted children, including several with “risk factors,” which he defined in his talk.

Before Guarendi spoke, Tuttle continued sharing about the work Right to Life of Indianapolis is doing to promote a culture of life through education, advocacy and more.

Becoming a movement of restoration, healing

The fact that most abortions are now illegal in Indiana does not end the battle for a culture of life, Tuttle noted. “Rather than drawing a number of abortions down to zero, we need to draw a number of women seeking abortions down to zero,” he said.

To do this, Right to Life of Indianapolis will continue its current pro-life efforts—organizing the Indiana March and Rally for Life, offering student contests and scholarships, helping establish Teens for Life and Students

for Life groups in schools and parishes, having a booth at the Indiana State Fair and Indiana Black Expo, and more. But new efforts are underway as well. Tuttle envisions churches taking a leadership role in their community “to promote life, to promote pregnancy health services, to promote post-abortion healing services, to be out there educating the community and their own congregations,” he said.

The organization recently hosted a Pastor’s Breakfast, “trying to bring the leadership of churches around the city together” to bring this vision to life, said Tuttle.

He also noted the need for an increased focus on post-abortion healing.

“Abortion doesn’t just harm an unborn child,” said Tuttle. “It also harms a woman in ways that we have a hard time understanding. The increased risk of suicide, the increased use of addictive drugs, relationship problems. ...

“We’re trying to change the narrative and get the stories of women who’ve been injured, men who’ve been injured, and what that fallout looks like.”

To do so, Right to Life of Indianapolis is working with Indianapolis-based Silver Lantern Studios to produce a documentary called *Gone Unseen*. Through recorded interviews, it “allows them to tell their stories ... to bring to the forefront the reality of what abortion is and what abortion does—not just to the babies, but to the women.

“The reason we need to do this is because culture has to change,” said Tuttle. The hope is for “the beginning of renewal, the beginning of the restoration, the beginning of the movement to bring healing back to our city, back to our state, and back to our country.”

He closed with a quote attributed to Frederica Mathewes-Green when she was vice-president of Feminists for Life of America.

“She said, ‘No woman seeks to have an abortion like somebody seeks to have a Porsche or an ice cream cone. A woman seeks to have an abortion like an animal that’s caught in a trap seeks to gnaw its own leg off.’

“And that’s the reality of abortion.”

‘Love without discipline is challenging’

Couching personal experience and wisdom in humorous stories, Guarendi shared insights on parenting and the value of all human life—including his and his wife’s own adopted children labeled as having “risk factors.”

“A risk factor is anything that would make a kid tougher to raise,” he explained. “Poor prenatal care, poor postnatal care, abuse in the womb, neglect in the womb, high maternal stress, low birth weight, heavy drug exposure”

Guarendi shared his opinion that “discipline without love may be harsh but love without discipline is challenging.”

He offered one of his “risk factor” adopted children as an example. The boy’s mother “pretty much ingested every toxin she could get a hold of,” Guarendi said.

But it was the boy’s bad behavior from lack of discipline in his foster home that led two prospective adoptive families to rescind their offer to adopt him.

Guarendi changed one bad behavior—not adhering to bedtime—in one night.

“I put my hands on his shoulders, and I just held him immobile in bed,” he said. He told the boy in a gentle tone, “Johnny,



Members of the Boone County Gen 4 Life group wave at the camera during Right to Life of Indianapolis’ Celebrate Life dinner and fundraiser at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown hotel on Sept. 25. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

it’s bedtime, son. You’re going to stay here, and I’m going to hold you. And when I let go, don’t get up, because I’ll come back.”

It was all about confidence and perception.

“He was reading me [thinking], ‘This guy looks like he means it,’ ” Guarendi said. “Because even now, I know I am stronger than the biggest, baddest 4-year-old in the whole world. ... It’s that element of calm, quiet, self-confidence.”

He blamed “all the psychologically enlightened ways to raise children” for confusing parents.

“You overthink, you overanalyze, you overtalk, you over negotiate—and you under-enjoy,” said Guarendi.

In his office and on his radio and television shows, parents often speak of their struggles with a strong-willed child, he said.

In such cases, “The parent needs the mindset, ‘I am [the parent], you are not,’ ” he said. “The big people have lost will. We’re not sure of ourselves. We’re not as confident. We’re not as quietly calm and authoritative anymore.”

‘We are wired different’

Guarendi noted another problem with modern parenting psychology, a concept that was promoted when he was studying for his degree.

“There was a notion they tried to push on us that I didn’t think would gain any traction whatsoever because it was too ridiculous,” he said. “It crashed up against reality, up against the research, up against God.”

The teaching was that there are no differences between men and women, that boys and girls are “just socialized into different roles,” he explained. “That if you give a little boy a baby doll, he’ll carry it around for four years and become a nurturing preschool teacher.”

The reality is that “50% of little boys will immediately rip the head off that doll and turn it into a machine gun!” Guarnedi said, setting the crowd laughing.

“We are wired different,” he continued. “God says it, human history says it, the research says it.”

Never tether peace to decisions of adult children

Guarendi closed with words of comfort for parents with children who no longer practice their faith.

“Moms especially beat themselves up,” he said, wondering, “Where did we go wrong? It was my fault. Somehow I missed things. Somehow I didn’t do what I should have done.”

He reminded such parents that, despite his perfection and ability to perform miracles, “Our Lord himself couldn’t get most people to follow him.”

Guarendi noted that some of his and his wife’s children had “drifted” from the faith.

“I think some of them may come back, although I may not live to see it,” he said.

“But my wife and I will never tether our peace to the decisions our adult children make. Never. That would make a liar out of our Lord, because he said, ‘I’ll give you peace the world doesn’t understand.’ ”

He drew laughs when he added that he “looked at those early [Gospel] manuscripts to see if there was an asterisk that said, ‘unless your kid keeps the faith—then you can’t have peace.’ ”

In closing, Guarendi reminded those present that, when it comes to their pro-life efforts, “The Lord doesn’t always let you see the good that you’ve done or the consequences of your actions until you get to heaven, keeping you from being prideful.

“But all your work, all the stuff you do, it has a kind of subtle effect. You can’t figure it out. God knows, but we can’t know.”

(For more information on Right to Life of Indianapolis, their efforts or how to support them through volunteering or financially, go to rtlindy.org. For more information on the documentary *Gone Unseen*, go to goneunseen.org.) †



Dr. Ray Guarendi offers a keynote address during Right to Life of Indianapolis’ Celebrate Life dinner and fundraiser at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown hotel on Sept. 25.

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Editorial



Two youths take part in the Indianapolis Life Chain event on Oct. 5 in front of the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

All human life is sacred

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2258)

All human life is sacred. This is not a complex sentence or a complicated concept. All human life—from the moment of conception to the experience of natural death—is sacred. No exceptions. End of story.

Yes, there are exceptions to the prohibition against taking a human life. Self-defense and the defense of innocent people are the obvious exceptions. In the face of an imminent threat against human life, it may be necessary to take the life of an aggressor. But self-defense is not an exception to the principle that all human life is sacred.

On the contrary, it affirms the absolute and immutable value of this principle by saying that the protection of human life sometimes requires that we take extreme measures to protect the sanctity of human life.

Defending innocent people against violent or murderous oppressors is defending the sacredness of human life. This is true in individual cases and in the case of a just war (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2309).

The Church now teaches that capital punishment is not the same thing as self-defense. In fact, the catechism was revised in 2018 to declare the death penalty as “inadmissible”:

Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good. Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes.

In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that “the

death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide. (#2267)

The principle of the sanctity of human life has broad and significant implications. To be “pro-life” means to advocate for the rights and dignity of human life in every circumstance from the moment of conception to the experience of natural death.

Pro-life Catholics join with people of goodwill from all walks of life in promoting health care, the availability of affordable housing, the rights of workers, the respectful treatment of immigrants and the just treatment of prisoners. Being pro-life also means being against abortion, euthanasia, suicide, domestic and political violence and the abusive treatment of immigrants and their families.

The social teaching of the Catholic Church does not allow for selective acceptance of fundamental applications of the principle that all human life is sacred. We cannot be against abortion and be indifferent to domestic violence. Nor can we say that we are against physician-assisted suicide but for capital punishment. All human life is sacred. Always and everywhere.

It’s certainly true that the application of this fundamental principle to public policies and legislation requires interpretation and often admits legitimate differences, even disagreements. This is the realm of politics which the Church should leave to public officials and to an electorate whose informed consciences have entrusted them with choosing representatives dedicated to serving the common good.

But this doesn’t mean that elected officials have the right to pick and choose where or when they will respect the sanctity of human life. The Church has the right and the responsibility to remind all of us, but especially our elected leaders, that some things are “inadmissible” and cannot ever be permitted.

The direct killing of another innocent human being can never be sanctioned. Catholics who actively oppose one another on one or more applications of this fundamental teaching undermine their cause.

All human life is sacred. Period.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Elizabeth Scalia

Finding and sharing mercy amid the madness in life

Thanks to the availability of instantaneous, global communication and our addiction to it, 21st century humans are permitted—perhaps



condemned is a better word—to witness daily episodes of brutality and violence and, particularly over the past few months, horrendous killings.

We were spared viewing the June slayings of Democrat

lawmaker Melissa Hortman and her husband and the nightmarish shooting of school children attending Mass at the Church of the Annunciation, in Minneapolis.

But the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk happened before countless smart phones set to video. The senseless murder of Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutka was caught on security cameras and released to the public with appropriate edits but remained gruesome.

Precisely as I filed a piece on Kirk and Zarutka, news was breaking about yet another school shooting, this time in Evergreen, Colo. I went to my prayer space, anguished that the pace of our violence had become so relentless.

And of course, nearly every day we see the carnage of a seemingly unsolvable war between Russia and Ukraine.

I write this on Yom Kippur, as details are still emerging about a terrorist attack on a synagogue in Manchester, England, killing two. On social media, we saw a Jewish victim dying in his own blood as police took down the attacker. He had already driven his car into people and then stabbed several while attempting to enter the building on this Jewish High Holy Day.

And here in America, we are only days out from yet another dreadful church shooting, this time targeting the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Michigan. It included deliberate arson into the mix.

“Enough, Lord, enough!” The plea rises from my tongue and gut like frail incense; I have no answers for the images before me. There is no action I can take beyond prayer. “Let me see no more blood, no more weeping, no more shock blankets, no more dying children!”

A tempting response might be, “Stay off social media; problem solved!” But given the giant role such platforms play in most lives, that’s hardly pragmatic. In chat groups, friends wonder whether explicitly violent material should be banned from postings, but there always comes a point where someone says, “I’d rather know what we’re facing out there, than not know,” and the conversation dies out.

That sentiment might be true, but I wonder if those of us who work in news media, where “if it bleeds, it leads” is understood, might help balance all the dreadful shots of human misery by promoting a larger awareness of the human mercies that sometimes follow.

There was certainly ample coverage when Erika Kirk pronounced forgiveness for her husband’s assassin—an act that inspired others—but it was not sustained.

Thoughtful editors might have sought further analysis of the action of forgiveness as an authentic bringer of hope and a maker of peace but I suspect that, especially for mainstream media outlets, taking a deeper look into the mystery of mercy would feel like initiating a too-challenging-to-control dance between religious and earthly sentiments, with the very real effect of the religious side seeming both wildly idealistic yet attractive—a secularist’s nightmare.

Still, we are seeing coverage of the incredible outreach by the Latter-day Saints to the family of the man who destroyed their worship space and killed their members. “They [the family] certainly didn’t choose this. They certainly didn’t want this to happen. And they’re victims, too,” explained Mormon David Bulter, who organized the GiveSendGo effort which has raised over \$250,000.

More than material support, the Mormons offered prayers and words of forgiveness and encouragement to people whose sufferings are often forgotten amid tragedy and outrage.

Getting less attention, but equally inspiring, is the story of Maoz Inon who embraced “radical forgiveness” after his parents were killed in the October 7, 2023, terror attack along Israel’s border. He has partnered with Palestinian Abu Sarah, whose brother died after being beaten in an Israeli jail. The two men work for peace by inviting personal dialogue.

Their co-authored book, *The Future Is Peace*, which details an eight-day journey across Israel and the West Bank, offers both Palestinian and Israeli narratives. It will be published in April 2026.

The forgiveness of Erika Kirk; the good-and-welfare outreach of the Mormons, the promotion of dialogue between Jews and Palestinians: more than actions of hope, these are evidence of mercy amid our current madness.

Praise be to God that we may not only be witness to such mercy, but each become part of it.

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

Letters Policy

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

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

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

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Christ the Cornerstone

We are called to share the peace and unity of Christ with others

Tomorrow, Oct. 18, is the feast of St. Luke the Evangelist. Luke is the author of one of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. He is revered for his ability to show us the teaching, healing and miracles of Jesus (culminating in his passion, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven) and for helping us to visualize the life of the very first Christians.

St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians refers to Luke as a physician. Thus, he is thought to have been both a physician and a disciple of St. Paul.

According to the Book of Revelation’s powerful imagery, four “beasts” give endless praise before the throne of God: a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle (Rev 4:6-11). These creatures are sometimes said to represent the four evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. St. Luke is identified with the ox, which symbolizes strength and sacrifice.

The Gospel for tomorrow’s feast day Mass describes the style of missionary discipleship which Jesus’ followers, and all of us who have been baptized, are called to embrace. As St. Luke tells us:

The Lord Jesus appointed seventy-two disciples whom he sent ahead of

him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God is at hand for you’ ” (Lk 10:1-9).

Jesus gathers us to himself to teach us and unite us as his sisters and brothers, but he does not allow us to cling to him. He sends us out in pairs (signifying that we are never isolated individuals or lone rangers).

The Lord tells us that the opportunities available to us as evangelists are many, but so are the obstacles. He sends us out—like lambs among wolves—to give witness

to the peace and unity that are his alone. We are not to impose our views on anyone or force them to accept Christ’s teaching. We simply announce that God’s kingdom is at hand and invite all whom we meet to encounter the person of Jesus Christ.

A personal encounter with our Lord and Savior is the one thing necessary for effective missionary discipleship. In my recent letter, “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection,” I write:

At the heart of both Church and Mission is Christ-centered evangelization and catechesis in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to bring about the Kingdom of God, which is the very essence of true peace and authentic unity. To that end, a personal encounter with Jesus is essential to the spiritual life of every baptized Christian. No tenet of Christian faith or Catholic belief will ever make sense apart from an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.

There is no record of St. Luke’s encounter with Jesus. We can reasonably assume that it was not dramatic, like St. Paul’s conversion, but most likely came through his experience of the Christian life as it was lived in the Church’s earliest days.

Many people also speculate that because Luke’s Gospel relates intimate details of the events surrounding our Lord’s birth and his childhood that this evangelist had direct access to Mary, the mother of Jesus. If that is the case, it certainly would have been one of the factors that influenced his personal encounter with her Son.

A tradition dating to the sixth century identifies Luke as the first artist to have painted the Virgin Mary. Whether or not this is the case, it is certainly true that St. Luke has given us the most vivid written images of the woman who said yes to God’s will and so, by the power of the Holy Spirit, became the Mother of the Incarnate Word of God.

As we celebrate this great feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, let’s ask this holy physician and evangelist to help us be more faithful to our calling as missionary disciples.

(To read Archbishop Thompson’s pastoral reflection in English and Spanish, go to archindy.org/pastoral2025. Study questions are available at facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis.) †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Estamos llamados a compartir la paz y la unidad de Cristo con los demás

Mañana, 18 de octubre, es la festividad de san Lucas el Evangelista, autor de uno de los cuatro Evangelios y de los Hechos de los Apóstoles. Se lo venera por su capacidad para mostrarnos las enseñanzas, las curaciones y los milagros de Jesús—que culminan con su pasión, muerte, resurrección y ascensión al cielo—y por ayudarnos a visualizar la vida de los primeros cristianos.

La carta de san Pablo a los Colosenses hace referencia a Lucas como médico, por lo que se cree que fue médico y discípulo de san Pablo.

Según las poderosas imágenes del Apocalipsis, cuatro “bestias” alaban sin cesar ante el trono de Dios: un hombre, un buey, un león y un águila (Ap 4:6-11). A veces se dice que estas criaturas representan a los cuatro evangelistas: Mateo, Marcos, Lucas y Juan. San Lucas se identifica con el buey, que simboliza la fuerza y el sacrificio.

El Evangelio de la Misa de la festividad de mañana describe el estilo de discipulado misionero que los seguidores de Jesús, y todos los que hemos sido bautizados, estamos llamados a seguir. Como nos dice san Lucas:

El Señor escogió también a otros setenta y dos, y los envió de dos en dos delante de él a todos los pueblos y lugares a donde él pensaba ir. Les dijo:

“La mies es mucha, pero son pocos los obreros. Por eso, pídanle al dueño de la mies que mande obreros a su mies. ¡Póngase en marcha! Yo los envío como corderos en medio de lobos. No lleven monedero, zurrón, ni calzado; y no se detengan tampoco a saludar a nadie en el camino. Cuando entren en alguna casa, digan primero: ‘Paz a esta casa.’ Si los que viven allí son gente de paz, la paz del saludo quedará con ellos; si no lo son, la paz se volverá a ustedes. Quédense en la misma casa, comiendo y bebiendo de lo que tengan, porque el que trabaja tiene derecho a su salario. No vayan de casa en casa. Cuando lleguen a un pueblo donde los reciban con agrado, coman lo que les ofrezcan. Curen a los enfermos que haya en él y anuncien: ‘El reino de Dios está cerca de ustedes’ ” (Lc 10:1-9).

Jesús nos reúne para enseñarnos y unirnos como sus hermanas y hermanos, pero no permite que nos aferremos a él, sino que nos envía en pares (lo que significa que nunca somos individuos aislados o llaneros solitarios).

El Señor nos dice que, como evangelizadores, disponemos de muchas oportunidades pero también lo son los obstáculos. Nos envía—como corderos entre lobos—a dar testimonio de la paz y la unidad que solo le pertenecen a Él. No debemos imponer

nuestros puntos de vista a nadie ni obligarlos a aceptar las enseñanzas de Cristo. Simplemente anunciamos que el reino de Dios está cerca e invitamos a todo aquel con el que nos topemos a que vaya al encuentro de la persona de Jesucristo.

Un encuentro personal con nuestro Señor y Salvador es lo único que hace falta para un discipulado misionero eficaz. En mi reciente carta titulada “Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral,” señalo que:

En el corazón tanto de la Iglesia como de la misión, están la evangelización y la catequesis centradas en Cristo, en cooperación con el Espíritu Santo, para hacer realidad el Reino de Dios, que es la esencia misma de la verdadera paz y de la auténtica unidad. Para ello, el encuentro personal con Jesús resulta esencial en la vida espiritual de todo cristiano bautizado. Ningún principio de la fe cristiana o de las creencias católicas tendrá sentido si no es a través del encuentro con la persona de Jesucristo.

No existe constancia del encuentro de san Lucas con Jesús. Podemos suponer razonablemente que no fue algo drástico, como la conversión de san Pablo, sino que lo más probable es que se produjera a través de su experiencia de la vida cristiana, tal

como se vivía en los primeros tiempos de la Iglesia.

Mucha gente también especula que, dado que el Evangelio de Lucas relata detalles íntimos de los acontecimientos que rodearon el nacimiento de nuestro Señor y su infancia, este evangelista tuvo acceso directo a María, la madre de Jesús. De ser así, sin duda habría sido uno de los factores que influyeron en su encuentro personal con su Hijo.

Una tradición que data del siglo VI identifica a Lucas como el primer artista que pintó a la Virgen María. Independientemente de que sea así o no, lo cierto es que san Lucas nos ha dado las imágenes escritas más vívidas de la mujer que dijo sí a la voluntad de Dios y así, por el poder del Espíritu Santo, se convirtió en la Madre del Verbo de Dios encarnado.

Al celebrar esta gran festividad de san Lucas Evangelista, pidamos a este santo médico y evangelista que nos ayude a ser más fieles a nuestra vocación de discípulos misioneros.

(Para leer la reflexión pastoral del arzobispo Thompson en inglés y español, visite archindy.org/pastoral2025. En facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis encontrará preguntas para el estudio de esta reflexión pastoral). †

Events Calendar

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

October 21

St. Mary Church, 1331 E. Hunter Robbins Way, Greensburg. **Little Souls Memorial Mass**, 5:30 p.m., sponsored by Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry. Information, name submissions: 812-212-3463, contactus@covenantresources.org, covenantresources.org/ mass.

October 21, 28

Lumen Christi Catholic High School, 717 S. East St., Indianapolis. **Catholic in Recovery**, 7 p.m. Tuesdays, sponsored by Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, free. Information: catholicinrecovery.com, \cir.church.holyrosary@gmail.com.

October 22

Immaculate Conception Church, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. **Foundation Day Mass**, 11 a.m., in honor of date St. Theodora Guérin and companions arrived at St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

October 23

Northside Events and Social

Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Central Psychological Services founder John Cadwallader presenting “Taking Back Your Life from the Controls of Technology,” rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Oct. 20. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

St. Pius X Church, 7200 Sarto Dr., Indianapolis. **Sensory Friendly Mass**, 6 p.m., Mass for those with sensory challenges, free. Information: 317-255-4534, mmehringer@spxparish.org.

October 25

St. Bartholomew Parish, 1306 27th St., Columbus. **Polidor 5K Run/Walk**, 8:30-10 a.m., benefitting ALFA literacy program in northern Haiti, \$20. Registration, information: 812-350-5250, saleeb9287@att.net, tinyurl.com/polidor25.

Primo Banquet Hall, 2615 National Ave., Indianapolis. **Marian Authentic Women’s Conference**, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., presenters include Catholic speaker and author Claire Dwyer, author Emily Wilson,

Diocese of Cleveland Father Patrick Schultz, includes Mass, light breakfast, lunch, snacks and beverages, hosted by archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life and Living Our Vocations Everyday Ministries, Inc., \$50, register by Oct. 21. Registration, information on event, volunteering or being a vendor: loveministriesindy.org/mawc, info@loveministriesindy.org, 317-361-8361.

St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Craft Fair**, 9 a.m.-3p.m., crafts and food available, free admission, vendor tables available for \$10, \$15 for tables with electricity. Information: 317-625-3130, blackjkl@hotmail.com.

St. Bartholomew Parish, 1306 27th St., Columbus. **Blessed is She Who Believes: Following Mary’s Example Toward a Life of Peace**, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., women’s retreat, Catholic author and speaker Stephanie Engelman presenting, includes Mass, adoration, breakfast and lunch, \$30, register by Oct. 20. Information, registration: 812-379-9353, dschafer@stbparish.net.

Knights of Columbus Hall, 1308 W. Main St., Greensburg. **Charity Dinner and Dance**, 5:30 p.m., benefitting Clarity Pregnancy Center, \$100 per couple. Information: 812-663-2607, council1042@indianakofc.org.

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

October 26

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

October 27

Gracehouse Church, 6822 U.S. 31 S., Whiteland. **Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties Annual Banquet**, 6:30 p.m., Safe Haven Baby Boxes founder Monica Kelsey keynote speaker, \$35, register by Oct. 24. Registration: mail check for RTLJMC to PO Box 1062, Greenwood, IN 46142; via Facebook message at tinyurl.com/RTLJMC; contact Emily

McNally at 317-697-2441 or ebrookehaskins@gmail.com.

October 31-Nov. 1

St. Mary Church, 2500 Saint Mary Dr. NE, Lanesville. **All Saints Vigil**, 9 p.m. Fri.-10:30 a.m. Sat., Mass 9 p.m. Fri., all-night adoration and communal prayer of Liturgy of the Hours, all invited. Information: 812-738-2742, ext. 22, benjamin.reinhart@catholic-community.org.

November 1

St. Charles Borromeo Parish, 213 W. Ripley St., Milan. **Harvest Dinner**, 3-7 p.m., Mass at 5 p.m., pulled pork dinner, cash prizes, quilt raffle, country store, kids’ games, \$15 dinner, ages 4 and younger free. Information: 812-654-7051, st.charleschurch@yahoo.com.

St. Martin of Tours Parish, 1720 E. Harrison St., Martinsville. **Christmas Holiday Bazaar**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., vendor booths, St. Martin’s Attic and Crafts, Christmas cookies and caramels by the pound, homemade baked goods, raffle cash prizes, handmade quilt wall-hanging door prize, hourly door prizes, food and drinks, carry-out available, free admission.

Information: 765-342-6379, parishoffice@stmtours.org.

St. John the Apostle Church, 4607 W. State Road 46, Bloomington. **Holiday Craft Show**, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m., handmade crafts from 35 local artisans, bake sale, lunch served 11 a.m.-1 p.m., free door prize ticket upon entry, free admission. Information: 812-821-1152, nothingfancyceramics@gmail.com.

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **All Saints Mass**, noon. Information: 317-784-4439, catholicccmeteries.cc.

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. †

Retreats and Programs

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

November 1

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Creativity is a Form of Prayer: Cardmaking**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Franciscan Sister Kathleen Branham presenting, \$50 includes lunch. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

November 2

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr.,

Mount St. Francis. **Holding Hope in the Holidays: A Grief Retreat**, 4-6:30 p.m., Mount Saint Francis associate director Regina Proctor presenting, soup and bread supper, \$25, register by Oct. 31. Information, registration: 812-923-8817, mountsaintfrancis.org/grief-retreat.

November 3

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Divine Wine and Art with Heart**, 5-9 p.m.,

includes wine, beverages, snacks and all painting materials. Registration: fjm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

November 3, 19

Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Dementia Education Series: A Positive Approach to Care**, 1-3 p.m., fifth and sixth of six stand-alone sessions,

respite care available for five families, limited space, registration encouraged, online option available. Information, registration: 812-238-1561, spsmw.org/events, ecollins@spsmw.org.

November 7-9

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Being and Belonging Weekend Retreat**, Fri. 6 p.m.-Sun. 1:30- p.m., for those who have experienced divorce. Father James Farrell, with team of men and women who have experienced divorce, presenting. Includes private

room with shared bathroom, all meals and program, \$210. Registration: fjm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

November 10

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds. Overnight stay is available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: fjm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

November 14-16

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **More Christ-Centered Counsel for Everyday Difficulties**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate Father Terrance M. Chartier facilitating, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$369.08 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com. †

St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities to hold reverse raffle on Nov. 8

The St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities Reverse Raffle will take place at Huber’s Orchard and Winery, 19816 Huber Road in Borden, on Nov. 8. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and the reverse raffle will begin at 7 p.m.

The event includes a bourbon raffle and a premium prize raffle, with chances ranging from \$20-\$50. Fifty chances will be sold for each premium raffle item, and chances are unlimited for the bourbon raffle. Chances may be purchased for more than one raffle. Winners need not be present.

The evening will also include Drop In to Win, 50/50 Split the Pot, buy

backs, pull tabs and more.

All proceeds of the event will benefit the work of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities, including residential programs and a homeless shelter for women and children, a family stability program, affordable supportive housing, adoption services, a community distribution program for household needs, supported living program for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and school counseling services.

To reserve a seat, request chances or for more information, go to stecharities.org/reverse-raffle or call 812-924-4003. †

Join in Respect Life Novena on Oct. 22-30 via text or e-mail

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will offer a Respect Life Novena in English and Spanish on Oct. 22-30 that can be followed by text or e-mail.

The novena intention is for the protection of human life from

conception to natural death. Each day of the novena features a different prayer intention, a short reflection, ideas for building a culture of life and more.

To sign up to receive the novena in English or Spanish via text or e-mail, go to tinyurl.com/RLNovena. †

Wedding Anniversaries

JOSEPH AND KATHLEEN (KIRSCHNER) DOYLE, members of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on Oct. 17.

The couple was married in St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Oct. 17, 1970.

They have four children: Colleen Guenther, Joe, Michael and Ryan Doyle.

The couple also has 11 grandchildren.



ROBERT AND MARY SUE (PAVEY) JONES, members of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 18.

The couple was married in St. Roch Church in Indianapolis on Oct. 18, 1975.

They have two children: Ashley Reed and Matthew Jones.

The couple also has three grandchildren.



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

EXHORTATION

continued from page 1

wrote in his 2018 apostolic exhortation “*Gaudete et Exsultate*”—“in this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate” (#3).

The exhortation draws extensively on Scripture, papal and conciliar documents, the works of Church Fathers and the lives of numerous saints—as well as the “ecclesial discernment” of the Latin American bishops, to whom Pope Leo said he was “greatly indebted,” having previously served as an Augustinian missionary in Peru for several years (#89).

Poor as a priority

Throughout the document, Pope Leo urges Christians to recognize God’s oneness with the poor, and to prioritize them according to the demands of faith.

“Love for the Lord ... is one with love for the poor,” wrote the pope, observing later in the document that “Jesus’ teaching on the primacy of love for God is clearly complemented by his insistence that one cannot love God without extending one’s love to the poor” (#5, 26).

In an even more direct passage, Pope Leo admitted, “I often wonder, even though the teaching of sacred Scripture is so clear about the poor, why many people continue to think that they can safely disregard the poor” (#23).

He stressed that poverty is “a multifaceted phenomenon,” and that “there are many forms of poverty” (#9).

Among those are material impoverishment; social marginalization; moral, spiritual and cultural poverty; “personal or social weakness or fragility”; and “the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom” (#9).



A member of the youth group at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Reque, Peru, serves lunch at a parish soup kitchen on May 13. Parishes in the Diocese of Chiclayo, Peru, where Pope Leo XIV, was bishop for eight years, have emphasized youth ministries and involving young people in Church life. (OSV News photo/David Agren)

In addition, said Pope Leo, forms of poverty have continued to evolve in ways that are “sometimes more subtle and dangerous” (#10).

He warned that “in general, we are witnessing an increase in different kinds of poverty, which is no longer a single, uniform reality but now involves multiple forms of economic and social impoverishment, reflecting the spread of inequality even in largely affluent contexts” (#12).

Globally, women often bear the brunt of poverty in its various manifestations, said Pope Leo, citing Pope Francis’ 2020 encyclical letter “*Fratelli Tutti*: On Fraternity and Social Friendship.”

Causes, challenges of poverty

Throughout the text of his exhortation, Pope Leo examined personal, cultural, social and systemic factors that both incur poverty and prevent its eradication—all of which, in essence, derive from a disregard for the sanctity of every human life.

“The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate. Nor, for most of them, is poverty a choice,” said Pope Leo. “Yet, there are those who still presume to make this claim, thus revealing their own blindness and cruelty” (#14).

He pointed to a culture—one “sometimes well disguised”—that “discards others without even realizing it and tolerates with indifference that millions of people die of hunger or survive in conditions unfit for human beings” (#11).

The pope also deplored “that specious view of meritocracy that sees only the successful as ‘deserving’ ” (#14.)

Such views fuel structures of sin in society that, as Pope Francis said in “*Dilexit Nos*,” are often “part of a dominant mindset that considers normal or reasonable what is merely selfishness and indifference,” wrote Pope Leo (#93).

As a result, said Pope Leo, “It then becomes normal to ignore the poor and live as if they do not exist,” and “likewise seems reasonable to organize the economy in such a way that sacrifices are demanded of the masses in order to serve the needs of the powerful” (#93).

Christians themselves have not been immune from “attitudes shaped by secular ideologies or political and economic approaches that lead to gross generalizations and mistaken conclusions,” wrote Pope Leo (#15).

“The fact that some dismiss or ridicule charitable



Pope Leo XIV signs his first apostolic exhortation, “*Dilexi Te*” (“I Have Loved You”), in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican on Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, as Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, the substitute secretary for general affairs at the Vatican Secretariat of State, looks on. The exhortation was released on Oct. 9. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

works, as if they were an obsession on the part of a few and not the burning heart of the Church’s mission, convinces me of the need to go back and re-read the Gospel, lest we risk replacing it with the wisdom of this world,” he reflected. “The poor cannot be neglected if we are to remain within the great current of the Church’s life that has its source in the Gospel and bears fruit in every time and place” (#15).

Pope Leo noted that almsgiving “nowadays is not looked upon favorably even among believers,” being “rarely practiced” and “even at times disparaged” (#115).

While “the most important way to help the disadvantaged is to assist them in finding a good job,” he said, “we cannot risk abandoning others to the fate of lacking the necessities for a dignified life” (#115).

“Almsgiving at least offers us a chance to halt before the poor, to look into their eyes, to touch them and to share something of ourselves with them,” a way of bringing “a touch of ‘*pietas*’ into a society otherwise marked by the frenetic pursuit of personal gain,” said Pope Leo (#116).

In the poorest of the poor, he said, “Christ continues to suffer and rise again”—and “it is in them that the Church rediscovers her call to show her most authentic self” (#76).

(To read Pope Leo XIV’s apostolic exhortation “*Dilexi Te*” (“I Have Loved You”) visit bit.ly/DilexiTe.) †

Care for the poor at the heart of the Church’s life, says Pope Leo in new exhortation

(OSV News)—The words of “*Dilexi Te*” (“I Have Loved You”)—the apostolic exhortation on love for the poor released by the Vatican on Oct. 9—come from the pen of two pontiffs, Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV.

With his April 21 death, Pope Francis never completed the exhortation, but Pope Leo—stating he is “happy to make this document my own” by “adding some reflections”—has now finished the task (#3).

Students of papal pronouncements may discern and debate how much of Pope Francis remains and how much Pope Leo added to the text—but there’s no philosophical departure. After only three paragraphs, Pope Leo informed readers he shares the late pope’s desire “that all Christians come to appreciate the close connection between Christ’s love and his summons to care for the poor” (#3).

Nor, Pope Leo says, is it optional: “I too consider it essential to insist on this path to holiness” (#3).

‘To be engaged with the poor’

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, encouraged Catholics to engage with the document’s reflection on Christ’s protecting love for the poor and the weak, and let it transform their lives.



Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio

“The Holy Father reminds us of a simple, life-changing truth, ‘Love for our neighbor is tangible proof of the authenticity of our love for God,’ ” said Archbishop Broglio, quoting the document. “This means that ‘charity is not optional but a requirement of true worship.’ ”

Archbishop Broglio also leads the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services.

If concern for the poor is a critical element of Christianity, what role has the Church had, and does it still have, in a world of growing inequality—especially in Pope Leo’s home country of the United States, which has wider disparities of wealth between rich and poor than any other major developed nation? What does Pope Leo

emphasize in “*Dilexi Te*,” and what do those who both serve the poor and study poverty think of it?

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson noted how Pope Leo in the apostolic exhortation reflected on various ways that believers can show love for the poor.

“Authentic concern for the poor is not only manifested in caring and serving but in listening and learning from those in various forms of poverty,” he told *The Criterion*. “Jesus, as the Holy Father reminds us, chose to be identified with the poor, the lowly, and the outcast.

“There is much in Sacred Scripture—the Beatitudes, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the teaching on the two greatest commandments, and the great Parable of the Last Judgment, just to name a few—that point to the primacy of love for God and neighbor that is manifested in concrete means of charity and justice in caring for those in need.”

In an interview with OSV News, Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami described the apostolic exhortation as “the pope’s strategic plan for the rolling out of his pontificate.”

“And in that strategic plan, the role of the Church’s advocacy for an accompaniment with the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten, is going to continue to be emphasized—as it was during Pope Francis’ pontificate,” added Archbishop Wenski, “as it has been throughout the history of the Church—that faith without works is dead.”

“He’s calling us to recommit ourselves to work with the poor,” Archbishop Wenski said, “and to work with the poor in ways that are more than just throwing a few dollars in the collection basket for a second collection; but to be engaged with the poor and walking with them, while at



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson



Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski

the same time helping and empowering them to reclaim their dignity as human beings.”

Archbishop Wenski—who spent 18 years in ministry to Haiti’s “boat people” in Miami and has been an outspoken critic of Florida’s “Alligator Alcatraz” immigrant detention camp—also responded to the exhortation’s assertion that the Church doesn’t regard migrants as a threat.

“People are not problems. They’re human beings, flesh and blood human beings,” he said. “Immigration might be a problem, but the people themselves are not problems—and we have to acknowledge their humanity, and seek to affirm it.”

Helping the poor at the “core to who we are as Christians’

James Sullivan, a professor of economics at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana and co-founder and director of its Lab for Economic Opportunities, a center researching effective solutions to reduce poverty in America, agreed the exhortation emphasizes the indispensable role of care for the poor in the life of the faithful.

“It addresses a lot of concerns about what it means to prioritize those living in poverty,” Sullivan told OSV News. “He’s calling us all—it’s fundamentally part of who we are as Christians. This isn’t something that is an idle fancy of those who prioritize social justice. This is all of us, as Christians, are called to love the poor in the same way that they love God.”

John Berry—national president of the Society of St. Vincent DePaul USA, which provides more than \$1.7 billion in aid to more than 5 million people every year through person-to-person services, food pantries, disaster response and more—noted the exhortation’s awareness of contemporary social failings.

“The pope’s message does not shrink from a candid and profound criticism of the ills of modern society, and its focus on materialism over care for others,” he told OSV News. “His pastoral guidance on how to overcome those shortcomings is clear.” †

SPORTS
continued from page 1

A sport to love, a faith to treasure
As the head coach of Providence’s football team, Daniel McDonald believes his commitment to having a pre-game Mass sends a message to his players.



Daniel McDonald

His actions matched his words when Providence played in Indiana’s Class 1A state championship on Nov. 30, 2024—an opportunity for the team to win the first state championship in that sport in the school’s history. Shortly after 7 on that morning, McDonald knew the team still needed to eat breakfast, still needed to travel to Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis after spending the night in a Greenwood hotel, still needed to settle into the locker room and get into their pads and uniforms, and still needed to do a walk-through practice and get last-minute instructions before the game at 11 a.m. Yet instead of heading straight to the stadium, McDonald had his team stop at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis where the administration had graciously opened its doors to the Providence team for the one pre-game ritual that their head coach wasn’t about to skip. Mass. Later that day, the team rejoiced as state champs. “Not every kid on our team is Catholic, but we keep our Catholic faith at the forefront of our program,” McDonald says. “And the Mass is a way to do that. I think mentally it prepares our guys for the Friday evening ahead.” Lincoln Kruer, a senior and a captain of the team, agrees. “It’s just a way for us to calm down before the game starts. To just get in touch with God spiritually before we go out on the field—what we’re truly playing for and the reason behind it,” says Luke, a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. “It just helps you get locked in for the game.” The pre-game Mass is usually celebrated by Father Adam Ahern, pastor of the Jeffersonville parishes of St. Augustine and Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and an associate director of vocations for the archdiocese.



Lincoln Kruer

The pre-game Mass has also been celebrated by Father Jeremy Gries, pastor of Holy Family Parish in New Albany, administrator pro tem of St. Mary Parish in New Albany, and dean of the New Albany Deanery. “Father Adam does a really good job. He relates the homily to competition or to being a better person or striving through adversity. That really helps our kids,” McDonald says. “A couple weeks ago, Father Jeremy subbed in for Father Adam. He emphasized in his homily that one of the ways we glorify God is through giving our best effort in the talents we’ve been given. So, if you’re going to play football, use it as a means to glorify God. That one really struck home with a lot of our kids, too.” As much as McDonald embraces the importance of the pre-game Mass, he says he’s just continuing that tradition from previous successful, influential and faith-filled Providence head coaches. “Before me, Coach Larry Denison had Mass every Friday on game days. And I believe Coach [Gene] Sartini did as well.” Similar to the state championship day, McDonald makes extra efforts to set up pre-game Masses before away games, with the help of Father Ahern. When Providence played the team from Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis earlier this season, Father John Kamwendo, pastor of nearby St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, rose to the occasion for the Providence team. “He had a busy schedule that evening, but we were able to sneak in there at 4:20, 4:30, and he celebrated Mass with us, and went out of his way to do that for us,” McDonald says. “We’ve had several priests in the Indianapolis area celebrate Mass with us. “It’s been really nice these six years to see the different parishes, meet the different priests and celebrate Mass in different environments like that.” Those connections add an extra dimension to the sport he loves and the faith he treasures. “It’s helped me become a stronger Catholic,” McDonald says. “I was raised Catholic. I’ve grown up Catholic. But being able to teach in an environment and coach in an environment where you’re expected to be a role model of faith has made me a stronger Catholic. “I try to make my guys understand that faith is important to me, and it’s the centerpiece of our program.” **‘Take God with you on every play’** In his second season as Sccecina’s head coach, the 30-year-old Harris is following in the footsteps of two of the most successful, influential and faith-filled coaches the archdiocese has ever known. A 2013 graduate of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, Harris played for four years in the football program that was then run by Bruce Scifres. One of the



Father Adam Ahern often arranges his schedule to celebrate a pre-game Mass for the members of the football team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville. (Photo courtesy of Tara Schmelz)

foundations of Scifres’ program was the pre-game Mass. “Coach Scifres would always say, “This is unique, guys. Most of the schools on our schedule don’t have the opportunity to come together as a team and live in the body of Christ.’ ” Scifres also repeatedly shared two messages with his teams, according to Harris. First, “Take God with you on every play.” And second, “Play like young men in God’s eyes.” The two messages still resonate so much with Harris that 12 years later he shares them with his Sccecina players. That emphasis on faith and a pre-game Mass was also embraced by Sccecina’s longtime, legendary football coach Ott Hurrle, who retired two years ago. That choice led to the hire of Harris, who has continued the pre-game Mass tradition. “Our players come to our locker room and relax for a little bit. They have no food, just water, so they have time to fast for Communion. And then we jump into Mass in our beautiful chapel at about 3:10,” Harris says. “Our players have their jerseys on. They come in and sit reverently in the presence of God in the chapel for a few minutes. “It’s a great way to count your blessings. It’s a blessing to be at a Catholic school. It’s a blessing to be at Sccecina. I don’t think that would come through if you just said it to them. Being in our chapel, celebrating Mass and being able to receive the Eucharist just reinforce that point.” The coach also believes it helps prepare the players emotionally for the game. “I think it really calms them down. It gives them a presence. We have the tabernacle. It relaxes them, but it also



Dan Harris

uplifts them in that it’s a blessing to play football.” Eric Montgomery, a senior and a captain on the team, knows the difference the pre-game Mass makes to him and his teammates. “For me, it gives me personal time before the game, to reflect on myself and my teammates as well,” says Eric, a member of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis. “Also, just having the priest there, it encourages players to be a little bit closer to God. And our coach always tells us, ‘To bring God with us.’ So, I think it’s a great start before the game.” The blessing of the opportunity to play a sport and to worship God—and to combine the two—is reinforced by Father Rick Ginther, the team’s chaplain who usually celebrates the pre-game Mass. “He’s absolutely incredible,” Harris says. “He just fits the bill as a team chaplain. Kids talk to him. Kids respect him. Kids love him. So, from that perspective, he’s already knocked out the relationship part. “Secondly, when he gives his homily, he usually references the first reading and the Gospel, and in the last couple of minutes, he always tailors it to teenagers, tailors it to football and then wraps everything together—that what you’re embarking on as a football player is connected straight back to the word of God, which is pretty special.” So is the impact of that focus of faith on Harris. “Being at a Catholic school has just brought me closer to the faith,” he says. “It’s strengthened my faith. Just to see how teenagers react to God and going to Mass just reinforces that our future generations are in great hands with the Church.” †



Eric Montgomery

Making the connection: Priests enjoy the bond with players, the school community



Father Rick Ginther can often be found on the sidelines during football games for the team of Father Thomas Sccecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis, making himself available to players who might need a word of encouragement or support. (Photo courtesy of Katie Nelson)

By John Shaughnessy
As he stands at the entrance to the chapel, greeting the high school football players, Father Rick Ginther always keeps one belief about teenagers close to his heart. “As they’re coming in for Mass, I’m at the door, saying something to them. The ones I know, I tease them. I want them to know that I’m not just there to do sacrament—that it’s important that the person leading prayer engages with them, so they feel appreciated. “High schoolers need that. They need to be seen as someone, because they’re still trying to figure that out.” For the past five years, Father Ginther has welcomed the opportunity to celebrate Mass with the varsity football team of Father Thomas Sccecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis on the day of their games. For the first four years, he added that opportunity to his schedule as the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. This season, during his first year of retirement, he has made it a point to continue that connection. “Football players are such rough-and-tumble kind of guys, many of them. And they’re very athletic,” he says. “And often they can lose that sense of God because they’re constantly *doing*. I thought, ‘You ought to stick

with this.’ Besides, I like the middle-school and high-school age group.” And the players appreciate him. “He’s absolutely incredible,” says Dan Harris, the team’s varsity head coach. “He just fits the bill as a team chaplain. Kids talk to him. Kids respect him. Kids love him.” That connection shows in the way Father Ginther approaches the messages he shares in his homilies with the team. “I try to think like a teenage boy. It’s a little difficult,” says the 75-year-old priest with a wry smile. “Sometimes it’s, ‘How does this relate to them being football players?’ Or sometimes it’s, ‘How does this relate to how you are as men of faith?’ And sometimes I’m never quite sure where’s it’s going because it’s rather spontaneous. But the players know they’re going to be put on the spot. So, they’re very attentive.” Father Rick’s impact is noticeable on the team, says Eric Montgomery, a senior and a captain. “He connects well with all of us,” says Eric, a member of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis. “His homilies are really great. We sit there in silence and think about how the homily reflects on us as a student, a person and

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Eucharistic procession at IU



People taking part in a eucharistic procession on Sept. 30 walk across the campus of Indiana University in Bloomington. The procession started at St. Charles Borromeo Church and ended at the St. Paul Catholic Center. (Submitted photo)



Dominican Father Zuelke carries a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament during a eucharistic procession on Sept. 30 that went across the campus of Indiana University in Bloomington from St. Charles Borromeo Church to the St. Paul Catholic Center, where he serves as a parochial vicar. More than 250 people took part in the procession. (Submitted photo)

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

a football player. Even after the Mass, we talk about what it means.

“He represents us, too. He’s at the game, talking to us.”

Father Ginther stresses themes of service, prayer and “a relationship with the Lord in some way” with the players.

“And loyalty to each other,” he says. “That they’re a team. I don’t have to do too much of that. For the most part, they’re there for each other.”

They’re also there for him, even occasionally offering him advice.

That was especially true during a moment last year when Father Ginther celebrated an all-school Mass shortly after dislocating one of his shoulders and tearing a rotator cuff—the result of falling in his bathroom.

“It was comical,” he recalls. “The players looked at me and said, ‘What did you do, Father?’ I told them. They said, ‘No, Father, you have to work that up! You have to have a *much* better story than that! Say you were defending someone in a bar fight! Jazz it up, Father!’ ”

He delights in that memory. Moments later, he turns serious about the importance of connection, for the players and him.

“Honestly, as a retired priest, it keeps me connected,” he says. “That’s one of the challenges of being retired. I no longer have those automatic connections.

“This year, I’ve been more on the sideline than ever before. It’s very different. I spend more time with the players than the coaches. I’m just there. But if one of them gets injured or has to sit out for a while, I’ll check on them and see how they’re doing. Encourage them. Just trying to be a presence.”

‘It’s a great gift and a blessing’

Father Adam Ahern strives to keep that same focus on presence and connection with the student-athletes on the football team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville.



Father Adam Ahern

be with them while they’re doing something that they love, getting to show them that there’s a priest out there who enjoys something they enjoy, that ministry is such a blessing to me. I often fit my schedule around things like this because of how much life it gives to me.”

Consider how packed his schedule is. The 45-year-old priest is the pastor of the Jeffersonville parishes of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine, an associate director of vocations for the archdiocese and a Catholic chaplain for the Indiana Army National Guard.

He sees similarities between the football players and the soldiers he serves.

“They’re great young men,” says Father Ahern, now in his sixth season of focusing on the team. “For me, it’s just like I’m with soldiers when I’m doing chaplaincy with the National Guard. They hear. They respond.

“I enjoy being able to be very direct with them. I don’t have to soften the homily. I’m talking to a roomful of football players, so they’re used to being yelled at. They’re used to being spoken to very directly.”

The team’s head coach appreciates Father Ahern’s approach.

“Father Adam does a really good job,” says head coach Daniel McDonald. “He relates the homily to competition or to being a better person or striving through adversity. That really helps our kids.”

Lincoln Kruer, a senior and captain on the team, sees the difference Father Ahern makes.

“He just knows how to get in touch with all the football players,” says Luke, a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. “I know he has military experience, so he knows that football and the military are pretty similar with the rules of discipline. So, he knows what’s going to get in touch with us in our spiritual work with God. And he just knows how to relate it to us in a way we can understand.”

The priest has an impact on the players in other ways, too.

“Sometimes the players ask for confession,” Father Ahern says. “Other times, they just want to talk—I’m



During most football games, Father Adam Ahern offers a presence to members of the team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville. (Submitted photo)

struggling with this.’ It’s fascinating watching them grow up during their four years. The freshmen they were are not the seniors they will graduate as. Just seeing that growth and development is really cool.”

He’s been there for players during their successes, health issues and disappointments in life. He sees his efforts as a reflection of what the other priests in the New Albany Deanery have also brought to students at Providence.

“All of us are pretty engaged with Providence down here,” he says. “It’s a great gift and blessing to the priests. We get to have that continued engagement to our high school-aged students.”

Father Ahern revels in that deeper connection that has long marked the tight, family community of Providence.

“I love going to the games and being on the sidelines, walking around. What’s neat about it is it’s not just the football players. It’s also the coaches. It’s also the cheerleaders. It’s also the other students who are there at the game, and the parents who are there at the game.

“It’s more than just the group of young men. It’s the community around them. It’s neat getting to minister in that orbit.” †

Panelists weigh death penalty as executions continue in Indiana

By Victoria Arthur

Roy Lee Ward, convicted of the 2001 rape and murder of 15-year-old Stacy Payne in Dale, Ind., was executed by lethal injection at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, Ind., on Oct. 10—the 23rd annual “World Day Against the Death Penalty.”

It was the third execution of a death row inmate since the state resumed capital punishment in December 2024 after a 15-year hiatus.

That impending execution cast a heavy and relevant shadow on Sept. 29 as four people with deeply personal and direct experiences tied to capital punishment gathered in a sacred space to share their stories.

Holy Redeemer Church in Evansville, Ind., was the scene of a panel discussion sponsored by the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and the Indiana Abolition Coalition, an advocacy group calling for an end to the death penalty.

Audience members heard emotional and sometimes graphic testimonials concerning the death penalty from a grieving mother, a public defender, a former corrections superintendent and a religious sister who has accompanied men on death row and witnessed two executions.

“We may be in different places when it comes to how we feel about the death penalty,” said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, who served as moderator of the panel. “I hope that tonight you can just sit and rest in this space and take in the perspectives of these panelists.”

‘God has given me total peace’

For Mary Winnecke, an Evansville resident and one of the panelists at the Sept. 29 discussion, this most recent execution hit close to home on more than one level. Winnecke had lost her own daughter, Natalie Fulkerson, in 1994 when a man close to the family brutally murdered her along with Natalie’s husband and sister-in-law.

Matthew Eric Wrinkles, the man convicted of the murders, was executed in 2009—the last person put to death by the state of Indiana until the practice resumed before the end of 2024. His case had drawn national attention and was the subject of an episode of Oprah Winfrey’s talk show shortly before the execution.

Then, as she did again during the late September panel discussion, Winnecke described her journey toward acceptance of what happened that terrible night in 1994 and, ultimately, her path to forgiveness.

The journey was an agonizing one. “I hated him,” Winnecke told those gathered in the sanctuary of her own home parish. “I couldn’t handle even thinking of his name. If I had been there that night and had a gun, I would have shot him. I’ll be honest with you.”

Then Winnecke described the moment that she said she heard God speak directly to her heart.

“So finally down the road, one day I hear God telling me, ‘You’ve got to pray for your enemy,’ ” Winnecke said. “Slowly but surely, God gave [me] the graces to forgive him.

“I pray for Eric every night now,” she continued. “I’m able to do it. God has given me total peace.”

Still, Winnecke and her family have been reliving the tragedy in an especially emotional way this past year as Indiana has resumed executions, with media coverage including the details of Natalie’s case. Through the years, Winnecke has become a strong advocate against capital punishment.

“If we have the death penalty, I’m no better than Eric was, because all I’ve done is pay somebody else through my taxes to murder someone,” Winnecke told audience members. “It’s murder, no matter what you call it.”

‘A horrible thing to ask state employees to do’

Her fellow panelists shared their own perspectives through their varied experiences with capital punishment.

Steve Schutte, an Evansville native and an attorney for the Indiana State Public Defender’s Office, has represented more than 30 men on death row. He has also witnessed five executions, including the May 2025 death by lethal injection of Benjamin Ritchie, who had been convicted of shooting and killing Beech Grove police officer William Toney in 2000.

Media accounts at the time of the execution included Schutte’s description of Ritchie’s body violently twitching as the lethal drugs were administered.

“There are significant issues about Indiana’s method of execution,” Schutte told the audience at Holy Redeemer Church.

Schutte said he had “no illusions” about Ritchie’s guilt in the police officer’s killing. But he also described the toll that executions take on state employees who work as corrections officers and get to know death row inmates personally, often over the course of many years. Four officers wrote letters to the Indiana Parole Board, asking them to commute Ritchie’s sentence to life without the possibility of parole.

“There was no excuse for what Benjamin Ritchie did,” Schutte told audience members on Sept. 29—exactly 25 years after the crime that began as a police pursuit of a stolen van. “He deserved to spend the rest of his life incarcerated. But those four corrections officers who had come to know him thought [his execution] was simply unnecessary.

“It’s just death for the sake of death.” Doris Parlette, a former superintendent for the Indiana Department of Correction, told those gathered at Holy Redeemer that “a little bit of the warden dies with the prisoner” when executions are carried out. She cited a wide range of effects on state employees who have been worked long-term on death row—from sleep disorders to suicides.

“The cumulative effect is horrific,” said Parlette, who serves as a board member of the Indiana Abolition Coalition. “I believe in my heart that it’s a horrible thing to ask our state employees to do.”

‘Something that never leaves me’

Fellow panelist Providence Sister Barbara Battista lives in close proximity



Providence Sister Barbara Battista, left, Doris Parlette, Steve Schutte and Mary Winnecke share their personal experiences regarding the death penalty during a panel discussion on Sept. 29 at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Evansville, Ind. The discussion was moderated by Alexander Mingus, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), pictured at right. The ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana, was a co-sponsor of the event. (Submitted photo)

to the federal prison in Terre Haute where the U.S. government resumed executions in 2001 after a 38-year hiatus.

A longtime health care professional, Sister Barbara has also served as a spiritual advisor to men on death row in Terre Haute. And, after another nearly 20-year gap in federal executions in Terre Haute, she witnessed two executions there in 2020—those of federal inmates Keith Dwayne Nelson and William LeCroy.

“I was with . . . those men in the chamber,” Sister Barbara told the audience gathered in Evansville. “I know it’s a violent act.”

That violence is despite what she termed as the “veneer of respectability” that surrounds the execution process, which she said on the surface looks like a medical procedure is about to take place. Then she vividly described the “cruciform table,” with the individual strapped down, arms outstretched as the lethal doses are administered.

“There is something that just never leaves me,” Sister Barbara said of the process that she calls a “killing machine” and that she saw unfold before her eyes two times. “But God is good, and he showed me that Will and Keith both deserved to have someone in that room who was not intent on killing them.

“There’s something about that human connection—even in the midst of our government killing a person in our name.”

Sister Barbara also shared with the audience that LeCroy had specifically asked her to pray the Divine Mercy prayer with and for him before his execution. She said that she continued to repeat portions of the well-known prayer, which is often said at a person’s deathbed, “until his last breath.”

“It just really moved me that this man was asking for mercy on the whole world,” Sister Barbara said. “This man who was being executed wanted to keep hearing that prayer.”

Looking back and moving forward

In addition to moderating the panel discussion, Mingus offered audience members an overview of the history of the Church’s thinking on capital punishment.

“Catholic teaching on the death penalty is nuanced and beautiful,” said Mingus, whose organization serves as the official

public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

He shared that for most of its 2,000-plus years, the Catholic Church recognized the legitimate use of the death penalty to punish an unjust aggressor and to keep society safe.

The Church’s tone began to shift with Pope John Paul II, who, in his encyclical “*Evangelium vitae*,” advocated for its use only in “cases of extreme necessity”—cases which are “practically nonexistent.”

Mingus spoke to the now-canonized saint’s witness to the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. He noted how Pope John Paul II’s successor, Pope Benedict XVI, reaffirmed and expanded the Church’s stance on the death penalty, calling for its abolition.

“Most recently, Pope Francis changed the language in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 2018 to declare the death penalty ‘inadmissible,’ ” Mingus said.

Guided by Church teaching, the ICC has consistently called for an end to the death penalty.

In this year’s legislative session, the ICC supported a bill introduced by Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne) that sought to eradicate capital punishment in Indiana. Despite the measure not moving forward at the General Assembly, leaders of the ICC expressed hope for increased attention on repealing the death penalty as a witness to the dignity of human life.

“The 2026 legislative session will undoubtedly feature meaningful discussion on the state’s use of the death penalty and supporting victims’ families,” Mingus said. “We look forward to helping move the conversation away from the use of the death penalty and toward supporting victims’ families and reducing violent crime.”

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, is a correspondent for The Criterion. To learn more about the ICC, go to www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on key legislation and ways to contact their elected representatives.) †

All are invited to Oct. 25 funeral and burial of infant found in Indianapolis park

Criterion Staff Report

A public funeral service and burial will be held on Oct. 25 for the remains of an infant discovered last month in Brookside Park in Indianapolis. The service will take place at 1 p.m. in Mt. Vernon Chapel at Washington Park East Cemetery, 10612 E. Washington St., in Indianapolis, followed by a graveside burial service in the Baby Garden, in the far northeast corner of the cemetery.

All are invited to attend to honor the life and dignity of the abandoned baby.

The service and burial were organized and will be officiated by Linda Znachko, founder of the ministry He Knows Your Name. According to its website, the ministry “exists to honor every child with a name in life, and dignity and honor in death.”

On Sept. 1, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department received a call from a passerby who noticed

the infant remains—later identified as female—in Brookside Park.

A Sept. 2 press release from the Marion County coroner’s office stated that tests were “underway to establish whether the remains represent a fetus that was not viable outside the womb [or *in utero*] or an infant that may have been born alive. These determinations are highly complex and require several types of examinations before conclusions can be drawn. . . . However, we do know that the remains

were at least 30 weeks gestational, based on visual development at exam.”

The release noted that there were “no signs of blunt force trauma or external injury that would have directly caused the death.”

Burying the dead is one of the Church’s seven corporal works of mercy—a work in this case made even more meaningful as the Church in the United States celebrates Respect Life Month in October. †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Church sees theory of evolution as worthy of study, ‘within certain limits’

By Benjamin Wiker

Second of two parts

In the first article on this topic, we explored how the Catholic faith takes a nuanced view of the concept of evolution, neither embracing it wholeheartedly as some in the scientific community do, nor rejecting it outright as people in some faith traditions do.

First, Catholics must hold that our study of nature confirms the existence of God. The catechism clearly states that “the existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason, even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error” (#286).

The catechism grounds itself in the definitive statement of the First Vatican Council’s dogmatic constitution “*Dei Filius*”: “Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the source and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the consideration of created things, by the natural power of human reason: ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.”

And this declaration is rooted firmly in Scripture, as St. Paul asserts in his Letter to the Romans: “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Rom 1:19-20).

We should not, then, be surprised to find the catechism stating the following: “Created in God’s image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of ‘converging and convincing arguments,’ which allow us to attain certainty about the truth” (#31).

We can indeed prove the existence of God through a kind of philosophic argument. But to say that it is a philosophic argument doesn’t mean that it is therefore nonscientific or, even worse, an unscientific argument. If we are able to reason from nature to the existence of God, surely it must be from a very well-informed understanding of nature—that is, one that takes into full account the very latest in the sciences that pertain to the area or aspect of nature that one is considering in using one’s reason.

So, what about creationism and intelligent design? Unfortunately, “creationism” as a term is associated with denying evolution altogether, and trying to prove a literal reading of the Bible against modern science. But the Church doesn’t reject the possibility of evolution outright, and the Catholic approach to the Bible is not that of a fundamentalist.

At the same time, the Church takes a critical stance toward evolution rather than simply affirming whatever contemporary evolutionists of whatever stripe happen to be saying, and the Church also believes with all its heart the Bible is truly and wholly inspired and without error.

And intelligent design theory? We should point out right away that “ID theory,” as it is called for short, is not really one thing, but a rather complex assortment of approaches all jostling for position. In general, however, ID proponents have tended to assert that some scientifically verifiable fact—for example, this particular molecular biological structure is too complicated to have come about through natural selection alone—directly demonstrates the existence of an intelligent designer.

These types of arguments have considerable merit, more than Catholics have been inclined to grant, precisely because they focus on quite particular trouble spots for a purely materialist, reductionist account of evolution.

But as noted above, the Catholic approach is to consider scientific evidence as only part of a larger, philosophical argument that must be made if we are to demonstrate the existence of God from nature.

The point is this: Particular scientific evidence alone could never be enough to demonstrate the existence of God, and further, much more attention must be paid to philosophy in order to properly draw together all the “converging and convincing arguments” necessary to do so.

Historically, the most important jumping off point for a discussion of the Catholic Church and evolution is Pope Pius XII’s 1950 encyclical “*Humani Generis*,” in which he taught that evolution was worthy of scientific study within certain limits.

It has seemed to many that the Church is saying something like this: You can believe anything you want about evolution as long as 1) you hold that all human



The land iguana is one of many creatures featured in Discovery Channel’s 1996 documentary *Galapagos: Beyond Darwin*. Charles Darwin was a 19th-century English biologist who did research on his theory of evolution in the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador. (CNS photo by David Clark for Discovery Channel)

souls are immediately created by God, 2) you hold some form of monogenism rather than polygenism—that is, you hold that all human beings have a common evolutionary ancestor rather than arise from a messy multitude—and (3) you don’t manifestly hold a purely materialistic theory of evolution that somehow undermines the dignity of the human person.

Can it really be all that easy? No, it cannot, precisely because these seemingly simple limits are, upon closer inspection, not very simple at all.

Take the first one, that all human souls are immediately created by God. This statement does not represent a retreat of the Church to a minimalist position, “Say anything you want about the evolution of the human body, only let us still have the soul!” Rather, it signifies a defiant “No!” to all forms of materialism because they reduce human beings to mere physical beings.

That puts a rather large obstacle in the way of many prominent evolutionists, because they have been, as a rule, prone to complete materialism.

Charles Darwin himself purposely defined his evolutionary account of human beings in his 1871 *Descent of Man* to prove that he could explain everything about human beings—from their moral to their intellectual capacities, from their artistic abilities to their belief in God—according to an entirely materialist, reductionist scheme.

Today, the most prominent evolutionists have no place for the human soul. They and the majority of evolutionists assume that purely material causes—causes subject to natural selection—entirely explain human capacities.

And the second? Here again, the Church is saying quite a lot. It is saying, in effect, that no matter what current scientists think, no matter how well established their theories of human origins seem to be, that in the end, when all the evidence is finally in, science will not contradict the fact that human beings have a single set of parents.

Note, I am not saying that science will at last prove that Adam and Eve existed. The point is much more startling.

I am saying that, try as it might, wander where it will, science will find that all its attempts to investigate the possibility of human polygenism is ultimately fruitless, and all its attempts to investigate the possibility of monogenism will prove wonderfully fruitful. The Church is declaring that faith cannot be contradicted because the God of revelation is the Creator God.

And the last? This is perhaps the most expansive limit of all, and the one least understood. In saying that no

evolutionary theory can be true that denies or distorts the dignity of the human person, the Church is demanding a great deal. Indeed, it places itself directly against the founder of modern evolution, Charles Darwin himself.

Darwin, in his *Descent of Man*, set forth an evolutionary account of human nature specifically designed to demonstrate that our moral nature was the direct result of natural selection. Several things followed from this.

First, morality is replaced with moralities, the singular with the plural. For Darwin, moral traits evolved among particular peoples, during particular times and under particular circumstances. They were as variable and transient as, say, the plumage of birds or the shape of tortoise shells. A large number of our contemporary evolutionists agree.

Second, there are no intrinsically evil actions. In fact, good and evil are reduced to what contributes to survival and what harms chances for survival. Anything that contributes to the survival of an individual, group, race or nation must be good; nothing that contributes to the survival of an individual, group, race or nation can be evil.

Most contemporary Darwinists have had trouble digesting this truth, and that is much to their merit—I think their hesitations are proof that they are indeed made in the image of God. But others have no qualms about infanticide and morally rating young human children below full-grown apes.

Third, if natural selection really is the basis of morality, then we should try to base our social policies on natural selection.

If human beings evolved through fierce competition between individual and individual, tribe and tribe, race and race, where the unfit were extinguished and the fit lived to breed more of their superior kind, then our social policies should be bent accordingly: We should not allow the “unfit,” the weak, sickly, morally and intellectually inferior to outbreed the fit, the strong, the healthy, the morally and intellectually superior. In saying this, Darwin has the honor of being the father of the modern eugenics movement, a movement that is gaining ever more speed.

It should be clear, even from the relatively brief analysis of these two articles, how large are these seemingly small limits placed by the Church among those who would legitimately investigate evolution, especially human evolution.

(Benjamin Wiker holds a doctorate in theological ethics and is the author of several books.) †

Hispanic Ministry/Felix Navarrete

Beyond its healings, shrine at Lourdes continues to be a place of hope

(As part of his studies to earn a master’s degree in theology at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana, archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic Ministry Felix Navarrete and his classmates traveled to Lourdes, France, this summer. Following is his reflection on their pilgrimage of faith.)

It was 11:45 at night as we headed to the grotto at Lourdes, France, after Tuesday’s torchlit procession. We wanted to contemplate in silence the same place where our Blessed Mother, under the name of the Immaculate Conception, appeared 18 times to a peasant girl in the almost unknown town of Lourdes, right in the Pyrenees, where the borders of France end—that is, on the outskirts of French civilization—in 1858.

We arrived thinking, because we were so late, that the grotto would be deserted—or at least that there would be only a few pilgrims. However, many were also there, perhaps seeking the same thing: a quiet moment for prayer and meditation at the foot of the grotto.

Despite the large number of pilgrims, the place was peaceful, and an unusual serenity and peace surrounded us. At night, the grotto is illuminated by the flames of candles, and the dim lights that penetrate allow one to see the statue of the white lady with a blue ribbon around her waist and two golden roses at her feet.

I was overwhelmed by the mist, and tears came to my eyes. I was there, kneeling in the same place where St. Bernadette Soubirous saw the beautiful lady on a winter afternoon in February. Why me, among so many?

Although Lourdes is the most visited Marian shrine in the world, many cannot go. I was there for my academic research, seeking to understand the different theological dimensions of a pilgrimage and the encounter with the divine. However, Mary chose me for that course for a reason: one that involves not only an intellectual component, but the simplicity of spiritual enrichment through the life of St. Bernadette.

I also had with me more than 100 prayer intentions that we had compiled just a few weeks earlier during the archdiocesan Hispanic Ministry’s first Mariology conference held at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. The Holy Spirit inspired me to ask our participants to write their intentions on a piece of paper for me to take to Lourdes. The stack of notes was in my bag just as a postman was preparing to deliver the mail. This time, all the mail was addressed to the same place and to the same recipients: Jesus and Mary, Lourdes, France.

As our field studies unfolded, we were exposed to different realities and people. Dr. Alessandro de Francisci, president of the Lourdes Medical Observations Office, gladly agreed to meet with our group. He explained the protocols to follow after a miraculous healing is claimed, and how he himself, as a physician, has experienced God’s loving kindness in his life and witnessed God’s grace in the lives of those who claim to have been healed at Lourdes.

I was moved by the number of sick people visiting the place—most of them in wheelchairs—and how the volunteers cared for them so lovingly and helped them reach the grotto or the baths, where they could do what is called “full immersion.”



Felix Navarrete, coordinator of the archdiocesan Hispanic Ministry, holds a candle at the shrine to Our Lady at Lourdes in France. (Submitted photo)

At Lourdes, the sick and disabled are prioritized not because they are treated differently because of their condition, but because it is written that the last shall be first. The marginalized and the poor of society have a special place at the Lord’s table, and that is the rule at Lourdes.

I’m not sure how many of them have been healed of their illnesses and diseases, but I could see the joy on their faces, the joy of having found someone or something

See NAVARRETE, page 14

Ministerio Hispano/Felix Navarrete

Más allá de sus curaciones, Lourdes sigue siendo un lugar de esperanza

(Como parte de sus estudios para obtener una maestría en teología en la Universidad de Notre Dame en el norte de Indiana, el coordinador arquidiocesano del Ministerio Hispano Félix Navarrete y sus compañeros viajaron a Lourdes, Francia, este verano. A continuación se encuentra su reflexión sobre su peregrinación de fe.)

Eran las 11:45 de la noche cuando nos dirigíamos a la gruta tras finalizar la procesión de las antorchas del martes. Queríamos contemplar en silencio el mismo lugar donde nuestra Santísima Madre, bajo el nombre de la Inmaculada Concepción, se apareció dieciocho veces a una campesina en la casi desconocida ciudad de Lourdes, en plenos Pirineos, donde terminan las fronteras de Francia—es decir, en las afueras de la civilización francesa—en 1858.

Llegamos pensando, por la tarde que era, que la gruta estaría desierta, o al menos que solo habría unos pocos peregrinos. Sin embargo, muchos también estaban allí, quizás buscando lo mismo: un momento de tranquilidad para la oración y la meditación al pie de la gruta.

A pesar de la gran cantidad de peregrinos, el lugar estaba tranquilo, y una serenidad y una paz inusuales nos rodeaban. Por la noche, la gruta se ilumina con las llamas de velas que se extinguen, y las tenues luces que la penetran permiten ver la estatua de la dama blanca con una cinta azul alrededor de la cintura y dos rosas doradas a sus pies. Me sentí sobrecogido por el ambiente y se me saltaron las lágrimas. Estaba allí, arrodillado en el mismo lugar donde Bernadette Soubirous vio a la bella dama una tarde de invierno de febrero. ¿Por qué yo, entre tantos? Aunque Lourdes es el santuario mariano más visitado del mundo, muchos no tienen la oportunidad de ir.

Estaba allí por mi investigación académica, buscando comprender las diferentes dimensiones teológicas de una peregrinación y el encuentro con lo divino. Sin embargo, María me eligió para ese curso por una razón: una que implica no solo un componente intelectual, sino la sencillez del enriquecimiento espiritual a través de la vida de Santa Bernardita. También llevaba conmigo más de 100 intenciones de oración que habíamos recopilado apenas unas semanas antes durante nuestro primer taller de Mariología, celebrado en la Casa de Retiros de Nuestra Señora de Fátima en Indianapolis.

El Espíritu Santo me inspiró a pedir a nuestros participantes que escribieran sus intenciones en un papel para que yo las llevara a Lourdes. El fajo de notas estaba en mi bolso tal como cuando un cartero se preparaba para entregar el correo. Esta vez, todo el correo estaba dirigido al mismo lugar y a los mismos destinatarios: Jesús y María, Lourdes, Francia.

A medida que avanzaban nuestros estudios de campo, nos vimos expuestos a diferentes realidades y personas. El Doctor Alessandro de Francisci, presidente de la

Oficina de Observaciones Médicas de Lourdes, aceptó con gusto reunirse con nuestro grupo. Explicó los protocolos a seguir tras una sanación milagrosa y cómo él mismo, como médico, ha experimentado la bondad amorosa de Dios en su vida y ha sido testigo de la gracia de Dios en las vidas de quienes afirman haber sido sanados en Lourdes.

Me conmovió la cantidad de enfermos que visitaban el lugar, la mayoría en silla de ruedas, y el cariño con el que los voluntarios los atendían y los ayudaban a llegar a la gruta o a los baños, donde podían realizar lo que se llama “inmersión total.”

En Lourdes, se prioriza a los enfermos y discapacitados no porque se les trate de forma diferente por su condición, sino porque está escrito que los últimos serán los primeros. Los marginados y los pobres de la sociedad tienen un lugar especial en la mesa del Señor, y esa es la regla en Lourdes.

No estoy seguro de cuántos de ellos se han curado de sus enfermedades, pero pude ver la alegría en sus rostros, la alegría de haber encontrado a alguien o algo que habían anhelado durante tanto tiempo. Creo que el gesto de condescendencia de Dios se puede entender en ese lugar. El de San Atanasio, quien lo describe como Dios tomando la iniciativa de acercarse a la humanidad por su amor infinito. El mismo amor por el que se encarnó en el vientre de María y se hizo hombre por nosotros.

Dios continúa manifestándose no solo en Lourdes, sino en todas partes cuando encuentra un corazón abierto a su presencia y a recibir las gracias que nos ha preparado. Aunque muchos buscan señales y deambulan por Lourdes, creo que nadie se va de allí con las manos vacías; siempre hay esperanza.

Cuando Nuestra Señora se apareció a Bernardita por tercera vez, le hizo una promesa: “Prometo hacerte feliz no en esta vida, sino en la otra.” Esas palabras llenaron el corazón de Bernardita de amor y esperanza. Es la promesa de la vida eterna; la comunión perfecta con la Santísima Trinidad a la que todos estamos llamados después de nuestra peregrinación terrenal. Bernardita, que sufrió en silencio hasta la muerte, nunca se quejó de su enfermedad porque creía en la palabra de Nuestra Señora; tenía esperanza en la felicidad eterna.

En este Año Jubilar de la Esperanza en el que nos encontramos, Dios quiere que tengamos esperanza. La esperanza que nadie nos puede arrebatar a pesar de las dificultades, enfermedades y luchas en nuestras vidas. La esperanza en la resurrección, claramente manifestada en su único Hijo, Jesucristo, tras sufrir dolor y muerte. La esperanza como virtud teologal que nos permite anhelar la eternidad y responder con un sí al llamado universal a la santidad; tal como lo hicieron María, nuestra madre, y Bernardita cuando la Señora la invitó a encontrarse con ella en la gruta cada semana.

Antes de concluir nuestro programa en Lourdes, tuvimos el privilegio de conocer a

Ver NAVARRETE, página 14

Evangelization Outreach/Irrobeje Crystal Owhoso-Maddox

Dear guardian angel: a declaration of thanksgiving for deliverance from evil

On Easter Sunday of 2007, my family and I stepped into the sacred waters of baptism and were joyfully received into the Catholic Church. It was a day of



miracles—overflowing with tearful joy and profound communion with the Body of Christ.

That same year, as autumn began to unfurl its golden leaves, I stood at the precipice of death. One moment, one decision, could have ended my life. In the fall of 2007, I was robbed at gunpoint.

My sister and I had just wrapped up a late night at a club when we were confronted by four men—strangers

who, in an instant, became wielders of violence.

One of them pressed a gun to my chest. In that breathless moment, I embraced the instinct to take the bullet if it meant sparing my sister. I found the strength to make the sign of the cross, and a wave of serenity washed over me. That peace—unshaken in the face of terror—was not mine alone. It was divine comfort, a silent assurance that the Lord’s

angels were near and present—a protective overcoat of heavenly intervention and promise of deliverance.

Now I cry out:

“O Lord, my God, I cried out to you for help, and you healed me. You have brought my life up from the pit, O Lord” (Ps 30:3–4).

When I sing this responsorial psalm, I am reminded of the countless times my guardian angel has stood between me and death.

A heavenly emissary of God, my guardian angel is charged with keeping me in his embrace so that I may continue the work he has set before me. The spiritual and physical realms of this world are not separate—they are intertwined, interlocking in moments of warfare and divine intervention.

In those moments, I cry out to God for assistance in battle, and I must give thanks for the intercession of divinity in my very human existence.

Just as Tobias did not recognize the angel Raphael, who appeared out of nowhere to guide, protect and heal, I too have been led by unseen hands.

My guardian angel has been a steadfast sentinel, a divine companion walking beside me through shadowed valleys and into the light. I have felt the brush of wings in moments of despair, the whisper of grace in times of confusion, and the shield of mercy when danger drew near.

This is my declaration of thanksgiving—for deliverance from evil, for the sacred presence of my guardian angel, and for the God who sends his messengers to walk with us. I am alive today not by chance, but by divine design.

And so I lift my voice in praise, not only for the miracle of survival, but for the purpose that survival has revealed. I have been spared to serve, protected to proclaim, and healed to testify.

May my life be a living psalm, a testament to the power of faith, the reality of angels, and the mercy of a God who never abandons his children.

(Irrobeje Crystal Owhoso-Maddox is the coordinator of archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry.) †

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, October 19, 2025

- Exodus 17:8-13
- 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2
- Luke 18:1-8

The Book of Exodus is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. One of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, its concepts are attributed to Moses himself. As such, it is part of the Torah—the fundamental document of Judaism.

As its title implies, its focus is upon the flight of the Hebrew people from Egypt, where they had been enslaved, to the land promised them by God as a haven and as their own homeland.

The journey from Egypt to the promised land was very difficult. First, the natural elements themselves often assailed the refugees. Then, the fleeing Hebrews encountered hostile peoples. Dissidents among them sowed seeds of confusion and alarm. Armies pursued them.

This weekend’s reading is about one such encounter. The Hebrews had to fight foes. Only when Moses held aloft the staff given him by God did the people prevail. After a while, Moses, by this time old and weary, could no longer lift his hands so his brother Aaron, the first high priest, and Hur, another faithful disciple, held up his arms with the staff.

For the second reading, the Church turns to St. Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy. As was the case in past readings from this letter, this weekend’s selection reassures and challenges Timothy in his task of discipleship and of serving as a bishop. The reading stresses that Jesus alone is the hope of the redeemed, indeed of all people.

St. Luke’s Gospel furnishes the last reading. In first-century Palestine, widows were very vulnerable. Poverty was rampant. There was no social safety net. Since women could not inherit from husbands under the law, they had to rely upon their children to survive. Virtually nothing was available to a woman to make her own living.

Therefore, the woman in this story

surely was desperate. Frantic in her circumstances, she boldly confronted this judge. It was a time when women were not expected to speak, indeed rarely to be seen.

The judge hardly is to be admired. Evidently, he was a minor judge and not an observant Jew. The Torah would have required him to be particularly solicitous about widows, yet he was not at all interested in this widow. He was more interested in polishing his own image than in responding to her plight.

Jesus uses the story to illustrate a lesson about God. Prayer does not require constant, loud pleas. Unlike the judge, God always is merciful. Sincerity, not repetition, is the key to the power of prayer. Anyone who prays must believe in God and trust that God will provide truly what is needed.

Reflection

The readings from Exodus and St. Luke’s Gospel this weekend could lead to several rather simplistic, childish and incorrect views of God. Exodus might give the impression that some seemingly foolish and unrelated gesture, such as holding arms aloft, will guarantee God’s help in a crisis.

It smacks of magic instead of illustrating a trusting relationship with Almighty God, as the gesture intended. Moses’ outreach of his arms symbolized his belief in God’s dominion over everything.

St. Luke’s Gospel does not suggest that people must flood the kingdom of heaven with thundering, ceaseless calls to obtain God’s mercy.

Instead, these two readings call us to develop an attitude about prayer that is both humble and trusting. In humility, we realize we can do little on our own. While we can do some things, we cannot fully control our destiny. As did Moses, we must depend on God.

We must also trust. We are inclined to dictate what God must provide us, but in this we act on our own judgments.

God will not forsake us. He will supply our genuine needs. †



Daily Readings

Monday, October 20
St. Paul of the Cross, priest
Romans 4:20-25
(Response) *Luke 1:69-75*
Luke 12:13-21

Tuesday, October 21
Romans 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21
Psalms 40:7-10, 17
Luke 12:35-38

Wednesday, October 22
St. John Paul II, pope
Romans 6:12-18
Psalms 124:1b-8
Luke 12:39-48

Thursday, October 23
St. John of Capistrano, priest
Romans 6:19-23
Psalms 1:1-4, 6
Luke 12:49-53

Friday, October 24
St. Anthony Mary Claret, bishop
Romans 7:18-25a
Psalms 119:66, 68, 76, 77, 93, 94
Luke 12:54-59

Saturday, October 25
Romans 8:1-11
Psalms 24:1b-4b, 5-6
Luke 13:1-9

Sunday, October 26
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18
Psalms 34:2-3, 17-19, 23
2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Luke 18:9-14

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Canon law allows for Catholic spouses to separate for just reasons

I read online that a married Catholic needs their bishop’s permission to separate from their spouse. My husband abandoned our family to live with his girlfriend. How can I get our bishop to make him come back home?



A I’m sorry you’re going through such a difficult situation. I don’t know exactly where you were finding your information online, so I can’t comment on the accuracy of what you read.

In broad terms, it is true that the Church’s law obligates spouses to maintain a common marital home under normal circumstances. As we read in canon 1151 of the *Code of Canon Law*: “Spouses have the obligation and the right to maintain their common conjugal life, unless a lawful reason excuses them.”

Likewise—very strictly speaking—in principle, canon law also envisions a Catholic as needing their bishop’s permission to separate from their spouse.

However, at the same time the law also provides a fairly wide “loophole.”

A relevant citation here is canon 1153, 1, which tells us: “A spouse who occasions grave danger of soul or body to the other or to the children, or otherwise makes the common life unduly difficult, provides the other spouse with a reason to leave, either by a decree of the local ordinary or, if there is danger in delay, even on his or her own authority.”

Obviously, this means that a Catholic in a physically dangerous abusive situation could leave the marital home as soon as they were able, without asking any kind of permission. But canon law also allows a faithful Catholic to separate “on his or her own authority” for less dramatic reasons. For instance, a spouse who was living a seriously sinful or otherwise

gravely disordered life (e.g., suffering from a severe addiction) and providing a scandalous example for their children would be a cause of moral danger or “danger of soul,” which would justify the other spouse leaving on the basis of their own discernment.

In the vast majority of cases, when a devout Catholic chooses to separate, it is for one of these justifiable reasons. This is why, practically speaking, most dioceses do not have a set process for obtaining the local bishop’s permission for leaving the marital home. (Though whether or not dioceses should have some protocol in place for this is perhaps another question.)

Your concerns are approaching this issue from somewhat of the opposite perspective. With respect to spouses’ responsibilities, the law tells them what their obligations are. Naturally, it is to be expected that a Catholic serious about their faith will take these obligations to heart and strive to fulfill them. And besides being illicit, abandoning the marital home for adulterous purposes is clearly a grave sin which the Church would never condone.

However, canon law does not give bishops coercive power to force spouses to fulfill their responsibility of marital common life.

Part of this is a matter of logistics and practical reality. That is, bishops do not have anything like a diocesan police force that is empowered to compel individuals to remain in places they wish to leave.

On a pastoral level, bishops and even parish priests can, of course, exhort and encourage a spouse who leaves their family for sinful reasons to return to their marital home. And if the abandoning spouse continues in their illicit separation, canon law directs them to refrain from receiving holy Communion (canon 916); and depending on the specific circumstances, they might even be appropriately denied communion if they approach the sacrament anyway (canon 915).

Yet the catch-22 here is that only a faithful Catholic would be interested in listening to their pastors, obeying canon law, avoiding sin and receiving the sacraments. But a person who willingly abandons their spouse for sinful reasons is probably not a Catholic who takes the faith seriously enough to be swayed by their pastor’s admonishments or to be concerned about the sacramental consequences of their actions.

(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

A Prayer to My Fortress

By David Charlesworth

Wonderful Counsellor open my confining mind,
Show me the righteous path to seek and find.

Mighty God give me the strength to do your will,
I beseech that you grant my supplicating spirit fill.

Eternal Father absent not your presence from me,
I bow with love and adoration on bended knee.

Prince of Peace instill within me a clean heart,
So that my joy in your Kingdom I may impart.

May the joy of the Resurrection flood my soul,
Until the end time my soul becomes whole.

(Correction: This poem appeared in the Oct. 3 issue of The Criterion with the incorrect name. David Charlesworth is a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. Photo: A path winds through the grounds of Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre in Morrison near Denver, Colo. in this Sept. 10 photo.) (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)



Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

BRANDENBURG, Simon A., 20, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Oct. 2. Son of Robert and Terri Brandenburg. Brother of Adam, Benjamin, Jack and Joseph Brandenburg. Grandson of Thomas Tillman.

CORRICO, Rita, 61, St. Mary, Lanesville, Oct. 8. Wife of Joseph Corrico. Mother of David, Michael and Steven Corrico. Sister of Judy Martin, Opal Wells, Donna, Jerry, Lester and Richard Hendricks. Grandmother of one.

FEENEY, Karen A., 67, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Sept. 26. Wife of Charles Feeney. Mother of Bridget, Mary Grace, Charles and Donald Feeney. Sister of Nancy Beckerich and Mary Ann Beckerich Froemming. Grandmother of three.

GOFFINET, Stephen D., 76, St. Paul, Tell City, Sept. 26. Husband of Judy Goffinet. Father of Sonja Poole. Son of Bobbie Goffinet. Brother of Becky Davis and Brad Goffinet. Grandfather of two.

HENNEKES, Sr., Joseph T., 85, American Martyrs, Scottsburg, Sept. 30. Father of Holly and Joseph Hennekes, Jr. Grandfather of three.

HUTT, Patricia, 79, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Sept. 29. Wife of Frank Hutt. Mother of Stephanie Anderson and Michael Hutt. Sister of Jane Best, Cathy Boone, Linda Smith and Dick Libs. Grandmother of two.

KEMPE, Jerome, 86, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Sept. 29. Brother of Helene Williams. Uncle of several.

MAUPIN, Harold L., 82, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Sept. 12. Husband of Beverly Maupin. Father of Heather Anderson, Karla Prime, Renee Shrier and Jason Maupin. Brother of Tom Maupin. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of three.

MCLAUGHLIN, Robert, 89, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Sept. 29. Husband of Mary McLaughlin. Father of Heather Carson, Maureen Lacy, Stacy and Michael McLaughlin. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of one.

MELOY, Marie F., 91, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Sept. 28. Mother of Jane Dobson, Christopher, David, James, John, Michael and Patrick Meloy. Grandmother and great-grandmother of several.

PEARSON, Martha Y., 89, St. Bernard, Frenchtown, Sept. 24. Mother of Tonda Snyder, Yvette Weathers, Jamie and Willian Pearson. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of one.

SEFFRIN, Thomas, 82, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Oct. 5. Husband of Joyce Seffrin. Father of Elizabeth and Walter Seffrin. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of two.

STANLEY, Dean P., 90, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Sept. 29. Father of Nancy Kassab and Dean Stanley II. Brother of Karen Hrbacek, Jerrie Pritzlaff and Marjorie Schmidt. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of eight.

UNDERWOOD, Evelyn

Pope meets ‘pope’



Pope Leo XIV greets fourth-grader Augie Wilk, who was elected and took the name “Pope Augustine” in a mock conclave at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy in Chicago, during the pope’s weekly general audience on Oct. 8 in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago looks on. The students’ re-enactment on May 6 of a papal election went viral days before Pope Leo’s own election on May 8. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

(Brengman), 87, St. Mary, Lanesville, Sept. 23. Wife of Kenneth Underwood. Mother of Donna Blank, Annette Jackson, Lisa Thomas,

David, Joseph and Michael Brengman. Grandmother of 20. Great-grandmother of 12. Great-great-grandmother of one. †

NAVARRETE

continued from page 12

they had longed for so long. I believe God’s gesture of mercy can be understood in that place, that of St. Athanasius, who describes it as God taking the initiative to reach out to humanity out of his infinite love. It is the same love by which he was incarnated in Mary’s womb and became flesh for our sake.

God continues to manifest himself not only in Lourdes, but everywhere when he finds a heart open to his presence and to receiving the graces he has prepared for us. Although many seek signs at Lourdes, I believe that no one leaves that place empty-handed; there is always hope.

When Our Lady appeared to Bernadette for the third time, she made a promise: “I promise to make you happy not in this life, but in the next.” Those words filled Bernadette’s heart with love and hope. This is the promise of eternal life, the perfect communion with the Holy Trinity to which we are all called after our earthly pilgrimage. Bernadette, who suffered in silence until death, never complained of her illness because she believed in Our Lady’s word; she had hope for eternal happiness.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope in which we find ourselves, God wants us to have hope.

The hope that cannot be taken away from us despite the difficulties, illnesses and struggles of our lives. Hope in the resurrection, clearly manifested in her only Son, Jesus Christ, after suffering pain and death. Hope as a theological virtue that allows us to yearn for eternity and respond with a fiat to the universal call to holiness; just as Mary did, and Bernadette when the Lady asked her to join her in the grotto each week.

Before concluding our program in Lourdes, we had the privilege of meeting Antonia Racó. She is the 72nd and most recent case of an approved miraculous healing there. After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and worsening in 2008, she visited Lourdes and received healing. As she was telling her story, my academic research felt more complete: she was not there to explain the theological significance of her healing, but to express from her heart what she experienced at Lourdes. Yet her testimony was one of the most profound and true lessons in theology.

She said, “First, I heard a sweet voice telling me to have faith ... and the second time, the same voice told me to tell my husband I was healed.” Mrs. Racó clearly received the word of hope the first time, and then was encouraged to spread it out, and she responded affirmatively. She

continues to spread it to thousands of people around the world.

She is not famous and clearly stated that she doesn’t like people treating her like a celebrity, but her kindness and humility are so powerful that you can easily feel God’s presence in her. And just before concluding the meeting, after graciously answering our questions, one answer in particular stood out to me: “I don’t know why me,” she said, in relation to being chosen by God.

Why me? Why us? Why in Lourdes? Why here, at this moment? God can act through us here and now, but we must pay close attention to hear his voice. God didn’t speak to Mrs. Racó with code words; he simply asked her for faith, and she believed.

Why do we find it so hard to believe? Are we waiting for a portentous sign to believe? If God poured out his grace on a little girl in the middle of nowhere, who had nothing and understood nothing of theology, then the Gospel idea that God reveals himself to the poor and humble is absolutely true.

Bernadette received a mission that she never imagined would bring so much hope and joy to the entire world. She simply followed Our Lady’s instructions; she never asked why, because she trusted her.

Today, the spring continues to flow like “living water.” Some are healed by drinking it, others by immersing themselves in it, some

are healed by drinking the water without visiting Lourdes. But what truly struck me is that some continue to receive healing through the powerful presence of the eucharistic Lord, who is processed every day at 5 p.m. sharp at the shrine there.

Doctors and the sick brought in by volunteers are first in line, followed by the thousands who visit the shrine daily. I felt as if I were portraying one of the Gospel passages: that of Jesus being followed by a multitude; those who heard his voice and decided to follow him, those who were healed, and those who were hunger or thirsty hoping to be quenched by him.

This is where my academic research is completed. Like many places in the world, Lourdes is a place of encounter with the divine, but also a place of communion with the universal Church.

Jesus meets pilgrims in many ways: in the Eucharist, in the spring, but also in each of us, who—moved by the Holy Spirit—reflect God’s countenance of faith, hope and charity. Healed physically or spiritually, or filled with hope, Lourdes is a foretaste of heaven.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us! St. Bernadette, pray for us!

(Felix Navarrete is archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic Ministry. He can be reached at fnavarrete@archindy.org.) †

NAVARRETE

continúa de la página 12

Antonia Racó. Ella es el caso número 72 y más reciente de

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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

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

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

sanación milagrosa aprobada. Tras ser diagnosticada con esclerosis múltiple y empeorar su condición en 2008, visitó Lourdes y recibió la sanación. Mientras contaba su historia, mi investigación académica se sintió más completa: ella no estaba allí para explicar el significado teológico de su sanación, sino para expresar desde el corazón lo que experimentó en Lourdes.

Sin embargo, su testimonio fue una de las lecciones más profundas y verdaderas de teología. Dijo: “Primero, escuché una dulce voz que me decía que tuviera fe ... y la segunda vez, la misma voz me dijo que le dijera a mi esposo que estaba sanada.” La Sra. Racó recibió claramente la palabra divina de esperanza la primera vez, y luego se animó a difundirla, y respondió afirmativamente. Ella continúa difundiéndola a miles de personas en todo el mundo. No es famosa y dejó claro que no le gusta que la traten como a una celebridad, pero su bondad y humildad son tan poderosas que se puede sentir fácilmente la presencia de Dios en ella. Y justo antes de concluir la reunión, tras responder amablemente a nuestras preguntas, una respuesta en particular me llamó la atención: “No sé por qué yo,” en relación con haber sido elegida por Dios.

¿Por qué yo? ¿Por qué nosotros? ¿Por qué en Lourdes? ¿Por qué aquí, en este momento? Dios puede actuar a través de nosotros aquí y ahora, pero debemos prestar mucha atención para escuchar su voz. Dios no le habló a la Sra. Racó con palabras en clave; simplemente le pidió fe, y ella creyó. ¿Por qué nos cuesta tanto creer? ¿Esperamos una señal portentosa para creer?

Si Dios derramó su gracia sobre una niña en medio de la nada, que no tenía nada ni entendía nada de teología, entonces la tesis evangélica de que Dios se revela a los pobres y humildes es absolutamente cierta.

Bernardita recibió una misión que nunca imaginó que traería tanta esperanza y alegría al mundo entero. Simplemente siguió las instrucciones de Nuestra Señora; nunca preguntó por qué, porque confiaba en ella. Hoy, el manantial sigue fluyendo como “agua viva”: algunos se curan al beberla, otros al sumergirse en ella, algunos se curan bebiendo el agua sin visitar Lourdes, pero lo que realmente me impactó es que algunos siguen recibiendo sanación gracias a la poderosa presencia del Señor en la Eucaristía, quien es llevado en procesión todos los días a las 17:00 en punto en el Santuario.

Los médicos y los enfermos traídos por voluntarios son los primeros en la fila, seguidos por miles de personas que visitan el santuario a diario. Sentí como si estuviera presenciando un pasaje del Evangelio: el de Jesús siendo seguido por una multitud: los que oyeron su voz y decidieron seguirlo, los que fueron sanados y los que tenían hambre o sed esperando ser saciados por Él. Aquí es donde culmina mi investigación académica. Como muchos lugares del mundo, Lourdes es un lugar de encuentro con lo divino, pero también un lugar de comunión con la Iglesia universal. Jesús se encuentra con los peregrinos de muchas maneras: en la Eucaristía, en la fuente de agua, pero también en cada uno de nosotros, quienes, movidos por el Espíritu Santo, reflejamos el rostro de fe, esperanza y caridad de Dios. Sanados física o espiritualmente, o llenos de esperanza, Lourdes es un anticipo del cielo.

Laudetur Iesus Christus. ¡Nuestra Señora de Lourdes, ruega por nosotros! ¡Santa Bernardita, ruega por nosotros!

(Félix Navarrete es coordinador arquidiocesano del Ministerio Hispano. Puede ser contactado en fnavarrete@archindy.org.)

From the Archives

Introduction

“From the Archives” has returned to *The Criterion*! In this latest iteration, the feature will include a trivia aspect. If you know the answer to the question, you can submit it to win a special “trivia expert” sticker. The answer to each question will be published the next time the feature appears in *The Criterion*.

In This Photo

In this window from a church in the archdiocese, we see Jesus turn water into wine at the request of the Blessed Virgin Mary during the wedding at Cana. The parish where this window appears was established in 1837. The parish was first served by a small log church which was followed by a stone church building. A new brick church was dedicated in 1862. The church’s stained-glass windows were ordered from Germany in 1914. Two of them made it to the United States in that year, though the remaining windows did not make it until 1919, having been delayed by World War I.

Trivia Question

In which church is this window located?
Let us know your answer at
www.archindy.org/ArchivesTrivia

Previous Answer

Father Clarence Witte poses on the day of the celebration of his first Mass on June 23, 1935. In times past, it was traditional for many children to participate in a procession for a priest’s first Mass. This procession included carrying the new priest’s chalice on a pillow. Sometimes, only a symbolic pillow was used. Two hundred children participated in the procession for Father Witte’s first Mass.



Pope asks Catholics to support missions with prayer, donations

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In separate videos recorded in English, Spanish and Italian, Pope Leo XIV urged every Catholic parish around the globe to observe World Mission Sunday on Oct. 19 and take up the annual collection that supports Catholic missionary work.

“When I served as a missionary priest and then bishop in Peru, I saw first-hand how the faith, the prayer and the generosity shown on World Mission Sunday can transform entire communities,” said the Chicago-born pope.

As an Augustinian priest, he served in the missions in Peru from 1985 to 1999 and then as apostolic administrator and later bishop of Chiclayo from 2014 to 2023.

In the video message, released on Oct. 13, Pope Leo encouraged all Catholics to pray on World Mission Sunday “particularly for missionaries and the fruitfulness of their apostolic labors.”

“Your prayers, your support will help spread the Gospel, provide for pastoral and catechetical programs, help to build new churches, and care for the health and

educational needs of our brothers and sisters in mission territories,” the pope said.

According to the Pontifical Mission Societies USA, funds collected on World Mission Sunday support “82,498 seminarians in formation; 258,540 religious sisters providing care and

catechesis; and 844,000 catechists sharing the faith at the grassroots.”

The funds also help sustain 12,000 health care centers; 8,750 orphanages and homes for the elderly; and have helped with the construction of 570 new churches.

In the video, Pope Leo asked Catholics to “reflect together on our baptismal call to be missionaries of hope among the peoples,” and to commit themselves again “to the sweet and joyful task of bringing Christ Jesus our hope to the ends of the Earth.”

The annual papal message for World Mission Sunday is released in February. Pope Francis had chosen “Missionaries of Hope Among All Peoples” as the theme for the 2025 celebration. †



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If you are interested in this position, please send your resume to:
bburkert@archindy.org.

Seton Catholic students celebrate St. Carlo Acutis

On Sept. 8-12, students of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School and Seton Catholic High School in Richmond celebrated St. Carlo Acutis, who was canonized on Sept. 7. The young saint, just 15 when he died of leukemia in 2006, was known for his use of technology to evangelize, particularly by creating a website on eucharistic miracles. The week included several events. A life-sized, cardboard cutout of the saint was present at each of the school campuses for photo opportunities. Every student received a

St. Carlo Acutis magnet. Each school also had a “Dress Like St. Carlo Day,” with students donating \$1 or more to wear jeans and polo shirts like the young saint; nearly \$200 was raised and donated to the Leukemia Society. Students were also asked to color, draw and/or reflect on St. Carlo Acutis’ ways and how each student and their family could imitate him to draw closer to God. Below is Seton Catholic senior Makayla Means’ favorite St. Carlo Acutis quote, followed by her reflection on the quote. †



A cardboard cutout of St. Carlo Acutis, ninth from right in the second row, seems like one of the Seton Catholic intermediate grade school students gathered outside of Holy Family Church in Richmond. (Submitted photos)



Quinn DeVito, left, and Jeslyn Willis, first grade students at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, pose with a cardboard cutout of St. Carlo Acutis.

“The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on Earth we will have a foretaste of heaven.”
–St. Carlo Acutis

The Eucharist is extremely powerful. When we take in the Eucharist, we are letting the real flesh of Jesus touch our souls. To me, this quote perfectly sums up what the Eucharist really is. It’s not just a piece of unleavened bread; the Eucharist is the closest we can get to heaven on Earth. When we physically and spiritually allow Jesus to enter our hearts, we get that small taste of heaven. It almost makes me feel unworthy to eat the Eucharist: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” However, the Eucharist is the Lord’s greatest gift to us here on Earth. I think it’s so important to sit down and reflect on what the Eucharist truly is! –Makayla Means, Seton High School senior

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